

The Turmi Morning Herald, Thursday 3 February 2005

The first day 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.

Can dreams become realities?

Yesterday morning we all met to discuss and answer two questions:

- 1) What do we predict will be the reality in 10 years?
- 2) What is our vision or dream for the future?

Regional groups discussed these critical questions as part of the process of bringing this global gathering to a close. The first group to present were the South Omo, who spoke of hopes of a livestock market in Turmi centre and the hope that they will have the resources to organise themselves to make change in the next 10 years. From the Afar and Somali groups of Kenya and Ethiopia we heard how if there is no change pastoralism will decline, poverty will increase and people will be forced to settle in villages. They hope that government efforts will include pastoralists in policy and decision making, and that the pastoralists themselves can continue to talk with each other. They also found hope in the fact that the world community and some representatives of governments and policy makers have come together here in Turmi. It is hoped that the policy makers will have listened and will make more effort to help pastoralists, so that pastoralists can in turn make more effort to help themselves.

Next we heard from the Bedouins, who spoke of an optimistic vision for the future within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. They commented that unless there is a coordinated effort from governments, pastoralists and international organisations, this vision will surely fail. But there is hope for a better future if the three groups work together. The West Africans then spoke of the risks ahead if there is no change in the next 10 years, which include further marginalisation of pastoralists, migration from rural to urban areas and the decreased availability of pasture land. They spoke of a vision of a better world for pastoralists supported by a representative international organisation that can recognise that pastoralists can live in harmony with their social and economic environments if adequately supported with basic services such as education and health care.

The Spanish speakers presented next, bringing together the voices of Chile, Peru, Argentina and Spain. They all agreed that if the situation does not change, things will only get worse. Their vision includes a hope that all of society will become aware of the ecological, social and economic importance of pastoralism, which can in turn lead to a great support and recognition of pastoralists at the government level. They also suggested that “a key thing is that pastoralists recover their pride in what they do and what they achieve”.

Finally Iran spoke powerfully about their positive vision for the future. Touching on issues of representation, coordination, universal education, communication and self-mobilisation, they then proposed specific next steps to come from this global gathering. These included a replication of this kind of gathering at the regional level, developing a more concrete plan to achieve these visions, a platform for follow-up communication (such as website hosted by WISP) and finally a commitment from all of us participating here in Turmi to share the results and ideas from this meeting. They echoed the calls from the South Omo peoples and Spanish speakers for a statement that summarises the key issues arising from this gathering.

We are all left thinking not about concrete solutions, but about ideas and possibilities for the future, and some possible strategies to turn these dreams into realities.



Chief Shane Gottfriedson passed on this saying from a respected aboriginal elder in Canada: “Like the thunderbird of old, I shall rise out of the sea, I shall grab the instruments of the white man’s successes, his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my Race into the proudest segment of your society, so shall I shatter these barriers of isolation, so shall the next one hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations.” The late Chief Dan George (Dukes)

Mali
“We have learned about other’s experiences, solutions that work, and the good will of others. We have also learned how to make better links with international organisations of pastoralists, and we are here to come together.”

Perceptions of women's roles and issues

The day began with the group of women who have been meeting during the gathering speaking about their experiences. They invited both men to speak about women as well as women about themselves.

Chief Musa Ngitieng from Turkana began, telling us about the role of women in Turkana society, where their husbands generally expect them to do as they ask and they have little power. They are responsible for a range of activities including water collection, cooking, digging holes for tree-planting, herding small animals, milking and gathering wild fruits when times are hard. A contrasting description was offered by **Mohamed Ag Mohamed Ali**, about the role of women in Mali society. Here, we were told, women are involved in around 70% of decision making processes and also have an important, if hidden, advisory role. They are a major force socially and culturally but a little behind politically. Despite traditional polygamy, the Tuaregs favour having only one wife, who oversees the household management. Hard physical work is done by men.

Then it was the turn of the women to speak. After greeting us all, **Bona Belenta** of the Hamar asked all the women present to stand up. She then requested the men to look at all these women from all around the world who had given birth and nurtured them. Than she challenged the men on how after all this they still oppress and dominate women. She spoke passionately about meeting other women and the solidarity that resulted from the shared understandings of their issues. She also said that access to education is important because it enables access to change, and drew hope from the account of women's status in the Mali society.

What did you value about the gathering?

We asked the people of the gathering what, for them, had been most valuable. What follows are some of their responses.

Juan Luis Merega, Argentina

"This gathering has shown us that most of the problems are common to pastoralists from all over the world. But fortunately it has also shown that it is possible to share and exchange on experiences which have had a positive impact in the field."

Maryam Niamir-Fuller, UNDP WISP

"The most valuable thing has been the ability to cross cultural divides and thereby have much more effective communication on commonly held issues."

