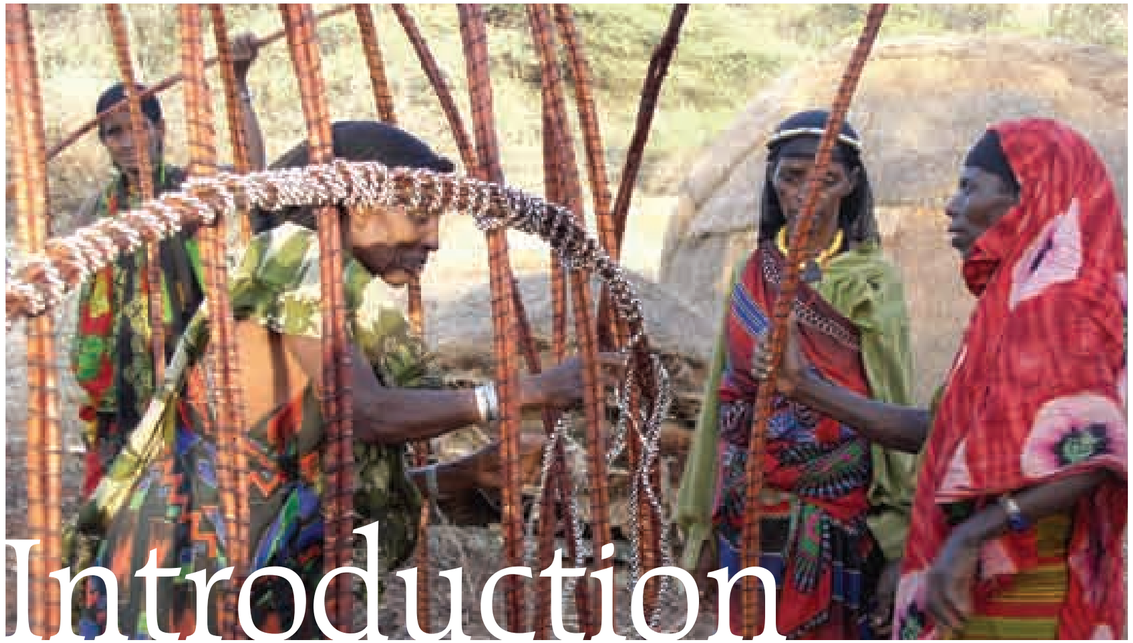
Pastoralists at one of the gathering's plenary sessions. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Pastoralists want peace. They say that too many of the Horn of Africa's 20 million pastoralists live under the threat of violence. Conflict has riven communities and diverted resources that are all too scarce. Pastoralists want to increase the quality and quantity of their trade. They are calling for better policies that facilitate the movement and sale of livestock and other commodities. They believe that trade allows them to regulate the size and composition of their herds and generate income. Pastoralists want to be better organised. Different elements of their society are ready to articulate new ideas for economic and social change, and take action. Pastoralist customary leaders are calling for recognition of their contribution in regulating resources and community relations, and their desire to work in concert with governments.

These are just some of the matters that occupied the 420 delegates - 350 of them pastoralists - at the Horn of Africa Regional Pastoralist Gathering. The meeting was held at a tented camp at Qarsaa Dembii, near Yabello, Oromia, Ethiopia, in July 2006. It was hosted by the elders of the Borana, Guji and Gabra pastoralists of southern Ethiopia. People stayed in locally-built pastoralist houses and tents, drank camel and cows milk from the camp's herd and ate meat at nightly barbecues. The meetings were held whilst sitting on grass mats under the shade of flowering acacia trees in the uniquely beautiful Borana rangelands.

During the months of May and June 2006, word went out to pastoralist community leaders across the Horn of Africa about a gathering of members of the pastoralist economy. The message was of a meeting whose agenda would be defined by pastoralists. The delegates should be strongly representative of communities and should be active in matters of trade, governance or production. They should be men and women, young and old. The invitations to the eight day meeting went out primarily to people from pastoralist areas of Ethiopia and Kenya, but also from Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti and Sudan in the Greater Horn. Pastoralist leaders from other countries such as Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria,



Introduction

Gabra women build one of the Gabra huts that were used to house delegates at the event. photo ©*Jack Howard*

Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali were invited to input fresh ideas, as well as some pastoralist innovators from India, Israel and Peru. Others - from government, international and national agencies and the press - were invited to join the debate in its final two days.

The questions they asked and answered were those of primary importance to the pastoralist economy. Could they surmount the many obstacles they face when trading? Could crossbreeding and other techniques aid production? And could traditional institutions and government work together to govern?

In the articles that follow, some of the main issues are described by our team of reporters. The Mursi from Ethiopia tell us how they used the gathering to discuss community involvement in tourism and national parks. Traders from the Horn of Africa describe their difficulties with trade barriers such as borders, taxes and veterinary rules. Traders from West Africa explain how they have dealt with similar issues and how they have gained access to new markets. Cheese producers and milk bottlers from Mali, Mauritania and Kenya share the secrets of their potentially lucrative trade.

There are analyses of conflict and commitments to peace. After 14 years of fighting and thousands of deaths, the Lou and Jikany Nuer from Sudan and Ethiopia began a peace process around a campfire at the event. Elders from many other areas analysed conflicts and discussed the ways and means by which they deal with disputes. All agreed that their conflicts needed to end. These discussions were complemented by intense deliberations on governance, which looked at the vital role of customary institutions in working alongside government to deal with administration of land and people. They also debated when it is the role of these organisations to challenge the interests of big business or the schemes of governments. Ethiopia's Kereyu tell of their plans to challenge the further expansion of sugar plantations that took nearly half of their traditional lands 30 years ago. And then there's the story of the Indian camel herders who took their government to court over rights to sell milk. And won.

The meeting was also about building alliances. All the countries that make up the five points of the Somali star were represented at the gathering. "We are not here to discuss politics but the common issues we all face as Somalis and pastoralists", said one. The gathering was also blessed by the presence of many remarkable women who tell us how, together, they gain strength. There are stories of how they developed co-ops and community organisations and work together for education.

The Horn of Africa Regional Pastoralist Gathering at Qarsaa Dembii was a rare opportunity for pastoralists to speak to one another, rather than be spoken to. An opportunity to learn from one another and make plans for co-operation, rather than be isolated through poverty and divisive politics. They speak here to remind us of what was said about Peace, Trade and Unity and to call on fellow pastoralists and governments to pay attention.

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Gathering chairman, Nura Dida, is interviewed by Ethiopian Television. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Oliserali back in the more familiar surroundings of South Omo after the gathering. photo ©*Peter Moszynski*

A Home or Game Park?

We followed some participants from the gathering back to South Omo, Ethiopia and found out how much they had been galvanised by their encounter with other pastoralists

For some of the groups represented at Qarsaa Dembii, it was a rare opportunity to meet people from the world outside their immediate circle on equal terms, and to realise just how much they had in common with others. This was especially the case for the Mursi and participants from other nationalities of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, Ethiopia – including the Hamar, the hosts of last year's Global Pastoralist Gathering. In a series of meetings convened to discuss tourism they made good use of this year's event to advocate for more community involvement in the management of national parks and tourism.

Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region is home for a myriad of small nationalities, each with their own distinctive language and culture. They include the Surma, Karo, Nyangtom and Hamar. It is also home to some of the country's few remaining large herds of wildlife and two of Ethiopia's most important national parks.

Last year's handover of the management of Omo National Park to a Dutch organisation, the African Parks Foundation, by the government of Ethiopia has created concern among the Mursi and other affected groups. They feel they have not been treated as full partners in the process of negotiating agreements for the park and its future management. They feel their access to their traditional land is in jeopardy.

Neither Milisha nor Oliserali Olibui went to school but they are the only Mursi who can speak English. Oliserali explains that his father, a spiritual leader of 8,000 Mursi, one of the smallest and most fiercely traditional of the South Omo tribes, realised that one of his people should make contact with the outside world, and managed to send him abroad to study English. Five years ago Oliserali returned from a 12-month stay in Australia a changed man "determined to see my people didn't suffer the same appalling fate as the aborigines".

He taught his brother enough English to help at the local mission station, run by Serving in Mission, where Milisha now works as a translator and pharmacist at the Makki health post. Last year he was one of the first to enrol when the missionaries opened the first Mursi primary school.

Oliserali says: "I would like to learn how to read and write, so we are no longer tricked into signing our rights away in documents we don't understand".

He not only attended the gathering, along with Milisha and representatives of the Mursi elders and women, but he filmed much of the proceedings and then edited the footage to show to his local community.

"I had never used a video camera before", he explains, "but I thought it was important to show our people what other people are saying

about our common issues. We almost never have the opportunity to have our voices heard in the outside world and we are proud that we have been able to meet with so many different groups in Qarsaa Dembii. Now our people can know that the Mursi have rights, just like other pastoralists all over the world have rights".

On the soundtrack of Oliserali's film of the two-day journey back to Makki, the Mursi 'capital', there are repeated bursts of Bob Marley and new found fans, enthusiastically singing: "Get up Stand Up, Stand Up for your rights, Get up Stand Up, Don't give up the fight".

Milisha maintains: "The government gives us nothing so we expect them to leave us alone. If they want to make decisions about our land there has to be community participation in the process, not just broken promises".

Milisha (right) at a meeting he and Oliserali held to tell their community what they had learned at Qarsaa Dembii. photo ©*Peter Moszynski*

At Qarsaa Dembii, Milisha and Oliserali made a perfect team - one in front of the camera, one behind - recording all that was going on around them and taking every opportunity to speak to others and make their views known.

Like most of the other nationalities in this peripheral part of Ethiopia, the Mursi see few services from central government and they resent the government's claims that the land belongs to the state.

In almost every way - other than the ubiquitous AK47 assault rifles, which each cost four cows - the Mursi have been virtually untouched by the modern world. The occasional foray to the town of Jinka, often with unfortunate consequences, is as far as it goes. Milisha explains: "The Mursi still don't really understand money and many people can't tell the difference between a one birr note and a one hundred. So when we go to town we often get robbed, just like Faranji [foreigners]".

However, he insists: "We don't need money or possessions, the only thing that we care about is land. With good land you can raise cattle, grow sorghum and gather leaves. We get everything we need from the land".

Yet the exotic customs and lifestyles of the people - Mursi women are lip-plate wearers - has led to gathering interest from off-road cultural and eco-tourism companies; the outside world is increasingly beginning to impact on traditional life in South Omo. Local communities complain that they have seen few benefits from tourist revenue - other than the informal two birr (25c) fee people routinely demand for photographs. Their biggest concern is that they may now be excluded from using some of their ancestral land - within the boundaries of Omo National Park, along the banks of the River Omo.

Oliserali says this would not be right: "At the gathering we met people from all over the world and we found out that in other countries no one would dream of trying to exclude the local communities from the management of the national parks. It is normal that we should be consulted, and now we are appealing to international organisations for support so that our voices can be heard and our right to our land be respected".

Milisha and Oliserali now hope to find outside support for a film they are making about the national parks and their impact on Mursi life.

Getting Tourism Right

Community tourism is no sure-fire recipe for rain, prosperity and peace. In Kenya, where 'eco-lodges' and community tourism are already buzz-words, there have been many disasters – communities have fought over proceeds, failed to plan for the future and have wasted money on ill-planned purchases, for example, buying cars without planning for their maintenance. But when communities get it right, the dividends can be significant.

Saita Kitonga, 26, is a member of the Il Ngwesi group ranch - one of Kenya's first community tourism projects. He is also affiliated to the Ngare Ndare Forest Reserve and works at a small privately owned lodge on Mount Kenya. He is a veteran of the private, public and community sectors.

Talia Vela de Eiden and Milisha and Oliserali Olibui share ideas at a meeting on community tourism. photo ©*Elena Rue*

His tips for community tourism are:

- "You must let the whole community see how a project is being set up. The [wider] community must trust the people setting it up and they must prove to everybody that they are going to be transparent from the start"
- When he worked at Il Ngwesi, he said one of the key things they got right was training. Kenya's national tourism school – Utalli College - sent teachers to Il Ngwesi and to nearby Sarara in the Mathews Range; this cut down on cost and allowed the trainers to see how the lodges worked in practice
- Profits should be spent on projects that benefit the whole community not just on dividends for the direct shareholders. Failing to do so causes conflict.

