

ETHIOPIAN PASTORALIST RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (EPaRDA)

Volume 1 Number 1



April 2009

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ETHIOPIAN PASTORALIST RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (EPaRDA)

BACKGROUND

EPaRDA is an indigenous non-governmental organization. It was established in 1999 by professionals of diverse backgrounds with concern and interest to support the Ethiopian pastoralist communities' livelihoods. The organization currently works mainly in South Omo Zone.

EPaRDA is the first local NGO in the zone and led a path for many other similar organizations to operate in the area. The South Omo Zone is situated in the south west of the Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional State of Ethiopia comprising eight woredas.

EPaRDA is undertaking its activities from the headquarters in Addis Ababa, field offices in Woito, Turmi and Jinka as well as mobile outreach camps in various places within the communities.

VISION

To see the Ethiopian pastoralists become self-reliant and their livelihoods improved.

MISSION

To empower the pastoralists with development in an integrated and holistic way by capitalizing their indigenous knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

- **To conduct action oriented research based on identified gaps .**
- **To facilitate development efforts in the highly volatile situation of the pastoralist area.**
- **To support non-formal education and awareness creation in improving livelihoods.**
- **To broaden the scope of the pastoralists participation in project management.**
- **To closely work with the communities and capitalize their indigenous knowledge.**
- **To empower the pastoralist women and enhance gender equity in pastoralist areas.**
- **To support and facilitate the provision of primary health care especially for women and children.**
- **To advocate pastoralists' development problems and opportunities so as to influence national and regional policies that favor pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.**

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**EPaRDA's Bulletin is a
Biannual publication of
EPaRDA**

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Welcome to EPaRDA's Bulletin

The year 2009 marks EPaRDA's tenth anniversary. This issue of EPaRDA's Bulletin is organized in a manner to give you a glimpse on EPaRDA's program's activities that have been carried out to empower the pastoralists in South Omo Zone. In this Bulletin, the message from some of the founders of EPaRDA and a foreword from the Executive Director would inform you about the background of EPaRDA, the challenges the organization faced in its ten years journey, the steps it took to overcome difficulties and to address and promote the pastoralists development agenda in South Omo Zone.

The programs' profiles section of the bulletin not only reviews and updates you on the areas that EPaRDA has been involved, it also describes the strategies used to achieve its objectives, and its direct support to change and build the capacity of indigenous groups in remote and marginalized pastoral areas. The programs' profiles section includes summaries on food security, health, HIV/AIDS, capacity building, gender, emergency relief, peace building, research, information and communication.

This bulletin is the first to be published under the newly established research and communication department. The new department plans to make EPaRDA's bulletin a biannual publication of the organization. The department is pleased to say welcome to the first issue of EPaRDA's bulletin and would like to thank all who have contributed to its contents. Finally, we would be grateful to receive comments, suggestions, and questions that would contribute to improve the bulletin's contents.

Mohammed Ali
Editor

Message from the Board Chairman

EPaRDA was established with the efforts and perseverance of its far-sighted founders Dr. Tafesse Mesfin, Dr. Zerihun Ambaye, Mr. Mulugeta Ayalew and others who are still active. It has added a few more members like Dr. Hirut Terefe and myself, but we still believe that EPaRDA should broaden membership base to enlist different professionals and interested parties.

It began its activities with three employees who had worked without pay during hard times and trying situations. Though it has added a few more necessary staff through time, as a policy, concentrates on project staff employment rather than at the headquarters level.

EPaRDA started operation with a single project in partnership with FARM Africa in a two room basement office. Of course, EPaRDA has now grown to run more than ten projects at a time and has gained good national and international reputation. At this juncture, EPaRDA would like to express its appreciation and gratefulness to FARM Africa for all the cooperation over the years.

The association's development is not physical as in number of staff members, vehicles, luxurious office or others, but rather in its timely, efficient and successful project accomplishments. In this regard, it has developed and grown beyond its means thanks to its dedicated staff members who have sacrificed a lot in adverse conditions with meager facilities. That is why it can now walk tall among its peers.

EPaRDA is one of the first of its kind to think of the marginalized people of the southern part of Ethiopia and to implement a project in the area. Having high regard to the indigenous knowledge and culture, it has introduced harmonized livelihood, health, gender, conflict resolution etc. methods that have helped to alleviate the difficulties. It can thus, be modestly proud of its accomplishments.

As to constraints and obstacles that may hamper EPaRDA's progress and endeavors in fulfilling its objectives, it all boiled down to financial limitations. But, as it is sometimes said, all that has come to pass.

All that has been implemented and achieved was made possible by donors' and partners' contribution which was not only vital but also indispensable to the Association's success. At this point it would be proper to mention some of them Oxfam GB, Health Unlimited, CORDAID, Pact Ethiopia, Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia, Sustainable Land Use Forum, WFD, Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP), CRDA, IGAD, SPCM and others. We hail and compliment you all.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude for the dedication of all members and staff of EPaRDA without whose efforts the objectives would not have been realized. The unreserved free service of our Board Members, unwavering leadership of executives, and the collective zeal of those involved have bear fruit.

