Afar Lowland Livelihood Resilience Project (ALLRP)

Rangeland Cluster Support Team-1

Documentation of Indegeneous Knowledge

Production of different handcrafts using palm leaves and their impact in improving livelihood at Doya community of Nemegubi Kebele, Afdera Wereda

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the indigenous Knowledge

Knowledge has been affirmed as power which brings development in every human endeavor that is useful for decision making. knowledge, according to Rowley and Farrow (2000) is the integration of new information into previously stored information to form a large and coherent view of a portion of reality-a definition which fits both human and machine held knowledge, and describes the knowledge bases used in expert systems. Indigenous Knowledge is home-grown and cultural knowledge of a specific society. It is a way of life, skills, experiences, culture, insight and values embraced by people in local community. Every society or community has her local knowledge which cuts across all aspects of human living on which livelihood and survival depend. These include but are not limited to health, fashion, food preparation, education, agriculture, religion, festivals, recreation, norms and values, institutions, politics and technology.

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is, broadly speaking, the knowledge used by local people to make a living in a particular environment (Warren, 1991). Terms used in the field of sustainable development to designate this concept include indigenous technical knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge, rural knowledge, local knowledge and farmer's or pastoralist's knowledge. Indigenous knowledge can be defined as "A body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature" (Johnson, 1992). Generally speaking, such knowledge evolves in the local environment, so that it is specifically adapted to the requirements of local people and conditions. It is also creative and experimental, constantly incorporating outside influences and inside innovations to meet new conditions. It is usually a mistake to think of indigenous knowledge as 'old-fashioned,' 'backwards,' 'static' or 'unchanging.'

Indigenous Knowledge is closely linked to maintaining the long-standing traditions from ancestors and its transfer to other generations in different forms. Hence, the term Indigenous Knowledge has different synonyms such as, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, community knowledge, rural peoples' knowledge, farmers' knowledge (Mahalik and Mahapara, 2010). Basu and Goswami (2009) opined that the term Indigenous Knowledge is not

confined to tribal groups or the original inhabitants of an area. It is not confined to the rural people. Rather, any community possessing Indigenous Knowledge-rural or urban, settled or nomadic, original inhabitants and migrants. Indigenous Knowledge is referred to not only to the knowledge of the indigenous people but also the intellectual property of other communities. Mabawonku (2002) defines indigenous as those ways of life that are often intertwined with the family, religion, nature, land and the wisdom gained through generations of observing and teaching. Ntui and Ottong (2008) stressed that Indigenous Knowledge develops over centuries; therefore, it represents all the skills and innovations of people, and embodies the collective wisdom and resourcefulness of a community. However, documentation and dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge is very essential. Documentation sees to preservation of such knowledge in its complete raw form for posterity while dissemination focuses on encouraging access to the documented knowledge for planning and decision making.

1.2 General Description of the Area

Afar region has been divided in to five administrative zones and 34 Woredas. The region is one of the lowland areas where the LLRP has been launched on January, 2019 commencing with its 20 pastoral and agro pastoral Woredas. Afdera woreda is one of the 34 woredas of Afar Regional state administered under zone two. It is named after Saline lake Afdera as depicted in Wikipedia. The Woreda is bounded by Zone-4 woreda in the west, Erebti in the North, Eritrea in the East and Bidu Woreda in the south. It has been divided in to 9 kebeles. Almost all of these kebeles are inhibited by pastoralists and 02 kebeles are living in towns. The average temperature of the Woreda is 37 degree Celsius. The total population of the Woreda estimated about 32,225, of which 18,191 are males and the remaining 14,034 are females. A total of 4,803 households live in the woreda. **The woreda is located at** Latitude: $13^0$14’60.00”N and Longitude: $41^0$00’0.00”E

1.3 Socio-Economic Description and Economy of the areas

The Name of the kebele identified for Indigenous knowledge to be documented is Nemegubi kebele, Doya community. The Kebele is located in the North-east of 168 km far from the woreda Centre, bordered in South by Argale kebele, Dabure kebele in north and in the North by Eritrea.

The total area of the kebele is about 1010 square kilometers, out of the total area, 22 hectares of land are used for agricultural purpose and the remaining hectares are used for other land use type. The major livelihood of the communities depends on animal husbandry (livestock) production, agricultural practice and petty trade. According to 2000 population censes data; a kebeles has 1750 total populations. Of them 1050 are males and 700 were females.