Researcher into community tourism, Peruvian lawyer Talia Vela de Eiden, believes Kenya's Koija Starbeds is one of the best examples of community tourism that she has seen in Kenya. The lodge maintains high standards and has spent its profits on bursaries, clinics and classroom building projects. Koija is in partnership with Loisaba, a local lodge and ranch, whose director Tom Silvester spoke to us. "Following the initial investment in Koija made by USAID through the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), all further funding has come from earnings" he says. He explains how Koija operates and offers the following advice:

- All income goes into the Koija Community Trust, the trustees of which are: two from the Koija community, two from Loisaba and one from AWF. Quarterly meetings are held and disbursements made after 25% of earnings are retained and 20% is paid to the group ranch. The balance is put towards projects supported by the whole group ranch membership - like the Koija bursary fund and the clinic. This system seems to prevent only the chosen few benefiting
- The community must either own, or have clear tenure agreements on the land
- The community should find a good commercial partner who can take the lead on marketing to an international consumer base and with whom they can share other economies of scale
- Make sure there is a well structured committee to oversee benefit distribution
- Do on the job training – preferably in conjunction with the commercial partner – to save money on training courses and to ensure training is appropriate to specific needs
- Have a good partnership and management agreement between the community organisation and the commercial partner so all marketing and management - including financial controls - can be taken care of.

Omar Jibril Hussein pictured just before a meeting on trade. photo ©*Elena Rue*

Barriers to Trade

Across the Horn, a thriving livestock export business is being held up by unnecessary obstacles

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Many traders in the Horn are forced to indulge in illegal trade because their traditional trade has been criminalised.

Livestock trading is one of the most important ways of sustaining pastoralists' livelihoods. Yet pastoralist traders often face great difficulties when trying to access markets. During the many meetings and discussions that took place in Qarsaa Dembii, access to export markets, conflict, poor infrastructure and disease control emerged as the main barriers to trade.

In East Africa two problems dominate: the restrictions on cross-border movement between Ethiopia and its neighbours, and the difficulties of maintaining standards of animal health required for exports.

The livestock trade from Ethiopia's Somali Region is estimated to be between three and six times larger than the Ethiopian customs authorities' official figures for the whole country. Yet almost all trade across these borders is unlawful and the government regularly seizes money and goods.

Hussein Aw Ali Gulied is a former trader from Jigjiga in Ethiopia's Somali Region and chairs a local NGO. "We are one and the same people, but for the borders. Our problem is common - Somaliland, Puntland, Ethiopia. We are all friends. By allowing trade through, the government of Ethiopia would get income and the people's lives would be easier. Until the political problem is solved we can't solve the pastoralists' situation. There should be an open market in all the areas of Africa".

One woman, also from Ethiopia's Somali Region, told *Peace, Trade and Unity that* she is a livestock trader who has to cross the border illegally to reach her nearest market in Somaliland. She uses ancient trade routes but current laws force her to "act like a thief".

"We try like it's a game, working out which route is safe" she says. "One time Somaliland, one time Djibouti or Puntland - wherever we think we can be safe. If we succeed in trekking

The Tuaregs explained that getting access to markets in West Africa is much easier.
photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

animals to the market we might make a small sale. But when I come back we are often looted by Ethiopian finance people".

In East Africa, there is no effective regulatory system. Disease - always a concern for livestock traders and importing countries - is a particular problem when animals are freely moving between countries with different levels of veterinary care and no standardised vaccinations.

An issue which causes great consternation and frustration is Saudi Arabia's ban on live imports from the Horn. The Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, is a key market for livestock producers and traders, one that has been severely disrupted in the past 10 years. The ban came about because of a 1997 outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia but people in all three countries say that there is no longer a problem so the ban should be lifted.

Fu'ad Adan Adde, Minister for Pastoralist Development, Environment and Wildlife for Somaliland spoke passionately in Qarsaa Dembii about how unjust he believes the ban to be. He and his regional counterparts took the rare opportunity afforded by the gathering to work on a solution.

> Livestock trading is one of the most important ways of sustaining pastoralists' livelihoods. Yet pastoralist traders often find it hard to access markets.

"We used to export several million animals, but today the Arabs think our herds are diseased. We had a meeting here – Djibouti, Somalia [Puntland], Somaliland and Kenya - to discuss frontiers. When we go back to our countries we are planning to hold a meeting with these four countries and invite all international bodies and look for ways to lift the ban - which is really political".

The situation is not clear-cut. Several animal diseases, which are also dangerous to humans, are endemic in the Greater Horn of Africa and are not going to be eliminated easily. On the other hand, Sudan, where the same diseases exist, has permission to export live animals to Saudi Arabia. Is it political clout that secured the agreements? Or is it that Sudan has a better developed system of phyto-sanitary regulation? The answer is probably a bit of both.

Despite the ban, export from the Horn to the Middle East still takes place as contraband through Yemen. Without strong government to enforce veterinary rules, traders from Puntland and Somaliland dominate the supply line.

Omar Jibril Hussein, a livestock trader from Wajir in Kenya, resents this: "Somaliland and Puntland export their livestock to outside, to the Middle East, because they have no government. But Kenyans don't get the same advantages", he says.

Omar is not alone in his views. Could it be that an illegal market is sometimes an advantage?

Puntlander, Sultan Garad Suleiman Burale Adan is a clan leader and a successful livestock trader who benefits from the trade with Yemen. One evening, sitting on a rug on the floor of his tent, the Sultan took time to describe this controversial export trade.

"Businessmen in Somaliland and Puntland have arrangements with Arab countries", he says. "They make demands and they send ships. Traders then order from the hinterland. Traders on the coast will buy more from the hinterland and send to the traders in the Arab countries who they have links with and who will send money back to these traders on the coast".

Cattle being taken to a market near Qarsaa Dembii. Many would like to see them also sent further afield.
photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Successful exporters like Garad Suleiman Burale suggest that the envy felt by other traders in the region is often misplaced.

"We don't have a system of going through banks, which depresses prices. It's just an agreement between traders. Sometimes you might lose your market and sometimes you make money".

Traders in Puntland and Somaliland take big risks. The Yemen market is unregulated, there is oversupply and prices are suppressed. If prices go down the effect can cause a collapse that affects everyone in the supply chain; there are no letters of credit to guarantee prices. Although governments bring bureaucracy and taxes, he says, "they also bring stability".

The illegal market may have its advantages for some, but in the long term, without regional and international regulations, is it sustainable? The present scenario is both risky and short term. No one knows what will happen to the Yemen market when the Saudis return to a legal market for live imports from the Horn.

Kassaye Hadgu, from UN OCHA in Ethiopia suggests that while the sustainable solution is eradicating endemic diseases from the exporting countries, an interim strategy would be to develop disease-free export zones.

Abdulkadir Mohammed works for the Kenyan Livestock Marketing Council and is convinced that open trading is the key to sustainability. The focus of the Marketing Council is infrastructure and procedures and Abdulkadir is confident that in the long term these will be an advantage in a legal market.

"Somalia has a short-term advantage because it doesn't have government restrictions but in the long-term I don't see it as an advantage, In Kenya we have veterinary regulations we must follow but I'm pleased about that. For any reasonable country to take your livestock, there must be veterinary procedures. We cannot compete with Somalia today, but in five or six years we'll do well".

A hushed tone often settled over the meetings when the West Africans spoke of their experiences. Mohamed Ewangaye, from Niger, explained in detail the workings of the successful West African system. He demonstrated a workable system which, with time could be replicated by the eastern side of the continent.

In West Africa cross border trade is not only legal but it is actively supported by governments. At the end of the colonial era in the 1960s, 16 countries set up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with a legally liberalised economy and integrated laws. There is a long standing history of exchange between these countries and unlike in the Horn of Africa where historic trade routes now face barriers, in West Africa they are open and encouraged.

There are standard vaccinations across the countries and traders pay a minimum tax in their country of origin to have documents that certify the origin of their animals. Amongst the 16 countries, animals and traders can cross borders with few restrictions. There is also monetary union between eight of the countries. They have the same institutions and systems in central Africa, so it is also straightforward for animals to be taken to Chad and Cameroon.

Finding a West African trader at the gathering that disliked the system was impossible. The issues that trouble the East African traders warranted hardly a mention from West Africans.

Almamy Tamboura is the mayor of Diondiouri in Mopti Region, Mali and a livestock trader: "It is free from tax if you export" he said. "It's very important, the government did a lot to help, it is important to trade without any heavy administration and control. It's very light, it's free".

Despite its many advantages the West African livestock trade still has limitations. Back at his tent, Mohamed Ewangaye painted a more complex picture. With the Tuareg musicians he was sharing a tent with, practising for their evening performance in the background, Mohamed began to talk of the conflict in Niger, and the efforts of those who had put down the gun to build a strong civil society. Conflicts have hampered trade in West Africa just as they have in East Africa.

For countries like Niger and Mali, which have cattle but only a small internal market, regional export is the only real option. And while Nigeria, with its population of 130 million, is the main cattle market in the region, traders there need to expand their export markets.

Mohamed said: "We have potential markets in Africa and Europe. The people want our meat, the demand is there, but our capacity to reach markets isn't there".

Ahmad Usman Belo, Chair of the Fulani Development Association of Nigeria, echoed Mohamed's frustration.

"Our problem is only export. We have enough livestock for export, but our problem is access to international markets. There is no export cattle market from West Africa. We want to export to other markets like Europe or the US. We are looking into this but it is not possible".

It is clear that markets need to open up both globally and inside Africa, but tackling disease on the one hand and political preferences on the other will remain a core difficulty. The message across the continent, from those trading in both legal and illegal systems, is the same: pastoralists want to trade. Whether it's taking their animals over a border at the dead of night, setting up holding grounds and export zones, selling to cities in their own region, or working to break into highly protected export markets. They want to access new markets and, with or without the support of their governments, will try to find a way.

Friend or foe?

Tracking down a middleman at a pastoralist gathering is not an easy business. Casually asking doesn't work very well because it evokes a deep intake of breath and a look as if to say, "Don't be ridiculous, you won't find that sort around here".

The impression given is that middlemen are out to make a profit at everyone else's expense. One accuser, Betty Sereya Maitoyo from Kenya, echoed the feelings of many: "Middlemen make sure producers cannot sell directly, because they set the prices in the market".

So what did one of the middlemen in our midst have to say for himself? Jarso Halkano, from Isiolo district in Kenya, has been in the business for 15 years.