My appreciation goes to all who have made things possible beyond the call of duty. I laud you all in the name of the board of directors.

Mr. Tsegaye Mekasha
Board Chairman



Foreword from the Executive Director



A lot is required to change the living conditions of the poor in Ethiopia that government cannot bear alone in anyway. In this huge country with large and diverse communities, it is hard to reach for all the calls and provide support in a short period. History recalls that some development partner organizations started to operate in few areas of the country long ago. But, the largest part remained marginalized even by successive governments of Ethiopia. Particularly, the pastoralists and agro-pastoralist remained marginalized with the underlying intertwined problems of development and peace where the situation requires utmost new efforts and strategies.

In December 1999, cognizant to the above facts, a group of like-minded professionals having diverse backgrounds established the Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association (EPaRDA) with the common mission; to contribute to poverty reduction and chronic vulnerability of pastoralists under the complex and diverse inter-faces of ecology, economy and politics.

EPaRDA is a pioneer national organization that began various development initiatives in a remote, marginalized pastoralist area of the South Omo Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia. Despite the limited available resources, at the outset we were sure of its success and, enthusiastic and highly motivated to work towards the betterment of the lives of the participating communities. However, it was not that simple, we faced a lot

of challenges and obstacles far from our expectation, which were testing experiences in EPaRDA's survival and evolution.

From 1999 to 2001, we were working hard to build the organization on a solid ground. Starting from 2001, we engaged ourselves in action with projects in South Omo Zone. Unfortunately, in 2004 the organization faced a financial setback that seemed as to doom our hope and togetherness. The problem had grown to the extent of frustration that tempted us to quit. We always think of the lives we changed in our early interventions and the trust that the target communities put on our organization. It was hard to turn around our faces from those hopeful partner communities and to concentrate on our individual achievements alone. We were immersed in uncertainty and doubt interfering and affecting even our personal lives. As the saying goes, "you wouldn't be challenged beyond your limit", we did not quit.

It wouldn't be to exaggerate if I say my position as the Executive Director exposed me to make hard decisions, convince employees to persevere, and to the extent of using personal finance to cover the day-to-day activities of the Association. In spite of the challenges, we did not lose hope and were working towards the enhancement of the lives of pastoralist communities.

April 2004 was the turning point for all successive projects up to today. Thereafter, we were able to secure funds and undertake over 24 projects of various nature assumed will change the lives of the pastoralist communities. Now, EPaRDA is one of the main non-governmental organizations participating in the challenging aspects of rural development in South Omo Zone. As a result of our interventions the living conditions of various pastoralist communities of South Omo have changed tremendously compared to ten years ago. EPaRDA is proud to be associated with these positive changes in the area.

One of the distinguishing features of EPaRDA development interventions is the harmonized and comprehensive integration of various pastoral development activities through holistic and participatory approach.

Foreword...

Thus, the major intervention areas comprises; action oriented research, food security, provision of capacity building, primary health care, HIV/AIDS, natural resource and traditional rangeland management, Small scale irrigation, water development, pastoralists' internal/cross-border peace building, women empowerment, risk management, informal education, and other sectors.

Since its establishment, EPaRDA has been taking tangible steps, in all of the above spheres of activities in order to lay firm foundations and bring about positive changes in the lives of pastoralist communities. We do have challenges to overcome, but what we have achieved can in no way be neglected. We know that there are a lot more to be done but, we will still commit ourselves to contribute to solve the development problem of the pastoralist communities. We are trying to nurture EPaRDA under new circumstances and in a vastly changing world.

The hope of the communities and the challenges on the ground indicate that we have great and enduring responsibilities in the future. I believe our experiences have given us the necessary commitment, courage and determination. In this regard, we can inject new dynamism and vitality into EPaRDA. We have begun the restructuring of the organization to serve the interest of pastoral communities of South Omo and beyond. We are under preparation to put in place a five years strategic plan that would shape our thinking and consolidate our practice towards a better end. Some of the activities we envisage to do in the coming years include the expanding and diversifying of the existing interventions of the organization.

Finally, it is the collective efforts of the organization staff members, the communities, the government authorities at different levels and the partner/donor community that made possible the achievements during

the above years. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to EPaRDA Board of Directors, staffs, donors and government authorities on behalf of EPaRDA management and the communities who benefited from these programs.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance I attach to EPaRDA and commitment to explore all avenues that further enhance and develop pastoral communities. In all this, and more, we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that we attain the maximum possible level of achievement in the coming years.

Best wishes and regards for us all in the future endeavors for sustainable pastoral development.