2. **Objectives of indigenous knowledge Documentation**

The objectives of documenting this indigenous knowledge:

- To identify the attitudes of the practitioners towards manufacturing various Doum palm handcrafts
- To identify the challenges faced in manufacturing the various products from using Doum palm leaves
- To draw lessons and scale up to other areas
- To recommend possible solution to mitigate the problems

3. **Rationale of the Indigenous knowledge**

Documenting this indigenous knowledge is required for the reason that:

- document IK so that both the scientific and local community have access to it and can utilize it in the formulation of sustainable development plans.
- raise awareness in the community about the value of Palm leaf products, record and share IK
- helps to encourage people to take pride in their experience
- help communities record and document their local practices
- enable to disseminate IK back to the community through newsletters, videos, books and other media.
- observe intellectual property rights: have agreements so that IK is not misused and benefits return to the community from which it originates.(Source: IIRR, 1996a)

4. Method of formulation

Descriptive survey method was used. This method was chosen because of the time and budget constraints. It enabled the document writer to use questionnaires and FGD to collect data. Samples were taken from respondents and their responses were taken into account by the general public. This method aims to provide important information to the community about the indigenous knowledge of palm leaf production. A random sampling method was used to obtain this document from the community members. Accordingly, 5 kebele management members were selected and 10 women engaged in palm leaf production participated. 4 Woreda participants are included to verify the information obtained from the community and kebele participants. The measuring instruments used for this study were interviews and group discussions. The 4 participants of the woreda were interviewed and a group discussion was held for the kebele and community participants. The questionnaire has two parts. Part A collects biographies, Part B

collects information about indigenous knowledge. The main tasks performed in the process were data collected and analyzed.

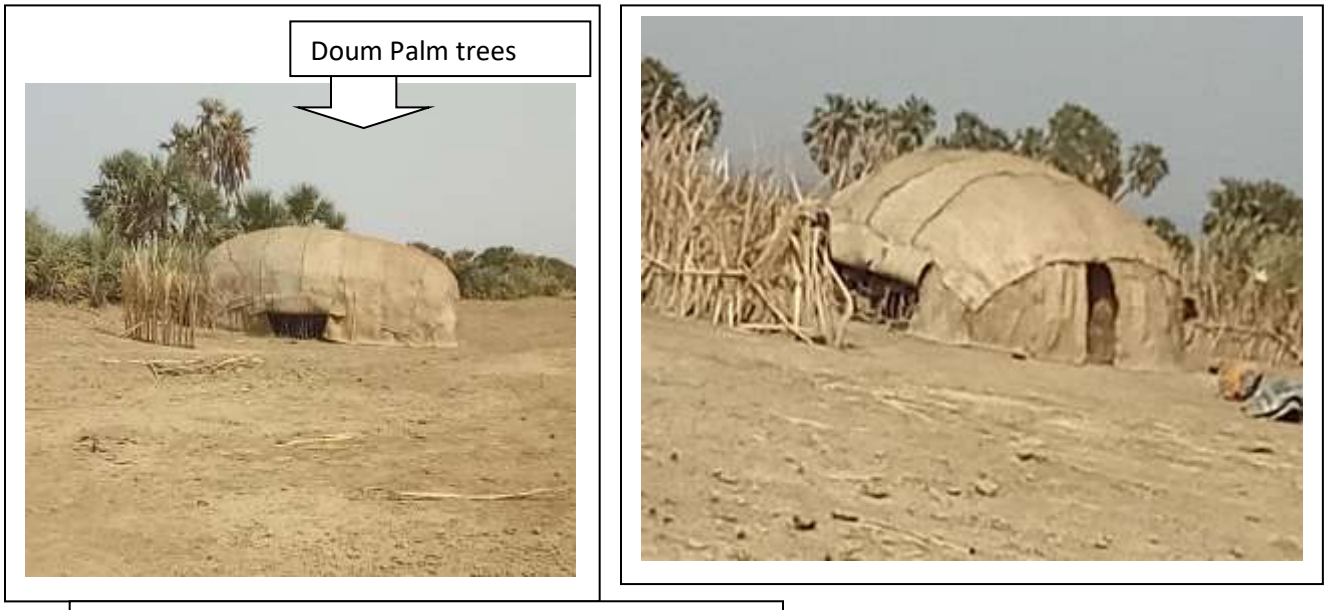
5. Data analysis

5.1 Demographic Data of participants

Demographic data show that 10 (66.67%) of the 15 participants are women and the remaining 5 (33.33%) are men. Only one male participant in the academy has enrolled in 10 + 2 TVET colleges, while others are under 8th grade. They are all Muslims. Most respondents were under the age of 45, with only three elder over the age of 65. Almost all respondents are pastoralists. Almost all of them are married and have children. They make their living by selling animal and animal products as well as palm leaf products. The main part of the questions is presented in a detailed question category. As shown in the appendix, a number of questions are asked to key informants. The questions and answers are summarized as follows. In the Doya community, villages in Nemgubi Kebele collect palm materials mainly from Garitu Palm (local name). Doum palm leaves are widely harvested because they are readily available and there are no restrictions on cutting. Most respondents confirmed the collection of raw craft material from common land. There is a forest reserve in the area called 'Kora'.

Pic 1: Doum palm trees in the Kora area

The palm tree was collected in the distance of less than 1km, it is around their home. The result indicated that villagers who collect palm craft materials live very close to the palm trees. The closeness of palm trees to the household makes their collections easier.



Pic 2: Doum palm trees exist around the community

5.2 Status of Doum Palm Trees

Although some of the Doum palm trees fall for unkown reasons as depicted in the pic below ,Almost all respondents assured that the vegetation of Doum palm trees exist in a good status.