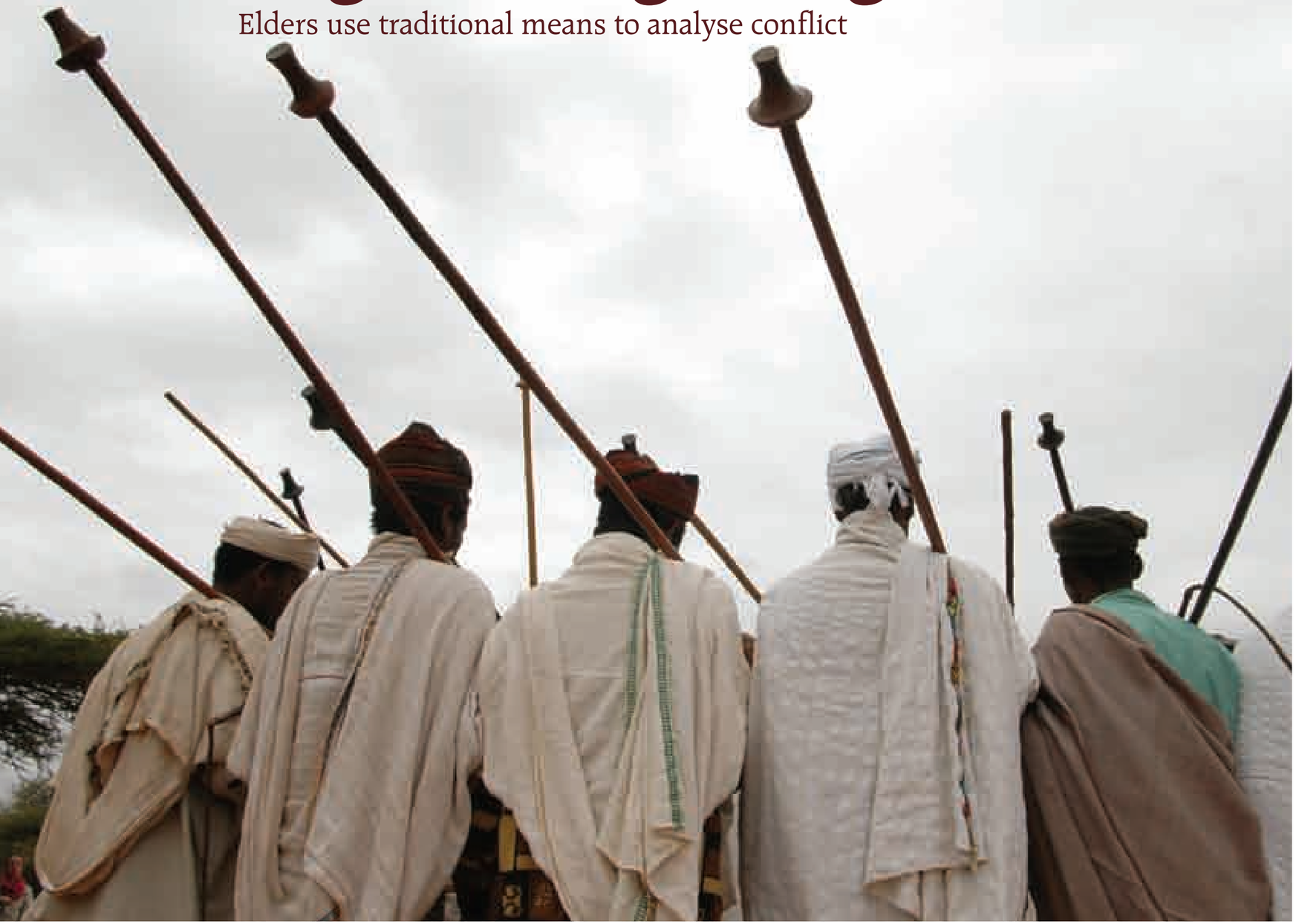
"You need middlemen", he says. "I am getting the pastoralists a better price than they would themselves. And traders from outside come to a district and don't know who's who. For example if you bought livestock from a pastoralist who had stolen it you would be arrested or jailed for handling stolen goods. Brokers are liked by traders because they know the prices and they know how the market has behaved over a number of days".

Many pastoralists insist that middlemen have too much power over producers. Some suggest that producers should work together to gain more expertise in the market but knowledge is not the only service that middlemen provide. Jarso's experience suggests that his can be a risky business too: "I take cattle, often by foot, 250 km to the market in Isiolo to sell. The journey is an expensive one with the risk of cattle raiding along the way. When business is good I can make a profit but there is plenty of risk involved".

photo ©*Ruth Turner*

Facing the Fighting

Elders use traditional means to analyse conflict



Borana elders at the opening ceremony. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Each night, as darkness fell, Oromo elders made their way to a meeting tree in the bush beyond the camp. They needed to talk. And they needed to do it in private. The elders went to their distant tree to discuss the reasons why they were fighting. But these discussions were different to the usual meetings on conflict. They looked deeper. The elders analysed the major instigating and exacerbating factors behind the fighting. And they did not seek to blame each other. Discussions between them were cordial and constructive throughout the eight days and many meetings took place. They not only met at night but over lunch, around their tents, and on many impromptu occasions. At the end of the gathering they took responsibility for finding a new way to deal with conflict and committed to working towards peace. A bull was then roasted and shared by all.

One of the serious issues they discussed was the recent violence in Oromiya Region (the region where the gathering was held), which began on the 29th of May 2006. It's not the first time the Guji, the Borana and the Gabra have fought. In fact, the Guji and the Gabra clashed only last year. This time, though, the main protagonists have been the Borana and the Guji. The Gabra this year have sided with the Borana. So much of what is happening is unfortunately familiar. But most people seem to agree on one thing. This recent conflict has been different.

It has been distinctive for its rumoured brutality. Conflicting stories abound, accounts collide, and most people seem unaware of what is really happening. This is most clearly evident in the stories that emerged of between 100 and 150 deaths - stories that remain unconfirmed. A recent UN mission to the area managed to verify just 14 deaths. And perhaps owing to the fact that the stories have been difficult to confirm, their effect is just as dangerous as those of the real incidents which have marked this fighting.

"People are afraid", said a Guji elder. "And this fear and fighting has made people feel very bitter on both sides. That bitterness was then demonstrated by a new style of fighting".

The gathering provided elders from the three pastoralist groups involved with a chance to address the rumours, to understand why there was conflict, and to try and find a lasting peace.

Elders agreed that a peace conference held from the 22nd - 24th of June, and organised by the Oromia Regional Government, had not succeeded in stopping the fighting.

"People have been dying most days since that agreement", said one Borana elder. "Someone was even killed the very next day".

A number of incidents are thought to have prompted the fighting. Four years ago Borana zone was split in two, creating a separate Guji zone. Each zone is partly inhabited by the ethnic group bearing its name but Borana, Gabra, Guji and other ethnic groups inhabit both areas. While the groups have cooperated thus far, the Guji are said to have requested the drawing of another Guji zone, a request that has created much anger and fear within the Borana and Gabra communities.

Cattle rustling provides another potential spark. It is claimed that a group of Gabra raided some Guji cattle in early May. The Guji assumed that the theft was carried out by Borana and requested the return of the animals. When there was no response, a Borana man was killed. This murder was the starting point for an outbreak of violence that saw Guji fleeing north and Borana and Gabra fleeing south.

But perhaps the most intriguing and mysterious story offered as a reason for the fighting was the movement of nearly 90 Guji families to grazing lands reserved by the Borana. In the past, traditional rules of access to this land had been observed. But this time it is claimed the Guji simply entered the area without informing anyone. They claim that they did this because they had been told to move to these lands by the regional government and that this permission had been confirmed by their leader, the Aba Gada. Many believe this blurring of the line between

traditional and state governance to be the central flaring point for the violence.

Some elders present at the gathering spoke of the many factors that could instigate fighting in their communities. One mentioned ill-considered government decisions on boundaries. Another spoke of possible corruption in their own communities. And a third blamed fear and rumour for causing the situation to spiral out of control. While there was some disagreement on which reason had the most impact, all agreed that the three factors combined and influenced one another. And that all factors had to be examined, both individually and in parallel.

A group of Guji men had no doubt about what caused the conflict.

"The problem is not about pasture and water", said one. "The Guji had requested that the government set up a zonal administration headquarters in Hagaremariam. We just wanted an administrative HQ to be near us. Honestly, positively, no hidden agenda. But the government sent a message to the Borana that we wanted to take over their pastureland. ...This conflict was started when the government sent the wrong message to the Borana".

The Guji elders also claim that, after hearing the message that was sent to the Borana, they complained and asked the government to correct it. Nothing was done, they say.

Another version of the problem was outlined by a Borana delegate: "The problem is from the government, because it has started creating administrative boundaries that are not there. These boundaries are the source of the fighting. Some want to claim their land and others want to claim new areas, and the government is not intervening on these issues. Eventually people fight".

Many different people believed that elements within the government had instigated the conflict. Others said that government had failed to recognise its own contribution to the confusion and violence.

"I strongly believe that this conflict, if you really want to know the truth, was instigated by the government", said a Guji elder.

His opinion was echoed by some senior Borana. "We believe the government is responsible for this insecurity. Yes, I think they instigated the fighting".

"We don't know why we're fighting", said a Gabra delegate. "In my opinion, if there were not external forces inside, it would not have happened".

For many it was difficult to imagine that external forces could have such a strong influence and they suggested that one should look for explanations inside the communities and their customary institutions. Rumours that

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

"Some want to claim their land and others want to claim new areas, and the government is not intervening on these issues. Eventually people fight".

senior elders in some groups were working to instigate conflict were strong, as were stories that they were doing it for financial gain. This, too, was the subject of much discussion in the bush around the camp.

"There are a few people who really want to benefit from conflict", said an elder. "The people who are making us fight are stronger than us".

Despite the fear that these unnamed people would undermine the process, elders from Guji, Borana and Gabra said they had embarked on a process to bring an end to the fighting between them. Noting that the meetings at the gathering had been marked by a determination to understand the root causes of the recent fighting, one Guji elder said: "This small meeting we have had here is more effective than the meeting attended by the President [of the region], we have eaten a peace bull with them. In our culture we cannot accept to eat the peace bull if we have not accepted peace".

They declared that if an attack were to happen the perpetrator must be captured and identified. They said that any new attacks would be dealt with as individual incidents rather than tribal attacks which can provoke reprisals and escalation. They committed to sending out the message of peace through a series of local meetings in Ethiopia and Kenya.

All the groups acknowledged that it would not be easy to bring their message to their people. The fear that those who do not want peace would also try to use their influence was strong. But most seemed determined. On the last afternoon of the gathering, sitting on mats in front of the tent of Fidele Sarassorro, the United Nations Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, pastoralist leaders shared their determination for peace with heads of Ethiopia's UN agencies and with Ambassador Tiruneh Zena from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They admitted that they would not be able to sort out conflict alone and requested the assistance of the UN in taking up the issue with government. They acknowledged that if violent conflict is going to be eradicated and advances made in trade, production and education, then pastoralists need to work with government. They need to find ways for pastoralist traditional administrations to play a greater part and for government to operate with more sensitivity and transparency.

The bull was roasted later that night. This act was significant, and the symbolism of the bull pointed to a commitment to work for the peace everyone had agreed was necessary. Members of the Borana, Gabra and Guji were all present, as were elders from the Jikany and Lou Nuer. They found much in common. Not least the fact that they had all discovered similar reasons underlying their conflicts. Also that they shared a new commitment to work for calm at home.

Elders sit at the campfire where they roasted a bull in the name of peace. This traditional meeting cemented their commitment to work for calm in their communities.
photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

"There are a few people who really want to benefit from conflict", said an elder. "The people who are making us fight are stronger than us".

"Our number one priority is to establish peace among us", said one. "We are committed to establishing peace and finding out what is causing insecurity".

Those men who spoke around the fire where the peace bull was roasting had worked hard for agreement and they spoke of their commitment to strive for peace in their communities. Their analysis had brought them to an understanding, and they were now determined to take responsibility for ensuring that conflict will be dealt with more effectively, and from within their communities. Many said they hoped that this new emphasis on the community would ensure that external forces could not manipulate their people again. But it won't be easy. Fear runs deep among them and the obstacles in their way are formidable.

"We don't know what will happen now", said one. "But we are determined. We have hope".

Law of the Land

Can traditional institutions and government work together for pastoralists?

Much of the focus over the eight-day gathering was on how to resolve the difficulties that can arise when two systems of government - one traditional and one run by the state - are operating in parallel. Many pastoralists have a deep mistrust of state bodies and their motives, in much the same way as colonial powers were not trusted. In East Africa especially, most agree that governments supply little in the way of assistance for pastoralists on small incomes, and pay insufficient attention to their plight when drought brings hardship, or when violence erupts.

Co-existence between the two systems is seen as essential, but is it possible?

Many at the gathering claim it is and cases examined in the meetings on governance backed this up - at least on areas like resolution of minor conflicts and the management of natural resources.

In Mali, clan leaders, or *Joros* are responsible for resolving conflict. Their word is final, but in the case of serious crimes the *Joro* will refer the suspect to the state authorities. Malian pastoralists also liaise with government on issues such as transhumance and farming calendars.

But when criminals are obliged to face punishment under two systems, problems arise. In some Kenyan communities murders are kept from the government and dealt with internally. Murder incurs a penalty of 49 cows and the killer is then washed in the blood of one cow and excommunicated. Sometimes, however, the criminal is fined 49 cows and then dealt with by the state courts as well.