Zerihun Ambaye (Dr.)
Executive Director



Pastoralism

The Case of South Omo

By Dr. Tefesse Mesfin

Pastoralism is an ancient mode of mobile livestock production that makes extensive use of rangelands. Pastoralists, in Ethiopia inhabit arid and semi arid land terrain that does not support sustained rain fed crop cultivation. Most pastoral lands fall below 1500 meters above sea level (a.s.l.) and receive erratic rainfall below 700 mm annually. Pastoral areas are endowed with diverse livestock species and breeds, range vegetation, wildlife, minerals, rivers, lakes, archaeological and attractive scenery sites. The rangelands also serve as 'carbon sink'. More than 50% of the Ethiopian land mass is estimated as pastoral area. There are about 29 ethnic groups who draw their major livelihood from managing livestock.

One of the pastoral areas known is the South Omo Zone where more than ten ethnic groups (Dasenech, Nyangatom, Hamer, Bena, Tsemaco, Hor/Arbore, Birale/Ongota, Mursi, Bodi, Kara, Muguji and Maale) inhabited the area and make their living based on extensive livestock production system.

Two major rivers, the Omo and Woito drain the area and charges Lake Turkana and Chalbi Lake popularly known as Chew Bahir located at the border of Ethiopia and Kenya. The elevation ranges from 350 meters a.s.l. at Lake Turkana to 2000 meters a.s.l. at Hamar Koke mountain range.

The area is remote and the people have remained marginalized by the previous successive governments. The wildlife and culture of the people have attracted tourists, but income from tourism has not significantly benefited the people. Currently, low number of wildlife both in species diversity and size of population are left due to indiscriminate hunting using more efficient guns than traditionally used spears.

Livestock species include cattle, sheep, goat and donkeys. Cattle are important during drought as they can be slaughtered and consumed. Oxen can be exchanged for rifles.



Cattle are important for traditional jumping in case of Hamer. Milk and blood are products of cattle that supplement the food particularly in time of crises. Butter is important and can be used for food and cosmetics. It is also useful in wedding ceremonies. The hide is worn by women and also used as mat or bedding. The fat tailed sheep is useful as supplementary nutrition during drought as the fat tail can be docked and melted to get butter or fat for the preparation of family food.

Goats can be exchanged for cattle and are used for dowry in marriage. The skin is used to make women's clothing. They can be slaughtered readily when guests come to somebody's house and also they produce milk. When there is rain, they are the first animals who can nibble at plants that turn green with the rain. Their meat is considered to be light, and somebody who eats the meat can travel easily unlike cattle meat which is considered heavy. The small bones of the legs and hooves are collected and used as ornaments.

For centuries pastoralist communities managed their communal grazing land by regulating resource used over wide landscapes by employing different strategies of mobility. Decisions for allocation of range and water resources were enforced by traditional institutional setup and special elders' committee to be implemented at different stage by young people. For example, in the case of *Tsemaco* ethnic group the *Bokolko* (spiritual leader) gives blessings every year and when necessary curse to avoid epidemics and other hazards. Community members contribute honey, goat, *sube* (young female sheep) and two or three quintals of maize as annual tribute. *Melbasqo* are elders who communicate with *bokolko* and they have the power to punish offenders. The *dago* performs the duty of a scout and moves ahead of the animals to check if the new pasture land is peaceful and disease free.

Then *dalequolete* (the herders) move the animals to the pasture after the conformation of dago. Herd splitting is one of the strategy used to make use of range resources without concentrating animals in one place which otherwise will end in degradation of vegetation. Lactating cows

Pastoralism....

and small stock graze around the homestead supplying milk to the elderly and young children. The mobile herd which constitute heifers, dry cows and bulls graze on the outer orbit. Transhumant pastoralists move between the dry season and wet season grazing areas. The number of male animals is lower than the female. The male animals are sold to fulfill household requirements. Since the female animals are required for breeding and milk production their number is higher than male animals.

Also pastoralists have used skills to treat their animals by employing plant, animal and mineral based resources. Today such traditional system is facing challenges from modern administration.

To supplement their food, pastoralists have cultivated sorghum and maize as flood retreat agriculture along the Omo and Woito Rivers. In time of crises the rangeland is also supported with wild food gathered by pastoralists. Recurrent droughts, conflict, proliferation of small arms, flooding, human and animal diseases such as malaria and trypanosomiasis (tse tse transmitted disease) that have remained endemic have been the major threat for pastoralists. Infrastructure and social services are poor.

The piece - meal development in the 1970s did not bring the intended purpose. For example, Rinderpest control resulted in cattle boom which again created pressure on the range vegetation leading to range degradation. Other livestock packages were not part of the project such as marketing which would have increased off take.

Since the 1980s pastoral land has been shrinking due to other non pastoral activities such as commercial irrigated farms and wildlife park demarcation. The two prominent irrigated farms are the Birale and Ethio Korea farm which is still allocated for large scale commercial farm investors. More and more bottom lands which were once 'safe haven' for keeping livestock in times of crises are being changed into cultivation thus land becoming individual rather communal.

Due to drought resulting in livestock population decline, ethnic groups fight among themselves and across international borders and raid livestock followed by counter raiding. These days pastoralists are armed with more automatic guns turning into violent conflict.

