

The Turmi Morning Herald, Sunday 30 January 2005

Today someone asked: how can we hear everything? The purpose of this newspaper is to help share some stories, events, and other information from the Global Pastoralist Gathering with all the participants, and to encourage more discussion.

Where are the women?

We gathered around to watch the Hamar youth tell us their story through a drama. While many could not understand their words, the youth were still able to share their feelings about the problems they see. After this, people at the gathering began to tell their own stories from their own countries about their problems and their solutions. **Sarah Ossiya**, from Uganda, asked why no women were speaking. She said that the first problem is that very few women are here at this gathering. The second is that the women who have spoken, spoke very very powerfully, which shows that when women are given the opportunity, they have something to say and can say it powerfully. The third point she made was that often as pastoralists we talk only to ourselves, this is a problem. The gathering here in Turmi is an opportunity to speak to people who can help us. What Sarah said made many people think.

Then some women began to talk to each other, and Hamar women told others about how they would like to make things better for their families. We decided to have a **women's gathering**. As the sun was setting, we sat on the sand in the dry river bed, gathered in a circle to listen to each other. The conversation brought women together from Argentina, Australia, Italy, Israel, Mongolia, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA and Hamar. The Hamar women told us of their hopes and problems. **Carina Gerez** from Neuquen, Argentina, said to the Hamar women, with tears in her eyes: I have walked through Turmi and seen how hard the women here work and I want to say congratulations to you for what you do. After the sharing of tears, emotions, stories and ideas, the Hamar women ended the meeting saying: "This is an occasion for us to talk. When you go back, we want you to think of us and remember us."

The women's gathering yesterday was the beginning of an extended conversation that will continue throughout the week.



Choke Bajju, in the Hamar Blessing: "I am one of the groups of Ethiopia. I drink the blood of these animals: this blood is our corn, our grain. I want to listen to all of you. I don't want to talk too much."

Gabriel Palmili, who works with local government on pastoralist issues in Argentina: 'I have twenty years' experience working with the pastoralists, and people in local government understand the problems—people higher in the government don't listen. The role of the government should be to help the pastoralists organise so that they can claim their own rights, so they don't have to wait for the government to give them things.'

News In Brief

Gathering objectives

- + To share ideas with each other
- + To communicate in the future, pastoralist to pastoralist, across the world
- + For the pastoralists, government, and agencies to understand each other better
- + To look critically at government policies on pastoralists and see how we can make them better
- + To look carefully at how we communicate with each other

A blessing from Hamar people

After welcome rains the gathering began formally with a blessing of chants and whispers by the Hamar people. After hearing from Choke and Bereda who welcomed all the different people and cultures to Turmi. We heard powerful words from **Workneh Woita** and **Bona Belenta**: “You have come and in a way you are bringing out all our cleverness and stupidity, how we live and how we are. Now I want to see what I can learn from you in the days ahead.”

“I presume you drink milk, eat meat and drink blood, but there must be something else that you are getting. You say you are herding cattle and goats, but your appearance doesn’t look like it.”

Oil and land in Argentina

The province of Neuquen, Argentina is a beautiful place with semi-arid planes and green highlands. Pastoralists there work with goats, cattle, sheep, and horses. Recently oil has been discovered there and the government has begun to restrict access to land. **Enrique Omar Soto**, president of a pastoralist association, says: ‘My heart tells me we should be living in a paradise, but instead we are living in a hell. The government doesn’t take responsibility, only money.’

Herding turkeys in Spain

In the mountains of Spain, pastoralists continue traditions of herding goats, cows, sheep, pigs, and turkeys, following the seasons. They use 125,000 kilometres of common byways. Many government people grew up in rural areas themselves and are supportive and sympathetic to the needs of pastoralists. **Jesus Garzon**, a pastoralist from Spain, encourages careful land use and ecological equilibrium to ensure a sustainable future.

Summary of Day 1

A pleasant morning rain caused the delay of the schedule, and created an opportunity for participants to gather together under the one shade. Many pictures were taken and people were able to make first contacts and share stories and experiences. The blessing of the Hamar people and the government of Ethiopia welcomed us all to Turmi. We saw a drama by the young Hamar, which sparked an interesting sharing of experiences from Turkana, Iran and Canada. Many discussions continued after the session ended, and an impromptu gathering of women took place on the river bed. Some groups also slaughtered sheep and goats to celebrate the occasion. The day ended with the showing of a Hamar film. We look forward to how these discussions continue and develop over the next few days.

Pastoralist representation in Benin

Several conversations yesterday morning raised the issue of government representation and recognising that governments and pastoralists have different perceptions about the key issues. I was interested to hear of an example in Benin where similar issues have been identified. **El Hadj Aboubacar Tidjani** spoke about UDOPER, which is an organisation facilitating communication among pastoralists, as well as between local, regional and national government groups. He will be presenting on these issues on Monday under tree 1.

Iranian response to the Hamar Youth Drama

Taghi Farvar from Iran described how their government nationalised all grazing land because they didn’t like people moving around. Similar to the Hamar, they experienced their government and experts not understanding or respecting pastoralism. The pastoralists met and together looked for solutions. They realised that their biggest problem was that the customary institutions of the elders had been weakened. They strengthened their traditional institutions, registered as an organisation and gained recognition from the government.

Remember: Tea will be served today at 15.30.