Mogole Hoibor of the Kenyan Rendille said under the governance shade tree: "It is us that are causing the problems. We are not respecting each other and we are not respecting our resources. The best way to form good governance is the attainment of peace".

Hassan Guyo Shano of the Kenyan Borana put the blame on governments. Despite occupying 75 percent of the land, he said, Kenyan pastoralists are continuously overlooked by their state.

"We are the poorest community in the land", said Hassan. "There are so many laws that are passed without consultation with the pastoralists.

Pastoralist Affairs Standing Committee member, Tuke Liban MP, talks to particpants. photo ©*Elena Rue*

Arop Deng (left), SPLA/M and Government of Southern Sudan representative to Ethiopia, and Ambassador Tirenuh Zena (right) of Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
photos ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

We tried to ask for our voice. Through civil society voice we have made the pastoralist parliamentary group but they got promotion and left the people with nothing".

Ethiopia also has a pastoralist parliamentary group but it is seen by many as weak. Tuke Liban, the delegate from Ethiopia's Pastoralist Affairs Standing Committee insisted that parliament pays close attention to pastoralist grievances and "encourages" traditional law.

Tuke, a Borana, is an opposition party member and sits on a pastoralist committee of "around 12".

He insists that: "Our Pastoralist Standing Committee is working for the laws and regulations concerning pastoralists".

Just as many pastoralists feel left out by the state, Tuke also feels isolated. This was the perfect time for the government to be involved he said, but the committee was only invited for two days, rather than for the full eight: "As a committee we did not share in the preparation of this gathering. This is an area that especially concerns us".

But the committee's absence went unlamented by some other participants. Many Ethiopian pastoralists at the gathering said that, at worst, they didn't trust it and at best they believed its members try but are not listened to.

"Our representation in the government is very weak", says Nura Dida, Borana elder and chair of the gathering. "When the government is debating policy our issues are never included. And when they are included they are at the periphery.

"Pastoralist issues have only begun to receive attention recently in Ethiopia. Structures have been established but nothing much has changed. The influence of all these structures cannot be seen in the policies coming out. For example, the farmers have got a ministry that deals with their issues. There is a lot of skilled manpower, trained in taking care of issues for farmers. There is nothing like that for pastoralists".

The government would counter that the formation of the Pastoralist Affairs Standing Committee and other structures is aimed at bringing pastoralists and their issues into the mainstream.

But Nura goes on to say: "MPs can speak their mind in parliament but nobody listens to what they say. We are not interested in just speaking".

Fellow Borana elder Borbor Bulle agrees. "Since his election (in 2005) this is Tuke's first time here", he says. "Every time we have a problem we go to the Gada [traditional council] like Nura. We don't have government offices where we can bring our problems".

These concerns were raised in a meeting chaired by Mohamadou Sali Djidda, the Lamido (traditional leader) of the Cameroon Fulani. He said that in Cameroon and West African states like Nigeria and Niger, pastoralist institutions are much more integrated within the state. Pastoralists vote in greater numbers, education curricula are agreed upon between pastoralist organisations and the state, and there is far more trust between the two entities.

As the meetings drew to a close, those discussing governance agreed on two statements. One recognised that the "ultimate legal authority remains the formal law of state". However, it was agreed that pastoralists "should lobby" for recognition of their customary institutions. This, it was agreed, would give more power to traditional law and thereby aid "decentralisation and good governance". The second stressed that pastoralists "should be encouraged to participate in the political life of their state" and "vote in elections at all levels".

On the first point participants at Qarsaa Dembii were given some encouragement by the arrival of Ambassador Tiruneh Zena of Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs who spoke on the final day of the gathering. The Director General of International Organisations and Economic Cooperation said: "I have listened very carefully to what you have discussed and your proposals. We have taken note as the Ethiopian Government and we will act. I promise you we will do our share".

"We have learned that we cannot solve the problems in Ethiopia unless we co-operate with neighbouring countries, unless we work with

Gathering chairman, Nura Dida, talks with some fellow Borana. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

the neighbouring countries' governments", he added. "In this regard, as the largest country and the oldest country, Ethiopia will take the lead".

Somaliland Minister for Pastoral Development and Environment, Fu'ad Adan Adde, said that it was the responsibility of East African governments "to do something for the working pastoralists".

Somaliland is seen as a model government by many pastoralists, if not by the international community. 65 percent of its population is pastoralist and it has a democratically elected government including a traditional elders' council with considerable authority in the legislative system. It is the one section of the former Somalia that enjoys widespread peace, yet it has not been recognised by the United Nations.

On the second recommendation, for pastoralists to "participate in the political life of their state" and "vote in elections at all levels," the talk was positive and the recommendation was seen as achievable.

Mme. Hawe Bouba Haman of Cameroon's African Indigenous Women's Organisation advised: "We have to be organised to be recognised by the governments, otherwise we are lost. Pastoralists should do all in their power to be recognised".

Abrahim Abukaf, a Bedouin of the Neghev, said that a monthly magazine, in which "pastoralist issues are shared", should

> "I have listened very carefully to what you have discussed and your proposals. We have taken note as the Ethiopian Government and we will act. I promise you we will do our share".

be founded. This, he said, would unite pastoralists and persuade their governments to recognise them "as a valuable part of the economy". Bedouin pastoralist organisations in Israel leverage the power of their population by bringing together all the Bedouin to discuss issues and raise their profile with the government. They use contacts in the media, appearing on television, speaking on the radio and distributing information about their situation on the Internet. They believe these activities have had an important impact on Israeli government policy on pastoralism.

But some were less optimistic about the ability of pastoralist institutions and organisations to influence the state. "This is just more discussion and debate on the ground", one Ethiopian Borana said privately. "There is no policy influence. Nothing has changed. If this gathering ends, we don't know where to go. We'll go back to herding, life continues as usual.

"Something is happening but it is not something with which you can feel satisfied".

The Boran elder's pessimism may be justified. But he could be wrong. It may be increasing recognition of the importance of millions of pastoralist votes that will change things. It may be the rise of pastoralist organisations that makes the difference. It may be a combination of these and other things. But whatever the possibilities, one thing is clear: pastoralists left Qarsaa Dembii with the unity and inspiration to push for what they need: a system of government that serves them and addresses their issues.

Strength from the Roots

"When you are climbing a tree, you don't climb from the top, you climb from the bottom".

Hassan Farah Yusuf

Doi Anugu, future customary leader of the Fulani in Cameroon, has been involved in setting up co-ops. photo ©*Elena Rue*

The need to establish strong organisations to unite pastoralists was one of the main recommendations of the gathering. Starting from a base of local co-operatives, trader organisations and self-help groups, people with common goals can unite in networks and co-operative movements to maximise their influence. It emerged that many co-operatives have failed in the past due to organisational difficulties. The main reason why they founder – according to speakers at Qarsaa Dembii – is that the necessary structures to sustain them, such as finance and leadership, are often missing.

Doi Anugu, future customary leader of the Fulani in Cameroon, who has been involved in setting up co-operatives in Cameroon, talked to *Peace, Trade and Unity* about his experience there. He says it is vital that any new co-operative follow guidelines that have worked in other regions. They must also follow the best financial and legal practices. Most importantly, he recommends that co-ops be set up firstly in the local area by the very producers wishing to achieve higher prices for their output.

To reach a better bargaining position, the co-op must begin by enrolling only members who are willing to pay a fee. This can be as low as one Birr ($12c) but 'buying in' demonstrates and encourages commitment as well as providing legitimacy. This also ensures that those registered and involved receive the most benefits. Nigerian education expert Nafisatu Dahiru Mohammed adds it is crucial that organisations should not accept money from outsiders until the organisation has defined its purpose, internal structures and non-negotiable principles. To do so courts the risk of becoming a puppet of the donor.

Advice for community organisations:

1. Charge membership fees
2. Hold transparent elections of the entire membership for a president, a secretary and a treasurer
3. Appoint an auditor to oversee the money
4. Record all decisions in writing

To grow or become a co-operative, organisations should also:

5. Draw up a constitution and have it adopted by all members

"When you decide to set up a co-op, you need several things. The first is an executive committee made up of a president, a secretary and a treasurer. Without these people the co-op cannot work", Anugu says. "The executive committee reports to the members".

Money is a persistent source of conflict so an auditor to scrutinise the co-op's accounts will be required, advises Anugu, as will a lawyer to draw up a constitution to govern how the co-op works. A constitution allows the co-op to have a formula to deal with disputes between members. "Everything must be put in writing", he says. It is hard for co-operatives without written records to open bank accounts and deal successfully with the authorities, indeed in some countries it is illegal to form a co-operative without formally registering it. Written records mean that disputes can more easily be settled. He also recommends having an annual meeting so that issues affecting the membership can be planned, discussed and voted upon.

On a broader level, co-operative and networking movements can bring people and local organisations from many countries together to discuss issues of mutual interest, as happened at the gathering. They can come up with global solutions to cross-border problems of access to markets and banking systems and can lobby governments to ensure their members become more prosperous.

All stress that from small beginnings great things can happen. In her work as Executive Secretary for the Nomadic Education Commission in Nigeria, Nafisatu works closely with Fuldan - the Fulani Development Association of Nigeria. One of its finest achievements was lobbying for the establishment of the Commission on which Nafisatu herself sits. Fuldan started with just four members: 36 years later it wields enormous power and has a fee-paying membership of over a million.

Hindou had to struggle for an education. Her father didn't want her to go to primary school, but her mother insisted that she went. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Young, Gifted and Motivated

"They are my blood. They are mine. They are my community. I want to help them by my education, by my knowledge".

Golicha Utukana gushes with enthusiasm when he speaks of the future. His ambition is boundless and his capacity for hard work was illustrated by the many jobs he undertook during his eight days in Qarsaa Dembii.

The 16-year-old was as effervescent at the end of the gathering as he was when stepping on to the bus at Hagaremariam over a week earlier. He came to Qarsaa Dembii with his mother and some elders from his tribe, the Guji.

"I came here to help my mother", he says dutifully. "She is a coffee maker. That coffee bean reflects our culture. I help her by giving coffee to anyone who needs it. If you need coffee, ask me. I will give you".

This was one of many jobs Golicha found for himself at the camp. A Kenyan Samburu woman would have only sold half the beaded jewellery she did had it not been for his beaming, boyish charm. The enterprising youngster also salvaged many conversations with his bilingual interventions.

> "They are my community. As my community I want to help them by my education, by my knowledge".

But his ambition was never more evident than when he spoke of his future.

Golicha can't decide what it is he wants to do but whatever it is it won't be pastoralism unless that is "God's will".

"No, I have no future to be a pastoralist", he insists. "I am a student. When I finish my class, I want to be in university. I want to be a doctor. If I complete my education, my first objective is to give my knowledge to my people. If I am a doctor, I give medical service to my people".

The suspicion among some elders is that, although there is no denying the benefits of education for their children, it may ultimately spell the end for pastoralism.

Golicha is aware of these fears and, even though life abroad is tempting, he insists he plans on returning to Ethiopia and to his people.

"If I get a chance to get a Phd I want to move away. When I get my chance, for example in America, I will go there but I will return to Ethiopia. I know I am not alone. I want to help my people".

Another with lofty ambitions is Milisha Olibui, "25 or so", and here as a representative of the Mursi tribe from South Omo. Milisha came with his wife Nagdole and his brother Oliserali. Oli spent a year in Australia and has returned an English speaker, ready to teach his brother and the rest of his people. Milisha feels it is now his turn to travel.

The Mursi have had to compete with farmers and safari tours encroaching on their land in recent years. These problems can only be resolved with good legal knowledge, he says.

"We have problems with Government treaties and with them selling land without talking to the people. I want to go to America to study international law to help communities and to talk to the government. I want to make sure my future as Mursi is safe and we do not become poor beggars".

Milisha is as adamant as Golicha that this will only be temporary and insists: "I am not going to stay away. I am going to come back and help my people. I want to come back with my knowledge to take care of my people".