Pic 3: Dried Plam Stems fallen for unknown reason

It was also understood that the average income from raw Doum leaves was about Birr 800 from a butch loaded on a camel. The villagers collect the craft raw materials in both dry and wet seasons.

5.3 **Income from Doum Palm raw material and Handcrafts**

It was also revealed that they produce one or more combination of products to maximize their income as well as their need for private and social consumption. Among the products they produce hard mats are the major one. Others like milking vessels, Praying mate, sleeping mates, and hats are also produced by the villagers. The following picture shows some of the weaved products from palm leaves by the community.

Pic 5; Miliking vessles on the left, hard mat on the right

Pic 6: mat for the brides on the right, Nid for

They are also aware of that they can produce/weave other products like Shopping bag with as well as without lid, hand bag with lid, sewing box, Round ink tray, Flower vase, shopping hand bags, sitting mats, glass holders, plates, trays, baskets etc whcihc are mainly weaved in India. It is recognized that Doya community dewellers are aware of them.

Pic 7: **Types of weaved products (large baskets, hard and soft mats, and brooms**

Pic 8: Types of weaved product (medium baskets, handbags and winnowing trays) from palm craft materials

5.4 Marketing Problems

Currently the producers faced marketing problem wich is attributed to the security problem in the north. Berahle town was the major market for Doya community palm leaf products. Currently they sell their products locally. They repeatedly asked the concerned body to create market linkage/chain for their products. Hard mats locally known as 'Dibora' and bride mats have demands. They sell $6m^2$ (2m h and 3 m wide) hard mat for Birr 80 in their village; they sell for Birr 100 if it is out of their village.

The bundles of leaves are cut by men and weave by craftswomen to make mats, hand fan, ropes of different sizes and to make the walls and roofs of local houses called 'Ari'. The local communities in the community have knowledge gap about proper collection, harvesting, and optimum production of doum-palm leaves using mechanical operation tools.

They indicated that lack of access to appropriate mechanical operation tools -technology, in-ability of the products to compete favorably with similar synthetic products made from rubber, and lack of market access are the major challenges faced by the local producers utilizing Doum palm leaves. Hence, performance evaluation of Doum-palm leaves production to commercialization including creating market linkages has to be given more emphasis to diverse their income.

The focus group discussion participants pointed out that the current market situation is not good, the reason given for the unfavorable market condition for both raw plant craft materials and its products were low price in the market caused by few customers and lack of products promotion.

Soft mat has highest price per piece compared to other weaved palm products, followed by hard mat and large baskets per piece. Brooms had the lowest price per piece. The reason for soft mats to be sold at higher price was due to high quality and the long time it takes to produce them. Normally one can produce one to two soft mats per month. The reason for broom having the lowest price when compared to

all weaved products from palm craft materials might be due to presence of industrial substitutes.

It can also be noted that females earn more income from palm leaves than male. This implies that more female were engaged in harvesting and making palm leaves products. It also implies that female plays a great role in income contributed in the household compared to men.

Most weaved products are produced by females. Males mostly involve in harvesting raw craft materials from Doum palm trees.

5.5 The Production Process

The production process using Doum palm leaves is labor intensive because it is manual. The Doum palm locally called ‘Garaytu’ is the vegetation type from which the craft raw material is collected. The following activities are performed in the production process.

- The dried palm tree leaves are place in big pot and boiled for 1 to 2 hours
- The leaves are turned frequently to ensure smoothness
- The boiled leaves are put in a basin to cool
- The women then use the raw palm leaves to produce various products

6. Problems encountered

- Lack of necessary skills to make the right choices of users, lack of acess to finance to cover their transportation and other related expenses needed to sell their products in Afdera, logiya and other towns
- Lack of access to improved manufacturing technology
- Lack of market linkages for their products
- Blockade of Berahle market

7. Lessons Learnt

A number of lessons can be drawn from this indigenous knowledge. More importantly the

following are the major ones drawn .

- Palm craft material production has significant contribution to household income in the villages
- The Doum palm tree contributes to existence of underground water and favorable air condition to both animals and human beings.

8. Conclusion

The main palm species harvested by Villagers living around Doya, Kora and Fiya community of Nemegubi kebele were doum palm (*Hyphane compressa*).
Currently utilization of palm craft materials in the area is low compared to what the forest can supply. This is mainly due to lack of market access Thus there is a high possibility to increase the contribution of palm craft materials to household income.

Livestock Population of Kebeles in Afdera Woreda

#	Name of Kebele	Goats	Sheep	Cows	Camel	Donkey	Remark
1	Aduella	6479	3455	3911	317	573	
2	Kusrawad	8009	6125	10899	6135	702	
3	Yalibahe	6441	3855	4557	3921	675	
4	Aytura	8022	6175	10967	5932	1001	
5	Argale	5200	6520	8042	4541	475	
6	Dabure	3718	2937	245	1518	722	
7	Harsuma	4916	3986	6211	1713	813	
8	Nemegubi	5111	7092	6111	1911	512	
9	Aligenda	5329	5561	4012	3731	812	

	Total	**53225**	**45706**	**54955**	**29719**	**6285**	