In the 1970s and 1980s there were NGOs such as Rada Barna, SPCM and Catholic Mission in limited areas supporting development and religious work. In 2001 EPaRDA with its partner FARM-Africa assisted the Hamer, BenaTsemay and Arbore ethnic groups in community animal health, camel introduction, peace building, alternative basic education, and human health and HIV/AIDS control.

Since then other NGOs intervention and government project such as Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP) are performing community based development work that has brought awareness on peace building, harmful practices, women empowerment and income generation activities.

As more and more people are settling in the rangeland, primarily because of agricultural labour brought from other areas, to work on commercial agriculture pastoralists are losing their traditional dry season grazing areas. Urbanization required more construction of houses and fire wood resulting in cutting of trees that would have been used to hang beehives and whose pods were used as dry season supplements for calves and small ruminants.

Thus more awareness, research, education and diversification of activities, and recognition of traditional wisdom that makes a holistic approach is needed to use such fragile ecosystems in a sustainable manner.



Food Security

Like other pastoralist areas in Ethiopia, the South Omo Zone very often suffers from various developmental as well as environmental constraints. Among the very often-cited natural and social calamities in this area are recurrent drought, conflict, livestock diseases and crop pest outbreaks. The drought problems combined with diseases have significant contribution in eroding the livestock resources in the area, which are the foundations of pastoralist livelihoods. Likewise, crop production is usually hampered by low precipitation, erratic rainfall and poor agricultural practices which resulted in crop failures from year to year and eventually led to food insecurity.

In cognizant of the above fact, EPaRDA together with the target beneficiary communities, donors and other stakeholders started the introduction of a food security related project interventions in the very marginalized and extremely food insecure pastoralist communities of South Omo Zone. The initiatives thus launched aimed at reducing and mitigating the vulnerability of the pastoral community through comprehensive and holistic development approaches and activities. To this end, the contribution of various donors particularly CORDAID, the partner for most food security projects, is worth mentioning.

The interventions and project activities of EPaRDA have been, therefore, witnessed to be on the right track of meeting their purposes of minimizing vulnerability of pastoral women and men to food insecurity as well as disaster related problems through various improved agricultural production initiatives and diversified better household income generation alternatives.

All in all, the successes in improved food security have been achieved through the under summarized major activity initiatives:

Small-Scale Irrigation

EPaRDA has so far introduced food security enhancing irrigation cultivation in five sites namely Gola and Karo (Hamer woreda); Lochuch and Selegn (Dassenech woreda); and Omo Kibish (Nyangatom woreda). In these irrigation schemes, around 2000 pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households have benefited and harvested at a time about 10,000 quintals of food grains (maize and sorghum mainly) from a total area close to 500 hectares. As a result of this magnificent impact, the communities in these locations have relatively became food secure as compared to other community groups in South Omo. This situation can be reaffirmed from the assertion made by the Gola communities in Hamer, "We do not need food aid, rather we are in the position of donating food to our relatives".



The Gola - Hamer communities in their traditional irrigation farming supported by EPaRDA



The Dassenech communities Banana irrigation farming supported by EPaRDA

Programs' Profiles

Food Security...

Livestock

EPaRDA's livestock health interventions in South Omo Zone have above all improved the livestock health situation. Under this program, the trainings of community livestock health workers from within the communities are conducted and have contributed a lot in creating improved access to livestock health services in the area. Likewise, the repeatedly conducted livestock vaccinations have widely reduced the prevalence of livestock disease epidemics.



Some of the livestock vaccinations' campaigns being conducted by

The other important initiative, which EPaRDA has embarked on for food security reasons, is the introduction of camels in the target area. According to the information gathered from Asile, Kola-Kaja and Shala-Luka kebeles, where EPaRDA has hitherto distributed camels, their numbers have increased remarkably and they are reproducing very well. As a result of this, currently the beneficiary communities are effectively utilizing the camels as a source of milk, meat and transport. After observing the varied benefits of camels, a great interest among the communities has grown and a lot of pastoralists have currently registered to own camels even on full cost recovery basis. Such interventions are vital in boosting the pastoralist food security situation.



One of the remarkably performing camels introduced by EPaRDA

Fishery

Fishery promotion is another vital initiative launched by EPaRDA for improving the food security of the pastoralist communities. Accordingly, 16 fishing boats and 65 fishing nets were provided to about 154 households, from the communities of Dassenech (Dassenech woreda), who fish on Lake Turkana. They are using the fish products both for home consumption and trade to obtain additional income. EPaRDA has also linked the beneficiaries with the Ethiopian Fish Corporation for the purpose of creating sustainable market opportunity to the pastoralist fishermen. In addition to this, EPaRDA, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Fish Corporation, trained the fishing groups on fishing techniques, the use of boats, and use of the high yielding fishing nets. Moreover, around 15 women were trained in fishing net making and on how to market their produce. The fishermen are linked with the net making women so that they can get additional nets when the need arises.



Programs' Profiles

Food Security...