At 25, Milisha is eager to bring his tribe forward but has had little formal education. His desire and intelligence are evident but he will need further education and financial help to achieve his goals. Milisha says that a friend in a local Christian mission has told him that he will receive all the help possible in his quest for a third level qualification.

> "My father and my family said 'why do you want to send your girl to school?"

The support and encouragement Golicha and Milisha have from those around them will be crucial. Even in northern countries achieving these goals is a huge task, but they can take inspiration from Chad's sole representative at the gathering.

Hindou Ibrahim Oumarou attended as a representative of the African Indigenous Women's Organisation. But her journey to the event did not begin when boarding a plane in N'Djamena. It began when she was a child and involved a long struggle with some of those closest to her.

"I went to primary school but it was very difficult because my father did not want me to go, and my family also, but my mother pushed to send me", she explains.

"My father and my family said 'why do you want to send your girl to school? 'Do you want her to become like a white woman?' So my mother had to fight in order to send me there".

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Taking a break: Golicha says that if he moves away he will return to Ethiopia to help his people. photo ©*Elena Rue*

The constant struggle at home was mirrored by a similar one in school. Students there also believed the little Peulh girl had ideas above her station. Her pastoralist upbringing ostracised her from the settled children in the school, while the fact that she was a girl made for a doubly difficult initiation.

Approaching her teenage years Hindou faced another hurdle. She now had to resist her father's insistence that she get married. Her sister wed at 14 and was forced to abandon her schooling until the marriage soured and she divorced. Hindou was expected to make the same sacrifice.

"My father always used to put pressure on me", says the 22-year-old. "He used to whip me to force me to get married. But I always refused and tried to stay strong". This strength eventually brought her to the Institute of Applied Science and Technology in N'Djamena where she graduated in accounting and finance.

Hindou has travelled to Rio de Janeiro and Paris to raise awareness of the problems some African women face. She sees her role as key to fighting the discrimination that she battled so hard to overcome.

"I try to make people aware of these issues and I think things are getting better. For example, I try to raise the age for marriage. It is still very low but it is getting better. I really want to make people aware that there are different things they can have".

This awareness is something that Hindou, Milisha and Golicha already possess in great measure and their determination to make things better, not only for themselves, but also for their people, was one of the gathering's most inspiring sights.

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Move, listen and learn

"The best son was taken to the cattle camp. The worst was taken to the schools", says James Gadet, from the government of South Sudan. He says that education has not always been prioritised by pastoralists. The duties of a young herder don't fit in with a conventional school day and lesson times often conflict with the best times for milking or grazing. Hard to access, education is often thought unrelated to pastoralist lifestyles and even as something that undermines the pastoralist way of life.

"Pastoralists did not accept to send their children to school until you provided a relevant education", says Nafisatu Dahiru Mohammed. Community schools in Nigeria, she says, have been established for pastoralists, using a mix of permanent structures, semi-permanent structures and mobile schools. Now there are even fold-up schools that are placed on the backs of mules that migrate with the herders.

Nafisatu is the executive secretary of Nigeria's National Commission for Nomadic Education. She grew up in a pastoralist family, went to school and university, taught in universities and teacher training colleges, and has now been with the Commission for 11 years. For her, education is about opportunity, choice, and pride in the pastoralist way of life -"the whole idea being that you don't just box them into a certain lifestyle, or to animal husbandry. We want to give the opportunity to make choices".

> "The best son was taken to the cattle camp. The worst was taken to the schools".

The Commission sees itself as a collaborator. For example, sometimes a community can build the walls for a school and the Commission will provide the roof, find the teachers and provide the learning materials.

Nafisatu Dahiru Mohammed at the gathering.
photo ©*Elena Rue*

One thousand, six hundred schools have so far been built this way.

Curricula include subjects like natural sciences and health education as well as English, Maths, Social Studies, Fulani language, Islamic religious instruction and life skills. In each community, the Commission also works to provide adult learning programmes. On some evenings she says, there is no one around a Fulani camp fire as the women, men and children are all busy with their classes. Teachers are recruited locally; this creates jobs and diversifies income opportunities. Some of the teachers are also trained to provide veterinary services and health care and become essential resource people.

African governments should initiate a continent-wide animal vaccination strategy, a leading health expert urged at the gathering.

Dr Mahamed Keita, an animal health expert, and an adviser to the Malian Government, says diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and brucellosis are risking the health not just of animals, but of the pastoralists themselves.

"With these diseases, the milk and meat of animals is also contaminated and so if you consume it, the disease will pass on. And that creates problems for the health of all pastoralist peoples.

"In our country we have mass vaccination and this should happen across all countries. It simply must be done. That involves the governments of the countries represented here, it involves donors and international bodies. You want all animals vaccinated and to have that documented so that pastoralists can be assured that when trading their livestock the buyer knows that diseases are not present and the pastoralist can get a higher price".

Many diseases still represent a challenge for pastoralists to overcome. Camel owning groups such as the Bale Arsi and Gabra from Ethiopia bemoaned the lack of scientific knowledge of camel disease and absence of veterinary care for these valuable animals.

The gathering also heard calls for Gulf countries to end their ban on livestock coming in from areas supposedly affected by Rift Valley Fever.

"It is time to put the facts on the table about Rift Valley Fever", said Ali Wario, a Kenyan MP. "It has been for too long an issue and it has hurt pastoralists. There are health problems but the fever is not one of them".

photos ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Fighting Disease

Malian animal health specialist argues for continent-wide vaccination

Homes at Risk

Kereyu and Orma lands threatened by Big Sugar development

It was in the 1960s that Haji Qassaru first became aware of the threat that sugar posed to his people's way of life. A plantation was created almost without warning and large areas of their land were taken over. Despite promises to the contrary from Emperor Haile Selassie himself, the Kereyu claim they were never compensated for the loss of almost half their traditional lands. And now, more than 30 years later, new sugar plant representatives have arrived. The sugar industry wants more.

For Haji, this can mean only one thing.

"If they take this land from us we will die. The Kereyu will be no more".

Many think he is right to take the issue so seriously. According to pastoralism specialist, Professor Jeremy Swift, it is threats to pastoralists' access to land and water, especially during the dry season, that renders them most vulnerable. The fact that all grazing land used by herders in Ethiopia remains the property of the state complicates matters further.

Haji says that the government has offered his people the chance to join the plantation workers and become sugar farmers, supplying the plant. The only other option on the table is a move to lands near the Sudanese border, as part of a resettlement scheme.

"We believe the government is lying to us", says Haji. "Thirty years ago we were told that 20,000 Kereyus would be employed at the sugar factory, 25 million birr would be given to help Kereyu development and that each household would be given one bag of sugar a month. None of these promises were kept. Not one bag of sugar was given".

The Kereyu learned to mistrust government from that experience 30 years ago. But even if the current government is telling the truth, Haji explains that they do not want to become sugar farmers and they believe that if they accept a move to new lands they will become involved in conflict with other tribes.

"We are pastoralists", he says. "If someone tells us to become farmers, we can't even begin to imagine it. We rely on livestock. Our livelihoods are with those animals. That's where our expertise lies. We want to continue living as pastoralists. We are refusing to leave because we believe this land is ours. We are its true owners".

Professor Swift says that while traditional law has a record of settling land disputes fairly, pastoralists are almost always the losers when governments declare an interest in their land.

"Far from making the heart grow fonder, the herders' absence for part of the year is treated as a lack of interest in the land and as justification for what in other circumstances would be called a land grab".

Hassan Ijema tells the Kereyu and the Mursi of his experiences. photo ©*Elena Rue*

The Kereyu are not the only group to find their land at risk. The Orma from Kenya, the Afar from north eastern Ethiopia and the Mursi from southern Ethiopia also attended the gathering and were keen to share their experiences. In fact, almost every group at the gathering could tell a story of the loss of valued land to uses beyond their control. The Orma had even used the story of what happened to the Kereyu 30 years ago - a tale that they heard at last year's Global Pastoralist Gathering - as a lobbying tool for their own campaign back at their Tana River home. The group had already been engaged in a campaign of resistance against moves by Spanish company Raesa and a local development authority to establish a $300 million sugar factory on their land. A campaign that has thus far proved successful.

Haji Qassaru (second from right) with his fellow Kereyu delegates. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

The Kereyu kept busy at the gathering. Determined to have their story heard and find support for their cause, they met with the Fulani from Cameroon; they met with hosts, the Borana; they met with the Afar and Mursi; and they met with NGOs and UN organisations.

"Support is very important for us", says Haji. "Our parents tried to fight back when the sugar plantation came 30 years ago but they lost because they had no support. We believe that through events like this we can find the support that our parents couldn't. Maybe we can not only resist the expansion but fight to reclaim the land that they lost".

Each meeting proved interesting, but the most important conversation for the Kereyu may well have been the one they had with the Orma. They met a number of times, around campfires, over lunch, hiding from the sun in tents. Hassan Ijema of the Orma, an enthusiastic man with an easy smile, told them the story of his people's fight against the Raesa sugar plantation. As part of that fight, they built an impressive media campaign - which prompted politicians and NGOs to join the struggle - and little by little built a movement that would eventually capture the attention of both the public and the Kenyan President.

"Your issues must be heard", Hassan told the Kereyu. "If you want to defend your land, you must educate your children and then fight for it. Don't die in silence".

Hassan left the meeting having accepted an invitation to visit the Kereyu villages.

The Kereyu now plan to take lessons learned at the gathering - the Fulani relationship with government, the Orma media campaign, the determination of the Mursi - back to their people and start what could prove to be a long struggle to defend their world.

"We are going to speak up for ourselves", says Haji. "If all the Kereyu speak together, we can succeed".

"Our parents tried to fight back when the sugar plantation came 30 years ago but they lost because they had no support. We believe that through events like this we can find the support that our parents couldn't".

Just some of the women who took part in the gathering. photos ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

"Together we have strength" Women Speak Up

Blessed with powerful words, galloping horses and traditional coffee, the gathering opened with a magnificent ceremony. Participants then introduced themselves. Of the first eight introductions - all individually impressive - six were from women. Yet only 70 of all 420 participants at Qarsaa Dembii were women.

"Men respect women who stand on their feet", says Shoba Liban, because they tend to look after their families well and give good examples in the community. Shoba is from Isiolo, in Kenya. She started a women's group called SAUTI (voice). "If you respect yourself, and you stand for the truth, they are supportive", she says. SAUTI works with elders to broach sensitive issues such as female circumcision, early marriage, divorce and other cultural taboos.

At the Global Pastoralist Gathering in Turmi last year, women held their own separate meetings in the dry riverbed beside the camp. The Hamar women were the welcoming hosts but uninvited participants of that gathering. At Qarsaa Dembii, even if all 70 women were participating in the discussions (and many weren't because they were washing, making tea or cooking), they were still under-represented. But the situation has improved.

"We have been chosen by the other women because we are eager for development", said Gaitu Garsho from the Hamar region of Ethiopia. One of the women in the riverbed meetings in Turmi, she is now a full participant. She reaches out and shows calloused palms as she describes a typical day. She wakes up early to make tea and breakfast for her family, collects firewood, takes the young animals to the river and then cooks more food for her extended family.

Elema Wata Chamari of the Finchawa Guji described much the same daily routine, adding that she has to walk 8km each way to fetch water. "I have been making traditional coffee since I was seven years old, and always make it for strangers visiting my house", she said. Elema had been hired to prepare coffee for guests at the gathering - the same sweet, welcoming brew that she has perfected over 30 years.

Both women have similar daily responsibilities and come from communities proud with tradition, with clearly defined gender roles. One is at the gathering to learn about changing those roles; one is there to perpetuate them.

Through self-organisation and determination, some women at the gathering described how they have made change happen. Chepokudho Lomupo and Cheponyiro Louriningole, from the Kenyan Pokot, described how 25 women in their community raised money by selling goats. By recently forming a co-operative, they have been able to increase the profit from each goat to around 50-100 Kenya Shillings (75c - $1.25). They then use their pooled profits to buy health products and food. One of the biggest challenges they face is that their seed money could easily be diverted to other needs in the community.