Mali

"That people have discovered they are not alone, not the only ones who live in these conditions and they are not alone in wanting to change their circumstances, are part of a larger pastoral world."

West Africans

"Pastoralists are like a sick patient in need of medicine. If nothing is done to bring medicine or help to this person, the pastoralist is going to die."



Patta Scott-Villiers, facilitator, says: "PCI is very happy to hear ideas from people about things they would like to do. PCI's goals is to help communication between pastoralists themselves, and between pastoralists and international NGOs, governments and other organisations."

Basically we heard this message from you; the most important thing is that pastoralists organise their own connections and their own support for the issues that affect you."

Eyob Tekalign, Ethiopian Ministry of Affairs:

"The most valuable thing about the gathering was meeting people and knowing about people not from papers but from the people themselves."

This meeting has made a lasting impression on me and will affect the way I work."

Eyob Tekalign, Ethiopian Ministry of Affairs

Sharaw Munkh-Orgi, Mongolia

“Because of this meeting over the next ten years the pastoralists’ lives will improve. The world will now hear pastoralists’ voices, and when they go home they will be able to affect the local government which will affect the regional government which will affect the national government which will affect international organisations. Herders will push their governments for this, and international organisations can help pastoralists’ voices reach the decision-makers. We appreciate that herders from so many places are here and that they understand that their problems are similar.”

Alippe Akjolbekov, Tajikistan

“With our own eyes we have seen how people in Africa work and live, and this has made a very strong impression. We have also learned that there are international organisations that regulate trade. This is important because the countries around Tajikistan have closed borders, and we have learned that we need to know more about how to open them.”

Dolat Ram Gujja, India

“The first thing is that I have never seen such diversity of people. I learned how people have been doing things differently—especially about how there are different types of policy. What I will take back to India is that community organisations can be so strong that they can influence policy, like the Mali people. In India we are doing this already, but now I realise we can be more powerful. And we will also try the camel milk processing we learned about here.”

Taleb Ahmed Juddu Ould Sidi, Mauritania

“We would be very open to holding an international gathering like this in Mauritania. I think it would be a good idea to repeat this dialogue every year.”

Jesus Garzon, Spain

“We will survive. We will give new hope to the world that we are able to look after our natural resources and preserve biodiversity. The most important thing is to see many pastoralists with a positive mind for the future.”

Jeremy Swift, Wales

“The value for me has been for people around the world to discover they are not alone as pastoralists and for people to discover that there are pastoralists in northern countries. This is exactly the right moment for such a gathering- it’s the first time it could have happened and if we miss this opportunity we’ve lost it.”



Nassar Ahmadi, Iran

“All of us feel that nomadic pastoralists are like fish that have fallen out of the water. It’s like we are struggling to get back to the water, and we are going to die if we don’t get back soon. Things I’ve always dreamed of, I found here. One was to see Ethiopia and its tribes and pastoralists. One was to see a lot of people and tribes from Asia and foreign nations. Not only to meet them, but hear their voices from their hearts, and about their similar lives.”

Farez Abu Abhed, Beodouins of Israel

“Every person came with their perspectives and thoughts, but we think that the gathering was built in a way that allowed new information to flow according to each person’s perspectives. It’s no wonder that there are people who have changed their perspectives and thinking and the way they will deal with issues, such as education for children and the way that women are treated. However, work is not done and there is a need for the international organisations to be in touch with pastoralists continuously.

Two thoughts for all pastoralists: you are strong people and you can change the situation because you are the ones that have survived all throughout the difficult years. No one can ignore you anymore. You must know that there are a lot of organisations and people that are working for you, but everything begins with you standing up for yourselves.”

Melissa Italy

“Not being a pastoralist myself, I found the most powerful aspect was the sharing of the same place, food, and facilities by many different people across borders and across nations. “



From the team of the Turmi Herald

This may be the final edition of the Turmi Morning Herald, but not the final word. We have been honoured to be included in this gathering. While we are not pastoralists ourselves, we have heard your stories, and tried to understand your troubles and hopes. We have done our best to represent the gathering in this newspaper, although we have only been able to reflect a very small amount of this rich exchange. We've appreciated people's comments, feedback, and thoughts on how to make it better.

One of the most important things about this meeting for us has been learning about how pastoralists' own knowledge is the most essential element for developing solutions, even though it is often overlooked and undervalued. We believe in the ability of pastoralists to use their own knowledge about their world to share with each other and others in order to change the things that affect their lives. Also we have appreciated the opportunity to know more about the creative ways that pastoralists are using communication to learn from each other and change their circumstances.

Further documentation

The representatives of each group attending this meeting will soon be sent a document either by email or as a CD-ROM, which will contain a small report and some photos. A video of the Gathering will also follow, just as soon as our film-maker friends can process the amazing amount of footage that they have shot. Thank you from all of us for all of your inputs.

**This newsletter was prepared by
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