Apiculture

Promotion of apiculture is also one of the food security assisting initiatives of EPaRDA in the pastoralist target areas. Consequently, twenty transitional beehive were distributed to twenty traditional beekeepers after they were trained in beekeeping/apicultural production techniques, beehives management and honey handling methods. The beneficiaries are presently enjoying improved honey production as a result of the support. They are getting additional incomes for their household that ultimately contributes to their food security. Following the success of the first round beneficiaries, other community groups as well as concerned government offices are requesting similar supports. Currently, EPaRDA is responding to these demands and the initiative will be strengthened.

The impacts so far discussed have shown a cumulative effect of improved household food security and income; and the economic strength thus gained has allowed the communities to increase their participation and involvement in all affairs that concerns their living.

Water Development

Water scarcity, erratic rainfall, scarcity of hydrological and other related information, limited promotion of water harvesting, conflict over water resources and the spread of water born diseases have long been known as the prominent challenges facing the pastoralist communities in South Omo Zone.

As a result of this, EPaRDA pursued the development of water infrastructures, especially water ponds, and the strengthening of community water management capacities in the target areas. EPaRDA has so far undertaken construction of four water ponds in Gisma (Bena-Tsemay woreda), Arbore (Hamer woreda), Omorate zuria (Dassenech woreda) and Nyanatom woreda, and established water use committees and provide training on water utilization.



Cattle drinking water from a water pond constructed by EPaRDA at Dassenech woreda

In addition to improving food security, the development support conducted by EPaRDA has contributed towards reducing the inter-ethnic conflicts in the area and relative peace has been restored among several ethnic groups. The Gola communities, who widely benefit from one of such initiatives once said that they do not have time to fight with their neighbouring ethnic groups, as they used to do, because they are busy working on their farms and securing whatever they require for their life from the improved farm produce.

Programs' Profiles

Health

The major threats on the pastoralists' health in South Omo Zone are triggered by harsh environmental hazards such as flooding and recurrent drought, prevalence of malaria, as well as women and children's health problems related to child birth.

Because of lack of access to modern health services in the area, communities rely on traditional healers and witchcraft. As a result, harmful traditional beliefs and practices still prevail in the area and contributes to the already high maternal and infant mortality rates.

In response to the basic health service needed in South Omo Zone, EPaRDA jointly with local health bureaus, traditional leaders, community members and non-governmental organizations work on a health project in the Hamer and Bena-Tsemay woredas.

EPaRDA's major objective in the health sector of the pastoralist community is to enhance the health status of the pastoralist communities, particularly women and children as the primary beneficiaries with provision of basic and integrated health services.

Some of the major achievements of EPaRDA's health project include; establishment of mobile outreach health clinics accessible to 80,000 people, provision of seven birthing huts with trained traditional birth attendants, training of community health workers to carry out children immunization, introduction of health insurance scheme at pastoralists level and empowering young people in basic health education through youth clubs.



A child receiving treatment by one of EPaRDA's health workers



One of the birthing huts constructed by EPaRDA



A mother with a baby delivered in the birthing hut



Programs' Profiles

Gender: Women Empowerment

In South Omo Zone, women play a critical role for the survival of households and communities as a whole. As in other pastoralist societies, women in South Omo Zone perform a large and diverse workload. Fetching water, collecting firewood, taking care of their family and livestock, construction of shelters and work on the farm are a few of the multiple tasks that the women perform. Such efforts of women would significantly contribute to development and poverty reduction. Unfortunately, they have not been fully recognized.

The deep imbalance, between what women do and what they have, contributes to worsening the wellbeing of the women. For example, women in the pastoral communities of South Omo have no right to own livestock or land and usually formal education for girls is not seen as important.

EPaRDA has been assisting women in the South Omo Zone to improve their livelihoods by ensuring that gender related activities such as women empowerment and enhancement of gender equity are integrated in its programs. Workshops and trainings that involved local women were conducted on gender equity, resource management and utilization, harmful traditional practices, workload easing mechanisms and gender on decision making. After the workshops and trainings, for example, women are participating in most of the meetings that are usually held by men, which is the first of its kind in the communities.

EPaRDA has been aiming to ease the day to day workload of women in the project areas. The provision of a local grinding mills is an example. Such facilities help the women to have more time to engage in other development related activities such as peace-building, community dialogues, where women's involvement become increasingly important in the management and resolution of conflict.

Other important activities launched to empower the pastoralist women include: income generating schemes, awareness raising and capacity building programs, goats groups formation and goats distribution, community awareness raising trainings on harmful traditional practices and education on HIV/AIDS.

From a community leader to member of regional council : the case of Bona Balanta

Women empowerment activities of EPaRDA have enabled many women from different communities to become self sufficient. To some, such activities have made them to go even further to become outstanding leaders and role models to women in their communities. Among them is Bona Balanta.