The Samburu Integrated Development Programme (SIDEP) has been running for five years longer than the Pokot scheme. Modelling the beautiful beadwork made by the women's co-operative, Rebecca Moira describes how she and some colleagues set up SIDEP in 2001. The organisation aims to eradicate poverty among women and improve their lifestyles and livelihood through small-income generating activities. Each group contributes 500KSh (US$6) a month for membership. They buy beads from Nairobi to make handicrafts and sell vegetables and livestock. They now have a membership of 720 women, comprising 24 groups.

Beyond helping women to achieve economic independence, both groups play an important role in supporting women and working to bring about change. One of the biggest issues facing the Pokot is female circumcision. The women's group has enabled a mentoring programme where older women can spend time with young girls and it has also started an awareness programme. For SIDEP, girls' education is key. Rebecca explained how her group rescues girls who are taken out of school for early marriage by going to the district office to report these incidents.

"Together we can have strength. We can have a voice. We have power. So that's why we came together", says Rebecca.

Some of the biggest issues touch on core traditional cultures and beliefs. Despite the impressive women at Qarsaa Dembii and the general atmosphere of acceptance and respect, many men remained steadfast against female participation. Unaware that he was speaking to a reporter, one spiritual leader said that women from his community would attend the gathering over his dead body.

But Rebecca said that Samburu men were now recognising what women have achieved on their own. They have been invited to join other committees and are working alongside men on issues such as water, sanitation and education. Chepokudho Lomupo noticed a difference after only six months: "In the beginning when we

Ika Badan was one of the gathering's translators.
photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

started, the men really laughed. We would not succeed. But when they saw in April this year the way women are meeting those needs, they started appreciating what we have achieved".

It was not only women who were talking about strengthening their voices and leadership within the community. Women are only half of the key to development. "We must establish education and women's associations - now is the time for women", said Omar Jibril Hussein from north east Kenya. Women, he observed, have a critical role to play in keeping the peace. This is similar in Sudan, where women are involved in the Pastoralist Union. "Women are very active in conflict resolution", said Hamarati Fazari Bashar, the Union's chairman.

In West Africa, women work in partnership with men as valued members of Fuldan and many other pastoralist associations. "Women are very effective members", recognised Ahmad Usman Belo, "and the associations could not have achieved much without them". Indeed, women are not merely members; they are directors, leaders and creators. Nafisatu Dahiru Mohammed, Executive Secretary of the Nomadic Education Commission works closely with Fuldan. Also present at the meeting from neighbouring Cameroon was National President of Mbororo Social & Cultural Development Association, Madame Hawe Bouba Haman. They and women like Vital Camel Milk's Mercy Kamau and Tiviski Milk's Nancy Abeiderrahmane left their mark at this year's gathering. Despite being in the minority, the delegates, coffee makers and dancers alike had strength of presence and purpose. Both men and women left the gathering brimming with hope and committed to change.

Ibrahim Abukaf from the Israeli Neghev said, "If there is a gathering next year, I would like to bring four women and four men. Women are the roots of my life".

LPPS organised an 800km camel *yatra* in India. photo ©*LPPS*

Rajasthan's Camel Crisis

To the supreme court and beyond - camel herders take the government to court and win

In 1999 Hanwant Singh Rathore and his NGO successfully defended the rights of pastoralists in the Supreme Court of Rajasthan, India. The administration had deemed camel milk unfit for human consumption because it wasn't mentioned in a colonial Dairy Act. In just two months of intense lobbying the court reversed the ruling in favour of the pastoralists. On a cold morning in Qarsa Dembii, Hanwant was trying to take on the government again.

On day four of the gathering, as the feeble sun tried to burn off the morning mist, Hanwant is alert and seeking news of his latest legal battle. There is silence as he calls his lawyer back home in Rajasthan on a satellite telephone. Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS), Hanwant's pastoralist welfare organisation, has been fighting to overturn a 2005 High Court decision that banned access to traditional grazing lands. Even though almost a fifth of the state's revenue is from livestock, there is no government policy on grazing in Rajasthan. In fact, says Hanwant, recent policies give preference to irrigated agriculture with serious implications for the sustainable use of Rajasthan's typically arid lands.

Hanwant has 15 camels and two cows of his own; he works in advocacy and programme development as a director of LPPS. "Pastoralists have power, they are strong in numbers", he says. Camel herders, known as *Raika* have come together to take on those threatening their livelihoods in Rajasthan. When the High Court ruled in 1999 that camel milk was not suitable for human consumption, the camel herders banded together and fought the government all the way to the Supreme Court. The decision was overturned and a new ruling stated that camel milk was not only good for human consumption but also had potential medical benefits.

Yet there are still many problems. The camel population of Rajasthan has more than halved in the last 10 years and is down to less than half a million. Camel products are not yet recognised in the Dairy Act, despite concerted efforts by LPPS. Bagdi Ram Raika, a fellow Rajasthani camel herder attending the gathering, says: "We are breeders. We take camels as if they are our children. If it is the end of camels, it is the end of our life".

"Camel slaughter has to stop. It is the end of our community. The end of our way of life".

Once symbolic of Rajasthan's age-old traditions and culture, female camels are now being sold to markets in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and even Bangladesh. According to Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, a researcher on camel marketing in Rajasthan and founder of the League for Pastoral Peoples the system has been breaking down over the last five years. Traditionally, camel herders were disgusted at the idea of eating or trading meat from their camels – it was taboo. But a lack of alternatives has forced many *Raika* to abandon their traditional beliefs, risk cultural condemnation and sell their female camels for slaughter.

"Camel slaughter has to stop - it is the end of our community, the end of our way of life", says Hanwant. The declining situation has prompted camel herders to take action. LPPS organised an emergency camel workshop in November 2004. It identified the disappearance of grazing lands for camels, the lack of involvement of *Raika* in government decisions, the absence of a national policy on camels and the lack of an organised market for camel milk as the main problems. These reasons are deemed symptomatic of a more deep-seated problem - a fundamental lack of respect for *Raika* and a lack of recognition by the government of the economic value of camel breeding to the state.

Camel herders returned home from the workshop and began a campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of camels. The *Raika* did what they do best - they saddled up their camels and rode on an 800km camel *yatra*, attracting media attention and support from pastoralist villages along the way. The *yatra* was covered in local TV and newspapers, and important community leaders participated in the march. It was a spectacular celebration of the camel, with musicians singing about the first camels in Rajasthan and *Raika* riding loud and proud towards greater visibility and recognition through the dusty landscape of Rajasthani politics.

"We take camels as if they are our children". photo © *Elena Rue*

Hanwant hangs up the phone. He explains to the small but interested group that has gathered around him during the long and intense conversation that he and his lawyer have requested more time - the other side is resorting to lies and legal tricks, and he wants to be back in Rajasthan to fight in the frontline. Upon returning home from the gathering, he will have 10 days to work with other *Raika* and his lawyer to mobilise public opinion and once again struggle for recognition of the rights of pastoralists through the legal system in Rajasthan.

But even if they are successful in the courtroom, it is only one half of a longer term solution. Hanwant today repeats what he said at the emergency camel workshop in 2004 and back at the first legal hearing in 1999: "Our experiences demonstrate that local activities are not enough and cannot really stop the decrease and gradual extinction of the camel, unless the government also provides a supportive policy framework". Were it not for the efforts of Hanwant and others like him, and their determination to fight through the courts and the media, it is unlikely that anything would ever change.

Somali delegates pose with new friends at Qarsaa Dembii. photo © *Peter Moszynski*

Somalis United

All five points of the Somali star were represented at Qarsaa Dembii

Among the dozens of different pastoralist groups represented at the gathering, there was a - virtually unprecedented - meeting of officials and traditional leaders from all five Somali-speaking nations. In addition to the ministers responsible for animal husbandry in Somaliland and the Puntland State of Somalia there was also high-level representation from Djibouti, north east Kenya and Ethiopia's Somali region.

"We are not here to discuss politics but the common issues we all face as Somalis and pastoralists", explained the Hon Said Jama Ali Korshel, Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Environment of Puntland. "In language, culture, religion, ethnicity etc. there are no differences between us, and we all face the same problems; we need better veterinary care, better livestock marketing, better health and educational services. We don't need to focus on our differences but on our similarities".

He pointed out that Somalis had so much in common with each other but had been divided into five different countries by colonial borders. "It is very unusual for all our people to have the chance to meet like this and we are taking the opportunity to discuss with one another and learn from each other's experiences". They were happy for once to talk about economic issues rather than the usual discussions of politics and security that dominate day to day life in the region.

"We are not here to discuss politics but the common issues we all face as Somalis and pastoralists".

The lack of recognition of the fledgling state of Somaliland has not prevented it from becoming a rare success story in a troubled region. The delegates discussed its successful elders' council, the Gurti, a model also adopted by Puntland. They compared notes on the evolution of traditional institutions and in some places, the proliferation of sultans and leaders who diluted the powers of the old systems. They compared notes on services and admired Kenya's public and private veterinary and marketing organisations. Government officials from Somaliland and Puntland promised to move on multilateral talks between the five nations on questions of cross-border trade and other issues of economic co-operation.

The fact that so many different Somali areas were involved in the gathering was big news internationally, and almost every evening after the various Somali-speaking participants came together to discuss their common agenda, each one patiently awaited their turn to be interviewed by the BBC Somali service.

"We usually go to conferences in five star hotels in various capital cities", opined one of the delegates. "Now we find ourselves meeting in the same conditions as most of our people usually face: sleeping under the stars, eating the same local food, even using the same primitive sanitary arrangements. It makes a welcome change from our usual meetings".

The various members of the Somali-speaking community were all effusive in their praise for their local Borana hosts and their welcome hospitality and for UNOCHA PCI for giving them the opportunity to participate. Minister for Pastoral Development and Environment for Somaliland, Fu'ad Adan Adde, commented: "They have shown us their hospitality. This gathering was very, very necessary and has been a big step forward for our pastoralists. Now the people in international organisations, the governments, the people in the towns know that they have to listen to and respect the interests of the pastoralist communities".

All the Somali representatives present agreed that the Horn of Africa Pastoralist Gathering had been an ideal forum in which to discuss their common concerns, and several of them said that they looked forward to hosting similar meetings in their home areas in the not-too-distant future.

From Campfire to Conference Room

After 14 years of fighting the Nuer people on both sides of the Ethiopia - Sudan border have agreed on a peace process

On Thursday 20th July 2006, the Lou Nuer of Southern Sudan and the Jikany Nuer of Ethiopia shook hands across a table at the United Nations headquarters in Addis Ababa. Many deaths, 14 years of fighting, thousands of raided cattle and wholesale displacement on both sides of the border were coming to an end. The foundations for peace had in fact been laid a few days previously at the Qarsaa Dembii Gathering. It had been helped by Borana mediators, inspired by the traditional governance structures of the Nuer and sealed with the death of a large Boran bull.

On the last night of the gathering, 40 people sat down around a large fire, watching great chunks of meat slowly roasting on stakes. Like many of the truly significant events at Qarsaa Dembii, the meeting was not on any schedule. It was organised by the gathering's Borana hosts to encourage groups embroiled in conflict to make a commitment to peace.

During the long war in Southern Sudan that has now ended, Lou Nuer expanded eastwards into the territories of neighbouring clans. The Jikany and Lou Nuer have been fighting for 14 years. The breakthrough between them had seemed a long way off just a few days earlier but the gathering brought the warring sides together on neutral ground and after a week of discussions over roast goat, they agreed to begin searching for a lasting peace. The Lou elders, whose people are occupying an area of Ethiopia called Tiergol, have agreed to withdraw and return the land to the Jikany after this season's harvest is brought in.

The agreement to find a truce was sealed with a bull because of its particular significance to peacemaking. Rhamsy Chuol, an elder and long time mediator for the Jikany, explained: "Cows and bulls are very precious to the Nuer". Traditionally at times of conflict, when there is dialogue, a bull is offered by one of the sides.

"Godly people begin to curse, cursing those who continue fighting, murdering", said Rhamsy. "They are cursed into the bull. The bull is then killed with a spear in the neck. It is a promise not to fight and to bring peace".

