

The Turmi Morning Herald, Tuesday 1 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.

Over the past three days, we have listened under all the trees, and have noticed some parallels between different groups. Today we will highlight two areas that seem important.

Whose Rights?

Rights have been mentioned both as something which can help pastoralists, and something which has made situations for pastoralists more complicated. But many people have talked about how pastoralists understand and use rights.

Angelica Tomasa Reales, from Argentina, spoke of how the UN Declaration of Human Rights includes rights for all. But in her experience, she has adapted internationally agreed human rights to her needs. For example, she says that pastoralists' rights should also include the right to the pastoralist way of life (such as traditional food, and livelihood).

We heard how in Mali, land rights have made some things more complicated. As part of decentralisation, different parts of Mali have developed different types of land rights, and these districts do not respect the types of land rights from other districts. This makes migration even more difficult for pastoralists in Mali, although many pastoralists believe that there should be a right to land.

By comparison, in conversation under tree 1 yesterday, one of the Gabra speakers said that the real issue is about how pastoralists access their rights—because the rights are not new, they are rights the pastoralists already have.

Traditional basis for rights, like ancestral and hereditary land rights do not necessarily match the rights that governments will protect in reality. But pastoralists have been organising to get governments to be more accountable.



Who's listening?

The key issues of influencing and holding governments accountable have been addressed in the presentations from many different countries. We heard yesterday from the people of Kazakhstan about a system of associations that is not working well for pastoralists because the associations represent both the pastoralists and the farmers. As Yesmyrzayev Sadyk said, "if you take the interests of both pastoralists and farmers, of course it's the pastoralists who lose."

We have also heard some positive examples from other regions, at the local, regional and national levels. In India for example, pastoralists organised themselves and were able to collectively negotiate with the local government and gain partial access to forest pastures which the government had taken away. Although the pastoralists at one time had unlimited access to these forest areas, this example shows how when communities, organising themselves and working together, have the potential to change harmful policies introduced at the local level. Likewise for the Bedouins in Israel, although not yet recognised by the national government, they have been able to organise 15 associations to represent 45 local villages. As Fares Abu Abid said, "we realised that nobody will solve our problems unless we solve them ourselves. We are now a strong community, we have our organisations, and we have policies to confront Israeli policies." Enrique Omar Soto offered a similar message from Argentina, when he said that "our strongest bargaining tool with the government is that we don't depend on anyone, we organise things for ourselves."

From Spain, Benin and Canada, we can gain even more hope from seeing how these associations can extend influence all the way to the national government. As Chief Shane Gottfriedson said, it is a difficult process that requires a lot of trust, time and unity.

News In Brief

Tree 1, morning session

Yesterday people from South America (Argentina, Chile and Peru) and from Africa (Maasai and Barabaig people of Tanzania) spoke about their experiences. There were many issues in common, but some interesting contrasts emerged between the African and South American contexts. In both there was a sense that there is a traditional basis for rights, such as hereditary or ancestral rights to land, that is being ignored by governments and private companies. However, the South Americans spoke of several examples of how they have organised as pastoralists, which has led to greater economic strength and political influence. While there are still problems to be addressed, the South American's offered some hopeful examples of what can be achieved. The Hamar people expressed their desire to travel to see how the South Americans work in practice, and the Argentineans extended a formal invitation to the Hamar people to visit.

Tree 2, morning session

At tree 2 yesterday we saw presentations from Kenyan and Ethiopian Somali, the Bedouins and the people from Kazakhstan. Some common issues were water, access to pasture and government representation. We also heard of specific issues about marginalisation during the privatisation of pastoralism in Kazakhstan, that shifted from collective land use and government ownership of livestock under the Soviet control to private ownership of animals in the current situation. We also heard about specific problems of seasonal pastoralism in Kazakhstan, which has a cold winter and a hot summer. Another interesting dialogue developed between the Ethiopian Somali and the Iranians, who spoke of mobile schools as a possibility for increasing the access of pastoralist children to education. This is working well in Iran, and is currently included in the policy of the Ethiopian government but yet to be implemented. The Bedouins used a simple proverb to motivate us all, saying that if you are sleeping you just continue to snore—you have to help yourself.

Tree 3, morning session

Peoples from Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Spain and Wales told us about their lives. A recurring issue related to the tracks, byways and common land used by pastoralists: with other competing land use pressures, many of these traditional routes are now inaccessible, having been taken for building, tourism, roads or by sedentary people. Even where traditional usage is protected by law, implementation of law can take a long time or not happen at all. Mauritania and Spain however shared encouraging stories of genuine support by government and others, even though the relative numbers of pastoralists in each country are very different. There were also calls for provision of water, veterinary services, well-marked paths, effective government policies, and agreements to make crossing border to reach both grazing and markets more easy.



Afternoon session

In the afternoon, people from each region came together to discuss what they had learned over the past three days, and what they would like to know more about. The groups identified a wide range of issues including: production, technology and how it can be shared, the way policies and laws affect pastoralists, how service provision from education to animal health can be improved, the role of marketing and political associations, the impact of international programmes, and conflict. In total, more than 14 groups from Argentina to Tanzania were called upon to share more information about these different areas. As a representative from Mali said, “we have learned that there are many different kinds of communication between pastoralists, there are different levels and that pastoralists are not all on the same level. But despite this, there is still a common basis to unite us together.” Today, these groups will be invited to share more detail about these issues. There was also a parallel meeting of women to discuss their issues.

Representatives from the Ethiopian and regional government, UNDP, DFID and USAID arrived to join the gathering today. We welcome them.

This newsletter was prepared by Jane, Joanna and Lucy from IDS, UK.