Bona Balanta is a married woman from the Hamar Ethnic group in South Omo Zone . She started her leadership experience when she worked as a chairperson for EPaRDA's women small group income generating activities in Turmi town. While with EPaRDA, she served women and men in her communities by attending pastoral related events in different regions of Ethiopia and aired her voice on behalf of her communities on different pastoralist development problems and opportunities. In 2007 , she also traveled to Kenya through EPaRDA to attend pastoralists related event. On different occasions, her efforts were recognized by the government and had received awards for the associations she worked for from the Ethiopian Prime Minister.

In 2007, Bona Balanta was elected as a member of the council of nationalities of SNNPRS representing her ethnic group. Since then, she has been taking the voice of the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists communities to a higher level.



First from left, Bona Balanta with some of EPaRDA's staff members

Emergency

In view of the widespread risks in South Omo Zone, EPaRDA has developed a project that can provide quick responses in case of unforeseen disaster strikes on the target communities in the area. This pioneer project was put in place in 2005 with the funding of CORDAID. A contingency fund system was developed within this project and a start up budget of 250,000 Birr was allocated. This has helped in carrying out swift emergency operations to save lives of victims and was a remarkable step in overcoming the delay in emergency supply as a result of 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 Dassenech and Nyangatom Woredas of the zone. Consequently, 364 people were killed, some 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 Non-Governmental Organization to appear on the scene of the incident with emergency support within a day after the flood. EPaRDA's emergency 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, Oxfam GB and UNOCHA. EPaRDA provided food relief and the associated materials, hygiene and environment sanitation materials as well as supplementary food for children with malnutrition.

Diseases like pneumonia, dysentery, measles and others have emerged as a result of this crisis. EPaRDA deployed a medical team led by a medical doctor to the emergency site to provide emergency medical care to the displaced people. In addition, EPaRDA covered the cost of medicines, and allowance and logistical support for government health staff members.

Vaccination and treatment were given to 428, 133 livestock against different livestock disease, which would have caused diseases outbreak following flooding.

Similarly, flooding occurred in 2007 in three Woredas (Hamer, Dassenech and Nyangatom) was very devastating both in its extent and geographical coverage compared to 2006 flood. Early preparation made both by EPaRDA in collaboration with donors and government (especially Woreda and Zonal) saved lives and properties.

The Omo and Woito rivers flood disaster is becoming a usual phenomenon hitting the low land woredas of South Omo zone namely, Dassenech, Nyangatom and Hamer woredas. From past experiences, the over flooding of Omo river starts from mid-August and continues till the end of September and first week of October. In addition to the provision of relief and emergency, EPaRDA is engaged in disaster preparedness and risk aversion operations. The risk aversion activities used in practice in 2008 and helped to save the communities from the possible destruction of flood. EPaRDA has at disposal emergency contingency projects for any unforeseen circumstances to support



Food and materials delivery by EPaRDA to victims of flooding in South Omo Zone

Programs' Profiles

HIV/AIDS

The estimated prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Southern National Nationalist Peoples region is 2.3%. This makes the area one of the highly affected regions in Ethiopia. A survey by EParDA in 2006 in the South Omo Zone identified a wide knowledge gap on HIV/AIDS; only 11.6% and 10.6% of the respondents have identified three and / or more means of HIV/AIDS transmission and means of prevention respectively.

The information gap on the HIV/AIDS epidemic is influenced by factors such as the area being one of the most marginalized areas of the country, communities pastoral nomadic lifestyle, extremely low health service infrastructure, the intact traditional practices that are deeply rooted in the communities, as well as having multiple sexual partners both by married and young unmarried men.

One of EParDA's main programs' focuses have been in the area of HIV/AIDS. In 2006, EParDA in partnership with Health Unlimited launched a project known as Empowering Marginalized Pastoralist Communities Project (EMPCP) – to prevent HIV/AIDS and promote the rights of HIV- positive people.

The project aims to empower youth, women and men of the pastoralists' communities in the Hamer and Bena-Tsema Woredas of the SNNP regions in order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, to enable access to Volunteer Counseling and Testing (VCT) service and to promote the communities right to care, treatment and support. In doing these, EParDA emphasized on awareness creation by establishing two sexual and reproductive health clubs, organized youth centers and music clubs, trained traditional healers in preventive HIV/AIDS counseling skill, trained 20 volunteer HIV positive people on HIV education and advocacy, as well as produced and distributed educational materials.

Under the same project, EParDA established associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. The associations have been enabling the HIV positive people to effectively support each other and also get access to the support of others including the government.



Awareness creation on Condom usage to young people by EParDA



Training of Trainees (TOT) on VCT organized by EParDA

Programs' Profiles

Capacity Building

Pastoralists by and large survive on the basis of their own knowledge of the environment and on how to manage it. Any attempt to improve their situation must begin with an understanding of this knowledge and should be conducted through participatory approaches. In its interventions, EPaRDA gives emphasis in building on existing local knowledge and also bringing in problem solving, labour saving, and productive ventures for conducive long-term pastoral development.