Many issues were discussed around campfires at Qarsaa Dembii. photo © *Jack Howard*

Around the glowing embers, elders took turns to move into the firelight and speak for their people. The Borana, Guji and Gabra were the first to talk of peace. It was then the turn of the Nuer.

Lou Nuer Chief, Miyol Bumetet rose and said: "We are very pleased that we've all come together here. I am talking as a chief from my community. When we go back we have to talk of peace. We have a tradition of committing to what we agree. We have slaughtered the bull here".

Rhamsy Chuol, for the Jikany, focused on practical steps. "Hunger, poverty and the gun are our common enemy", he said. "We are now working for peace and ways to develop our pastoralist way of life. Let us armour ourselves with a weapon called peace and the help of God".

A few days later, in the more formal setting of the UN in Addis Ababa and in the presence of representatives of the governments of Ethiopia and Southern Sudan, they declared their commitment to an official end to the conflict and made promises of peace. In just a week the Nuer had been guests of the Borana in the bush and of the UN in the capital city. Such vastly different forums are indicative of the merging of traditional and modern systems of conflict resolution being utilised by the Nuer and their governments.

In Nuer tradition, the elders and the young men are brought together to resolve conflict. They look at the root causes, blood compensation is paid to families and it is then taken for granted that people are reconciled. The arrival of the AK47 in Nuer lands overloaded this system but with disarmament, it could work again.

Both the Ethiopian and Southern Sudanese governments agree that the conflict should be resolved at community level backed by government. There is recognition on both sides that heavy-handed intervention will not be effective. For the Government of Southern Sudan, the approach reflects the newly formed administration's decision to base its interim constitution on customary law, as well as its determination to create trade corridors and good border relations with Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government may be less confident in the powers of customary leadership to deal with these complex issues, but there is considerable interest in peace.

The Southern Sudanese Government Representative, Arop Deng Kuol, takes an optimistic view of traditional practice: "This conflict has been politicised by both the Sudanese and the Ethiopian governments. We want to take the issue of the border and have the traditional leaderships come together and see how they can make the border more useful. Then we will tackle the political issue. It will work because the constraint is the government and not the people, but the government has said let's traditionalise the process".

Dr Koang Tutlam from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has less confidence in the traditional process because, he says, the war in Sudan has changed the social fabric. "The government is choosing a community level approach because conflict can only be reduced by dialogue. Violence would lead to more violence. But traditional methods have been rendered less effective because the youth now have small arms. Even the traditional rulers aren't listened to".

> "Hunger, poverty and the gun are our common enemy".

One thing both sides agree upon is the need to disarm – a difficult process that is under way in Sudan - but some ask what the disarmed youth are going to do now. Others are optimistic that the community-based approach will work: it has to. The return of cross-border trading is imperative for the region's economic health and is impossible without peace. Their optimism also masks fear. No one wants to talk about 'what ifs', but the possibility of intervention by the military hangs over all discussions.

David Ruach is in his first year as an Ethiopian Member of Parliament for Gambella and is quick to support his government's approach: "The government is still saying the community elders shall come together. Action will be the last resort".

Great steps towards peace have been taken and there is reason for optimism. Already Ethiopia has shown commitment by releasing nine Lou traders from prison in Gambella. The present community-based approach and ongoing disarmament are helping to finish what the bull's death in Qarsaa Dembii started. The next step is a meeting in Tiergol after the harvest has been brought in. Two weeks after the gathering, some Jikany Nuer left for Tiergol: "We are going to look for our cows", they said.

Top Thong was a key peacemaker. photo © *Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Rhythm and News

Music is used to protest, mobilise and convey news

The gathering had a strong cultural component, with musicians from across Africa performing every night. There was also a pastoralist film festival, which showed documentaries and movies about life in various nomadic societies.

While some crowded around the main stage every evening to enjoy the festivities full on, others chose to listen to the music from the comfort of their own campfires. The music wafting across the encampment was, if anything, even more spellbinding out in the open beneath the starlit Borana sky.

Borana men sing to keep rhythm as they draw water from a 'singing well' near the gathering. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

> "When we were young and acting as shepherds and cow-minders, we used to sing to our animals, and then later we also began singing to attract girls".

One of the most compelling acts was a group of Tuareg musicians from Niger's desert capital, Agadez, called T'flauiste (Tamazight for 'happiness'). They soon captivated everyone with their entrancing sound of Saharan Blues. Another was the Burkinabe band Wangare, whose mesmerising combination of rhythm and guitar got everyone dancing and was particularly popular with the local Borana youth.

Beja musicians and dancers from eastern Sudan added a swash-buckling dash of sword-dancing into the mix, whilst various participants of Somali, Chadian, Kenyan and Ethiopian origin also made good use of the occasion to showcase their differing musical cultures.

Several groups of Borana musicians also added to the cultural melting pot. The Borana area is famous for its 'singing wells' where each local clan maintains its own water supply, dug down to reach the ground water dozens of metres below. Gangs of men operate bucket chains to bring the water up to the surface, singing to maintain their rhythm.

Burkinabe musician, Dicko Fatimata Amadou. photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

"For the Tuareg, music was a revolutionary tool, and their modern style of guitar-playing was adapted from its traditional Saharan roots in order to mobilise their people in their anti-colonial struggle", explains Nigerien participant Mohamed Alhassane Sidi.

"At the time of independence from France we were divided between five countries: Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. Our first revolution began in 1963. We failed to succeed and unite our nation and many people went to Algeria and Libya in exile. At the same time there was the Sahel drought and our livestock suffered heavily. We found that the new post-colonial governments recognised the people in the towns, the settled people, rather than the interests of the itinerant herdsmen. Music was a very effective means of communicating our struggle".

Sidi says that the name Tuareg is an Arab word, "meaning someone who goes without a guide. It shows respect for our ability to live in the desert and our refusal to accept borders. But it is also rather derogatory, as it implies we did not accept the teachings of the Prophet. Of course we were all Muslims but the Arabs didn't accept that we could pray in our own language.

"In our own language, Tamazight, we call the desert *tenere*. For us it is the most beautiful thing, because it is our home. We don't recognise frontiers because we are nomadic people. Nobody can stop us. As pastoralists, we don't need passports". He says that, although the Tuareg have been divided by colonial borders, "Our dream is not broken. We still have our own language, our culture, our lifestyle".

Wangare frontman and lead-guitarist Cissé Oumarou Abdoulaye was helped to become a professional musician by legendary Malian guitarist Ali Fakr Toure (who sadly passed away earlier this year). He explained the central role of music in his pastoralist society: "When there is good rain and plenty of grass we sing because we are happy that our herds will grow and prosper, and our wealth will accumulate. The young men are happy because they will be able to provide sufficient dowry to attract a suitable bride, whilst the women are happy because they can find more eligible suitors. At the same time, if the animals are well-fed and watered, the girls can dress better, and wear their wealth as gold and silver adornments - such as the silver coins our women weave into their hair - and thus attract better husbands".

Abdoulaye maintains that "our music is based in our pastoralist background. When we were young and acting as shepherds and cow-minders, we used to sing to our animals, and then later we also began singing to attract girls".

"The music we play nowadays has several messages. The first is the need for women's education, which is a really important issue for us back home. Women seldom have the chance to go to school so we like to push the idea. The second is health. We don't really have good health centres so too many kids die from lack of doctors. At the same time, we are also concerned with veterinary health. Back home our people don't often have the chance to take their animals to vets for vaccinations and thus there are many epidemics. For us, health - both human and animal - is our most important treasure".

All the musicians agreed that the Qarsaa Dembii gathering had been a fascinating experience and an excellent opportunity to showcase the diversity and vibrancy of pastoralist culture - a sentiment that appeared to be widely shared by their fellow participants.

Sudanese musicians entertain delegates during a break in proceedings. photo ©*Elena Rue*

Breeding for Profit

Can crossbreeding improve livestock and, in a world of patenting, can pastoralists maintain the right to breed their cattle?

Even if the many health issues facing pastoralist herds - vaccinations and other veterinary services, hygiene, nutrition - are addressed, there remain difficult choices to make. Should herders, as some argue, increase the size of their herd and try to sell as much to local markets and exporters as possible? At any price? Or should they look to improve the quality of their stock in the hope of higher prices?

The choice is as fundamental as the issue of crossbreeding, which has split communities across the globe. Some believe it offers a quick fix to boost the output of animals; others are concerned about the long-term implications for the health of herds. Crossbreeding can increase the drought resistance qualities of some breeds of cattle (see box).

Many believe that the dangers are being minimised or even overlooked altogether, pointing out that higher production cannot be maintained over too long a period. In this camp is Ilse Köhler-Rollefson of the League for Pastoral Peoples, who has studied the issue. She says the potential risk to the health of future generations of crossbred animals outweighs the benefits.

"We don't want to say that there is no room for improvement of the animal. In certain environments crossbreeding can actually raise productivity. It depends very much on that environment and if you have the right climatic conditions. Where the environment is very harsh, crossbreeding should not be an option for pastoralists. We have found clear evidence in the past that any gain in livestock production also makes the animal more vulnerable to diseases and other problems", Köhler-Rollefson said.

"For instance, in India we have a traditional sheep breed called Bati and no matter what conditions it is being kept in, it has always managed to survive - sometimes on three legs. But it produces very little milk and the lambs grow very slowly. So there was an attempt made to upgrade the growth capacity by crossbreeding with another type. This was ultimately unsuccessful. While you did get some increase in production, the animals were very vulnerable to diseases. That is why you have to be aware of the risks", she warns.

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

One Kenyan breeder who attended the gathering agreed: "Local breeds are the safer to keep in the long run. For decades western countries have been promoting their indigenous animals so that their own exports will benefit,

> The rights to breed animals may be threatened in the future by patent laws and the fight to protect pastoralists' rights has become a global one.

but I believe that pastoralists must retain their own breeds". Focusing on local breeds does not mean that pastoralists do not breed their animals - they are constantly selecting for desirable qualities in offspring.

Modern technology is also having an impact on production methods, though it represents a threat to many. With advances in biotechnology improving the health of livestock across the globe, some scientists have been seeking to commercialise many of the traits that have developed in some of the breeds maintained by pastoralists across the Horn of Africa. Though it has yet to happen, there are fears that soon a multi-national company may patent the DNA sequence of the genes that cause disease or drought-resistance in some animals and force pastoralists to pay for the right to breed their own herds.

> "In India we have a traditional sheep breed called Bati and no matter what conditions it is being kept in, it has always managed to survive - sometimes on three legs".

The rights to breed animals may be threatened in the future by patent laws and the fight to protect pastoralists' rights has become a global one. Boran cattle, which provide higher quality meat than some other breeds, have never been more popular. But while exports from pastoralists are growing, many think they may be about to lose out: Australia has been breeding Boran cattle for years, and some of its farmers are now attempting to patent the genome sequence for the breed, a move that has left many African pastoralists furious.

Ali Wario MP, head of the Kenyan Pastoralist Parliamentary Group, believes that African governments should look at taking legal action to ensure their genetic resources remain in the hands of their populations.

"We should sue the Australians for taking what is ours", he demanded at Qarsaa Dembii.

Whatever the outcome of that challenge, Wario says now is the time for pastoralists across Africa to take ownership of their resources.

Sahiwal Bulls

An enterprising Marakwet from Kenya turned Ethiopian heads at the gathering when he described a sturdy crossbreed that he insists will produce double the milk of other cattle. Chadwick K Kirop explained to eager listeners that by serving his Borana cow with an Asian Sahiwal bull, he had produced a SuperCow.

Borana cows like these have been crossbred with Sahiwal Bulls in Kenya since the 1930s. photo ©*Elena Rue*

Kirop did not pioneer the practice; it has been going on in Kenya since the 1930s but only on commercial ranches. Sahiwals come from India - import rules and high costs have made it hard for small scale livestock breeders to take advantage of their characteristics.

"The appearance of the bull was one with a bigger face and a big hump. The advantages of the Sahiwal bull are drought resistance and it grazes openly (no feeding)", explains Kirop.

"The Borana cow is 350 kilos but the Sahiwal will grow up to 500 kilos", he adds. "Whenever you use these bulls to plough the land they are faster and have more stamina".

Kirop also claims that the average Borana cow produces 3.5 kilograms of milk, whereas the Sahiwal produces 7 kilograms. He has had a lot of interest in Kenya and even more in Ethiopia, but some have warned against cross breeding. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson is the co-author of *Indigenous Breeds, Local Communities*. She says that many people are not aware of the long-term implications of crossbreeding.

According to Köhler-Rollefson the Sahiwal is "supposed to be the best exotic dairy breed", but she is not convinced it would serve Ethiopians as well as it does Kenyans. "I think it is doing quite well in most of Kenya but I don't think it would do well in the really harsh areas", she says.

Köhler-Rollefson was at the gathering to highlight the dangers of crossbreeding. A German national, she has spent the last 15 years in India and is an expert on indigenous breeds. Her main concern is that pastoralists go for a quick-fix with crossbreeding and end up with cattle that are susceptible to local disease and bear weak offspring.

For Kirop however, the Sahiwal has been a revelation and fetches more money at market, "up to 40,000 Kenyan shillings, compared to 10,000 for a Borana bull". While the benefits can clearly be immense in the right circumstances, many also believe the risks to be too substantial.

Excess to Success

How turning surplus camel milk to cheese can generate profit and prevent waste

It is 6am and the man from Niger carries a brown briefcase. Dressed in a smart pair of trousers and a shirt with a button-down collar he carries the case into the Ethiopian bush. He walks for a few minutes before he finds the camel herd. Camels are being milked, young Gabra boys drink the milk from jerry cans, the camels enjoy their own food, and some vultures pick over a goat carcass. The man from Niger stands still, enjoying the morning sun while three boys fill a bucket for him. They carry the 150 birr ($18) worth of milk back to the campsite, while the man from Niger follows calmly, swinging his briefcase. The boys are paid and go back to their camels. Assadek crouches, opens the briefcase and prepares his equipment. He is about to make cheese.

Few know how to do this. At last year's Global Pastoralist Gathering there were stories of some people in Iran who'd managed to manufacture it and word of some West Africans who were making a healthy living. But nobody could confirm it. This year, though, they were there.

The cheese was initially made to absorb the seasonal milk surplus but those who manufactured it soon began to look for ways to maximise the potential profit. Assadek Hammo says his cheese is mainly sold to tourists in Niger. Many of the East Africans in attendance thought that tourists might provide a market for them too, if they were to start making it themselves.

> Cheese was initially made to absorb the seasonal milk surplus but those who manufactured it soon began to look for ways to maximise the potential profit.

Assadek says that organisation is vital. His business relies on a daily delivery of super-fresh camel milk, buying from a well-organised group of camel milk producers who provide a regular supply. He has taught them how to milk the animals hygienically, another crucial element of the process. Assedek demonstrated the use of a patented formula that he orders from France, *Camifloc*, for curdling the milk. He also showed that it can be done with the same rennet used to produce cow or goat cheese. The secret is the addition of an extra bacterium that turns the camel milk. "Demand is growing", he said. "I am selling not only to Agadez but also Niamey (the capital city). I am diversifying, adding spices, olive oil and other flavourings to my cheese. I also make camel milk caramels".

Assadek's cheese making caused quite a stir in the campsite. Borana, Gabra, Guji, Kereyu, Indians, Somalis and Kenyans were all distracted from their walk to breakfast by what was going on around a campfire in the middle of the site. They watched the process carefully. "It's not a secret", smiled Assadek. They would come back to taste the end product when it was ready, they said.

"I'm very sure our people would like this cheese", said Kerayu Kallu, Fanto Boru, at a tasting the next day. "It's definitely something we're going to investigate".

photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Assadek's cheese ready to serve.

Some Borana and Gabra men looked on. "It would be worth thinking about if we could find a market for it", said one.

Nancy Abeiderrahmane of Tiviski Camel Milk and Cheese believes that this is possible. Nancy started pasteurising camel milk in Mauritania in 1989, making camel cheese in 1994 and is now one of the world's largest suppliers. Her company also sells fresh milk in cartons, buttermilk, butter, ice cream and yoghurt. To manufacture these products, she now buys camel milk from over 1,000 pastoralists in her country, netting Tiviski 15,000 litres a day.

She has begun exporting to countries such as Nigeria and the Ivory Coast but food regulations have thus far prevented selling to Europe, somewhere that she believes would provide a lucrative market. Nancy's cheese is pasteurised and can last around a month, making export a viable option. She is currently looking into ways to have the product reach the standards necessary to satisfy European regulators.

> "It is feasible that people in East Africa could begin making money from camel cheese. It's not complicated".

"It is feasible that people in East Africa could begin making money from camel cheese", she says. "It's not complicated. You could set up plants, not only in Addis, but elsewhere. You could even contemplate mini-dairies. All you need is the mad entrepreneur".

One Gabra man with a mouthful of cheese agreed. "Maybe that entrepreneur could be one of the people who tasted cheese for the first time here". Mercy Kamau, the manager of Kenya's Vital Camel Milk, began to look interested.

Assadek's Recipe

- Ensure the milk is absolutely fresh and collected in hygienic conditions
- Filter the milk
- Pasteurise the milk by warming it up to 60°C
- Once warmed, cool it down to 39°C;
- Add *Camifloc*
- Leave it for 24 - 48 hours
- Wrap it in a cloth and drain all the liquid
- Eat it fresh or leave it to dry in a covered but ventilated container in the shade

photos ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI and Elena Rue*







The Search for Rain, Prosperity and Peace

In February 2005, 200 pastoralists left their homes, responsibilities and livestock to attend a global gathering in Turmi, southern Ethiopia. Some were away from their homes for more than five weeks and then chose to do it all over again in July 2006. We asked them if it was worth it.

Haji Qassaru of Ethiopia's Kereyu people said that Turmi changed the Kereyu's way of thinking. "Pastoralist is a newly invented word in Ethiopia", said Haji. "Before we called ourselves the Kereyu, Borana or Guji. But in Turmi we recognised that there were pastoralists like us with livestock all over the world".

The Kereyu left Turmi with an un-quenched thirst for practical solutions. They face the imminent loss of large amounts of grazing land and water sources for their animals to a government-supported sugar scheme. In 2005 they were disappointed not to have found practical solutions to the problem. In 2006 they found some answers. They are eager to try some of the ideas they have learnt about organising themselves, advocating for their rights, increasing productivity and accessing new markets. "What we have learned today, as a very small first, is that we have got the fuel to burn well. But unless you help yourselves, no one will help you".

Hassan Ijema of the Tana Pastoralist Society, Tana River, Kenya, was inspired by Turmi to become further involved in a campaign to oppose sugar investors who were taking prime grazing lands in the swamp areas of Tana River. Moved by the plight of the Kereyu, Ijema showed *'Rain, Prosperity and Peace'*, the magazine from the Turmi gathering, to his group and shared the story of the Kereyu. It became ammunition for mobilising the Orma people to take up their own fight for justice.

"The swamp area", says Hassan, "is our lifeline. Without it, we will perish". The group captured the attention of Ali Wario MP, chairman of the Kenyan Pastoralist Parliamentary Group. Wario mobilised other MPs to support the Tana Pastoralist Society and now although much land has already been turned over to sugar and other irrigated crops and there is still a threat to the rest, the land acquisition process has been slowed. "At Turmi I gained knowledge and felt solidarity with what other pastoralists have been able to do for themselves", said Hassan. He has offered to pass on that knowledge by visiting the Kereyu and speaking to the community there about how the Orma fought for their land rights.

> Turmi was a "big step in the legitimisation of pastoralists and pastoralism".

Higinio Porto Huasco attended the Global Pastoralist Gathering last year and found he couldn't resist this year's event photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

Higinio Porto Huasco is at his second gathering. He is the chairman of a Peruvian co-operative, which is responsible for processing and marketing wool from alpacas (small camelids), making threads and clothing. It has 1,500 members and sells to markets in Peru, America, Asia and Europe. It has been successful in this but has not yet exported meat. Having heard at Turmi about marketing animal products in Mongolia and India, Higinio returned to Peru and discussed the idea of meat marketing with his co-operative. Now they have completed a feasibility study and are looking to raise funds to build an abattoir between their two primary alpaca rearing areas.

Turmi also hosted some intermediaries and politicians concerned with pastoralists and their issues. Iranian Taghi Farvar is the chairperson of CENESTA (the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment). He said Turmi was a "big step in the legitimisation of pastoralists and pastoralism". He felt it had allowed his organisation and others like it to be more radical in their support of pastoralists. Eyob Tekalign, from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Turmi, "helped me identify what pastoralists think about the problems in this country".

Gaitu Garsho came to Qarsaa Dembii as a full delegate.
photo ©*Antonio Fiorente/UNOCHA-PCI*

The Hamar women, whose community hosted Turmi, were pleased to meet so many 'foreign' people. Gaitu Garsho said that after the Turmi gathering, the World Bank Pastoralist Community Development Project helped the Hamar Women's Association build a small shop and a granary mill. But perhaps more significantly, the women went from being "invisible hosts" - making coffee, feeding delegates and trying to participate while the men played the formal hosting role - in 2005, to invited community representatives at Qarsaa Dembii. "We were chosen by other women to attend because we are eager for development", said Gaitu. "We didn't write on paper, but we have kept everything we heard at Turmi in our mind and are here today to talk about how we can change, and how we can take ideas away from this meeting".

Some were less fortunate. Argentinian Gabriel Palmili was stopped by his own government from attending Qarsaa Dembii. He believes he was denied permission to attend the gathering because of comments he made at Turmi about the preferential treatment shown to petroleum companies by his provincial government. Like the Kereyu, for Gabriel the real value of Turmi was meeting foreigners with familiar lives. He loved the freedom of expression and recognition that others faced similar problems to his own community in Argentina. The very frankness and honesty that made Turmi so special for Gabriel however, is now being used against him.

> "PCI is like a big shade - and it is under their shade that pastoralists have this opportunity to learn from each other".
>
> Hassan Ijema, Tana River Kenya

Nonetheless Gabriel sent a letter to the organisers and the Borana, Gabra and Guji people. It began, "I should be there with you sharing the days that will be lived along this so special meeting, learning of your experiences and wisdom of the pastoral life and contributing as little or as much that I have learned throughout 22 years of working with pastoralist families in my land". He vowed to continue his struggle for freedom of speech and recognition of pastoralists' rights with his provincial government. He remains optimistic that he can learn, even from afar, from the discussions at Qarsaa Dembii: "You will have more possibilities of finding the way towards a better future for the next generation of pastoralists. My sincere desires of rain, prosperity and peace for all".

The search for rain, prosperity and peace was stimulated by Turmi. Hassan Ijema, now a veteran of both gatherings, explained why once more he would leave his animals and do it all again: "Turmi had an impact. This one will have an impact. These events need to keep going to bring pastoralists together, to learn from each other, to gain knowledge and to gain recognition".

You are not alone. This was one of the gathering's most important messages. Over 350 pastoralists descended on southern Ethiopia from every corner of the globe. Some came by bus, some came by plane, some came on foot. Some combined all three. There were those who travelled for more than two weeks. There were those who negotiated harsh terrains. And there were those who left behind countries and communities in crisis. But all were determined to be there. They came not only from Ethiopia, but from Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Djibouti, Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Peru, India, Cameroon, Nigeria, Israel, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali. A long list and many different, yet similar, people. Each delegate as keen to share information as the other. Everyone wanting to tell their story. Indians and Mauritanians discussing camel cheese; Ethiopians and Kenyans talking about governance; Somalis, Bedouin and Malians sharing information on trade. There was a great solidarity evident in all of these conversations. Many were surprised to find they had so much in common and, when there were differences, a desire to understand and assist each other was uncovered. Each face at the gathering was singular. The people shared a way of life, a determination, and the smile of kindred spirits. Everyone who attended this remarkable event left with renewed hope and new friends. Here are just some of those faces.

Reporting from the Horn of Africa
Regional Pastoralist Gathering,
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