Pastoralist communities 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 are conducted by enhancing the capacities and building the abilities of the communities to perform and manage their own development activities. Hence, such capacity strengthening efforts of EPaRDA include three major components, namely, community based capacity building programmes; capacity building of various government experts, through material support and various trainings on a wide range of issues; and enhancing EPaRDA's field offices' capabilities for effective delivery of community services.

In view of these, EPaRDA has been duly involved in launching various capacity building initiatives for the target communities, government counterparts and its own staff members. These initiatives employed methodologies that are believed to have yielded remarkable successes.

Strengthening of community capacities through infrastructure development such as water ponds/wells, grain mills, non-formal schools, market places, emergency slaughterhouses, and others are conducted.

EPaRDA also provided irrigation pumps for irrigation farming community groups, fishing gears (nets and boats) to organized pastoralist fishing groups, beehives and other apicultural equipment, farm implements and improved seeds to agro-pastoral farming groups, motorbikes for government offices especially to health centers, human health medicines and livestock drugs as well as medical equipment to woreda and zonal level health centers.

EPaRDA Provides trainings to community groups in different areas. Some of them are; hygiene and sanitation, clean water management, la-

trine construction and management, malaria prevention and control, HIV/AIDS prevention, the promotion of fishery and fishing nets production, beekeeping, beehives management and honey handling, lowland agricultural production and irrigation management, water conservation, crop husbandry, livestock health workers trainings, 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.



A group of community health workers on capacity building training organized by EPaRDA



A capacity building training on risk Management organized by EPaRDA



Programs' Profiles

Peace Building

Peace is an important and necessary precondition for sustainable development of a given region. Poverty, resources scarcity, ideological differences, external interest, religious and cultural influences generate tensions and conflict as people scramble for limited resources. Armed conflicts (violent conflict) severely constrain development endeavors by destructing infrastructure, interrupting the development process, and diverting resources from development. However, conflict does not necessarily result violence, if institutions and mechanisms are in place.

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. The number of livestock to be provided for dowry is very high that a young man could not easily meet. This usually leads to cattle rustling and instigates conflict. In addition, the demographic upsurge and the proliferation of small arms exacerbate the situation.

In the early days, the frequency of conflicts was very low, mainly because the resource availability and the carrying capacity of the land was relatively balancing compared to the current situation. The destruction was also minimal as traditional weapons were used. The traditional peace making mechanisms were stronger by then. Hence, the different ethnics were able to resolve conflicts through elders.

Nowadays the situation is entirely different. The actors involved, the causes, the frequency and magnitude of the conflicts have increased and became complex. The use of modern weapon, commercialization of cattle raiding and poverty had aggravated the situation.

On the other hand, the current government policy has created a better situation compared to the previous pastoralist state of affairs. The introduction of federalism to address ethnic issues, the constitutional rights of pastoralists and decentralization of power to grass root levels have contributed a lot to the peace building efforts in these areas.

EPaRDA believes that fruitful results in the pastoralist communities of South Omo require an integrated approach of development and peace build-

ing interventions. In this regard, EPaRDA has been engaged with peace building activities hand in hand with the development interventions since its establishment. EPaRDA conducts its peace building interventions through traditional mechanisms that have been in practice for years and inbuilt within the culture of the ethnic groups.

EPaRDA has been a pioneer in attempting to facilitate and organize 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, Knoso and Borena. The second peacemaking was made among Mursi, Ari, and Bodi, and the third peacemaking was made among Hamer, Dassenech, Nyangatom, Karo Muguji, Mursi and Bodi. Currently, a series of peacemaking processes are underway for these same ethnic groups together with a cross border peace-building endeavour Turkana of Kenya and Dassenech and Nyangatom of Ethiopia.



Peace related discussion among South Omo Zone communities

Programs' Profiles

Peace Building...

In this regard EPaRDA has brought face-to-face various rival neighboring pastoralist ethnic groups to discuss about the age-old rivalry among themselves through the traditional peace settlement and conflict mitigation mechanisms that resulted into unprecedented peaceful coexistence among pastoralists that were looking at each other as historical enemies.

Currently, most of the ethnic groups in the area enjoy relative peace and began utilizing pasture and water in buffer zones and tries to penalize individual criminals jointly after the intervention. Within this time, it is proved that working closely with all actors involved such as the government and community is vital for durable conflict mitigation interventions.

The methodologies used by EPaRDA to implement conflict mitigation and peace building interventions include:

- Traditional and indigenous peace settlement mechanisms through organizing local peace conferences that included relevant government representative, representative of conflicting ethnic groups and other actors.
- Traditional elders' managed and all-inclusive (elders, women and youth) inter-community dialogues.
- All- inclusive (elders, women and youth) inter-community peace week celebrations.
- Conflict mitigation and peace building trainings for community elders, women and youth.
- Working with government at all levels, especially with local government.
- Development for peace
- Establishing peace committees; joint community peace committees, ethnic based peace committees, and woreda peace committees



EPaRDA's Executive Director receiving 'the Millennium Peace Ambassador in South Omo Zone' trophy from the South Omo Zone administration office



A community member on South Omo Zone addressing the community on



Research

The South Omo pastoralist communities are marginalized and live in a remote area. As a result, much is not known about the communities and their surroundings. Providing fruitful development interventions in the area requires sufficient knowledge about the situations on the ground. It is in this context that EPaRDA, as implied in its name, is engaged in action-oriented researches and studies in selected areas of development and peace. Since its establishment, several researches and studies have been conducted and practical steps have been taken based on the findings. The following are the major studies conducted to date.

Ethno veterinary research

A study on indigenous herbal practices of South Omo pastoralists against external parasite was conducted in Tsemay wereda. The objectives of the study include,

- To ascertain the efficiency of plant species, previously used by pastoralists of South Omo, to treat animals infested with helminthes parasites.
- To identify new plant species to be used in the treatment of gastro-intestinal parasites.
- To teach the pastoral communities about the protection and conservation of these medicinal plants in the coming 10 years through the use of extension workers.

Resource inventory and mapping

Resource inventory and mapping survey was conducted. As a result of the survey key rangeland and water areas, shared resources for the livestock and wildlife, dry land reserves and potential conflict areas, migratory pattern of the target pastoral communities, and land use pattern of agro pastoral communities were identified and recommendations were drawn. It is being used for various interventions in the area.

Socio-economic survey

The socio- economic survey on the economic and nutritional return of pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and rain fed/irrigated farming was con-

ducted. The outcome has been used for various interventions in the area.

Camel adaptability trial

Considering that the area does not have much grazing land rather better suited for browsers, EPaRDA took the initiative to introduce camels into the project area. Camel adaptability trial was done for a year with 10 camels brought in the project area. The result was successful and EPaRDA is providing the communities with camels and other organizations are adopting the method.

Dry meat research

This 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 cost from additional transportation and other related costs.

Sorghum transplantation

Since the area is suffering from 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 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 implementation is underway.

Harmonization of modern and traditional laws and gender in peace building – the case of South Omo

This study investigates ways of harmonizing traditional and modern laws for a more fruitful the peace building process in the area. In addition, the study tried to take into consideration the role of women in peace building. The outcome has been used for various peace building interventions in the area.

Research...

Post conflict trauma rehabilitation study

Due to recurrent inter ethnic conflict and the post conflict trauma that usually last long in the communities, EPaRDA conducted post conflict trauma rehabilitation study. The study tried to identify ways and methodologies to overcome the trauma.

Agronomy study in the three weredas of the South Omo Zone

This study focuses mainly on analysing the existing farming practices in Bena Tsemay, Hamer and Kuraz woredas. The study is conducted by taking into account traditional farming practices of the communities. It demonstrates the great contribution of dry land farming to enhance food security in the study areas by introducing improved technologies.

Best practices documentation

The documentation of best practices and important project activities has been in place in EPaRDA with a view of sharing experiences and consolidate efforts. EPaRDA prepared various audiovisual materials and publications of the best practices in various sectors of intervention to use them as a source document in the future endeavor and for other interested stakeholders.

Communication and Information Giving a voice to pastoralist

As much as a bull has two horns, action fails to be relevant without information and to be complete without communication about it. In that sense, EPaRDA sets communication at the center of its work to support its mission, the empowerment of pastoralists through development by integrating their indigenous knowledge, and to advocate pastoralism at community, local, national, and regional levels.

Communication to EPaRDA means communication with stakeholders and for stakeholders it happens in manifold ways. The participation of communities is at the core of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of EPaRDA's program activities. EPaRDA's training and capacity building of partners at the local level in the main program areas is the key to sustainable development.

EPaRDA's contribution to information sharing, as well as publications in form of books, studies, posters and brochures on its experiences and knowledge on pastoralism set milestones, raise awareness and trigger innovation for organizations' policies and informed decision making in politics.

EPaRDA initiates and maintains dialogue between stakeholders by documenting activities and impacts and asking feed-back to support a two-way flow of information. EPaRDA's research on gender, traditional laws, peace-building, and livestock links pastoralists to academics and generates innovative action relevant to needs, and works as a microphone for pastoralists' concerns.

Documentation of EPaRDA's good practices and lessons learnt guarantees continual organizational learning and development to achieve its objectives in an up-to-date and informed way.

EPaRDA strives to constantly develop its work in research, information and communication in order to reach out and to continue contributing indigenous, academic, and organizational knowledge to informed discussion and action on pastoralism and to invite all concerned to participate in it.

EPaRDA believes that excellence in communication will facilitate a focus on pastoralism and put the pastoralists' voice at the place it deserves: to be heard and listened to.



Acronyms

CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
EPaRDA	Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association
IGAD	Inter Governmental Authority for Development
PCDP	Pastoralist Community Development Project
SNNPR	Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region
SPCM	Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFD	The German World Peace Service (Weltfriedensdienst)



EPaRDA's headquarters staff members



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