

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (APIK) RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

RATIONALE

Ethiopia is one of the countries known by their ancient civilization and technology. Ethiopia still has immense indigenous knowledge and technology and traditional practices worth studying and disseminating. But to date the issue has not been given due attention by any agency.

The indigenous knowledge and technology is dying out as generation passes away and modern way of life takes the place of traditional practices. Therefore, the identification, recording, studying and dissemination of indigenous knowledge and technology call for immediate action. Hence, the establishment of the Association for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge (APIK) has become a crucial idea.

We acquire knowledge through scientific methods as well as through studying traditional practices which can lead to more proven and useful knowledge. In the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, there are provisions which encourage such efforts. According to the Policy, one of the functions of education is to transmit human's experience and values accumulated over the years. The policy states that education should be 'a supportive tool for developing traditional technology' and traditional education will be improved and developed by being integrated with modern education. The task of implementing the policy, however, should not be left to the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureaus alone. It requires the support of such relevant associations as APIK.

The first task to Ethiopia ought to be to fully utilize its internal resources already existing and easily accessible. Among the internal resources, the indigenous knowledge and technology should be considered a priority agenda for the following reasons.

Ethiopia is a country with diverse nationalities and cultures. It is rich in indigenous knowledge and technology in various areas of life (refer the Illustrative Profile of Indigenous Knowledge in Ethiopia). The national economy is based on traditional agriculture. The performance of the majority of the population who lead traditional life is not by ignorance or accident; rather it is the result of deliberate, time tested, locally suitable and environmentally friendly indigenous knowledge and technology. But this knowledge has not been given enough attention. When we see all forms of effort to disseminate knowledge and technology of Western origin, no attempt has been made at least to record our rich indigenous knowledge and technology which are still the life blood of our country.

There is a missing link between our modern education and indigenous knowledge. Our schools are considered as 'Western knowledge enclaves'. Pupils do not hear anything about indigenous knowledge and its importance. No indigenous knowledge is illustrated to be associated with the 'modern' school knowledge.

Therefore, students are unable to associate what they learn in school with their prior experience and environment. Eventually, they consider modern education as alien from their real life and forget it. Identification of indigenous knowledge and its association with modern education helps students develop their inquisitive character. Students will also be sensitive to the environmental stimuli, be research oriented, creative and appreciative of their own indigenous knowledge and develop it so that it will contribute to the national development. To this end, the need for the contribution of APIK to incorporate the indigenous knowledge and practice in the curriculum is indispensable.

In the agriculture sector, too, identification, recording and development of indigenous agricultural knowledge and technology have paramount importance to both farmers and development agents. Without the knowledge of the indigenous classification of crops, soils, plants, animal diseases, etc., the development agent and farmers cannot develop common language and communicate. Farmers would like their indigenous knowledge to be appreciated and given worth. After all, it is first knowing the traditional practices of the farmers one can bring about improvement in the life of the rural people. So, APIK helps in creating a common language and common understanding between the development agent and the farmers.

For the health sector also the importance of indigenous herbal medicine and treatments are not things to be underestimated. We have rich knowledge in this aspect from nerve stimulation to inoculation. In the veterinary medicine our rural people are knowledgeable to the extent of operating. If one approaches the rural people equipped with science jargons but without knowing a word from the terminology of the indigenous people, it would be considered a deliberate attempt to confuse the users. Science should agree with indigenous knowledge and technology. The Education and Training Policy also states that due attention should be given to the local conditions. APIK, therefore, has a purpose of bridging this gap.

Besides our indigenous knowledge and technology, our natural resources have not been explored. In association with the indigenous knowledge and technology, there are natural resources that can easily be exploited if brought to the attention of people who have the capacity to make use of the resources. The members of APIK will pioneer, in their capacity, to let these natural resources known and potential investors have the required information.

Recording, developing and disseminating indigenous knowledge and technology which are meant for problem solving and of immediate importance will make both adults and youth be proud of their country, people and indigenous knowledge. This will lead to further scientific investigation and close examination and appreciation of the environment. This eventually improves our standard and quality of life.

We have immense traditional practices and indigenous knowledge worth transferring from one area to another and that cannot be covered by the formal education system alone. To implement the activities of APIK the participation of many Ethiopians from different corners of the country is of paramount importance. Any body who by chance or deliberately came across to indigenous knowledge and practices that are scientific or can be proved scientific, if takes part in the activity of APIK, the mission of the organization will be accomplished. ***Little knowledge transferred to many people is as great as the number of recipients.*** This is the motto of APIK.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF APIK

APIK has the following general objectives:

1. By identifying, recording, studying ,encouraging others to study, developing and disseminating useful indigenous knowledge, technology and traditional practices known in different areas of life and in different localities of the country, APIK will contribute to the betterment of the life of the people and lay the ground for further scientific investigation.
2. To help the people be creative, research- oriented , self-reliant, and develop confidence by integrating and make use of indigenous knowledge with modern education
3. To help organizations like Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health , Ministry of Education, etc., utilize indigenous knowledge and technology as a supportive tool to implement their policies. In this regard, APIK will help curriculum developers and teachers give the curriculum local touch and to enable students enrich their school knowledge with indigenous knowledge and vice versa by creating conducive condition so that indigenous knowledge be incorporated in the curriculum.
4. To enable different nationalities of the country exchange their worthwhile indigenous knowledge, technology and traditional practices.
5. To help people with indigenous knowledge make use of their knowledge to supplement their income and contribute in their capacity to the country as a whole.

6. To let interested national and international researchers and potential investors know the indigenous knowledge and researchable cases of Ethiopia which are of global importance.

ACTIVITIES

To accomplish the objectives of APIK the following activities will be carried out:

1. APIK will strengthen itself by promoting the Association and enrolling more members and organizing School Indigenous Knowledge Clubs.
2. The members, school indigenous knowledge clubs and employees of the organization will identify and record indigenous knowledge, technology and traditional practices worth developing and disseminating.
3. APIK will issue Indigenous Knowledge bulletin and newsletter and disseminate to organizations and individuals.
4. APIK will invite resource persons from different disciplines to study, comment on and develop the indigenous knowledge recorded and give scientific touch.
5. By creating strong link with the government organizations and NGOs, that is, the MOE, MOA, MOH, STC, IIZ.DVV, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc., APIK will organize exhibitions, workshops and seminars to disseminate the indigenous knowledge that is of immediate importance and problem solving.
6. Through its bulletin and newsletters APIK will bring to the attention of potential investors, researchers, etc., the knowledgeable people, the potential investment areas associated with indigenous knowledge and researchable cases that are pioneered by the members of the group from different localities of the country.

ANNEX

ILLUSTRATIVE PROFILE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN ETHIOPIA

Traditionally in Ethiopia children are advised not to shelter under a big tree when lightening is expected. People believe that long trees 'attract' lightening. In rural parts of the country if some one is struck by a lightening, the survival will be immediately brought into contact with moist ground or dung. This is considered a cure. Though the rural people in Ethiopia are unable to explain the why of the stated safety precaution and treatment this can be substantiated by static electricity theory. It could have been good example to teach Ethiopian students about lightening or static electric discharge.

Scientifically when lightening occurs everything that has physical contact with the earth will have a collection of charges the same to that of the earth. The earth is universal acceptor of charges. The longest tree on which charges are collected will be the nearest thing on the earth to the opposite upper layer of charges in the air. So the shortest path for the static electric discharge is through the tree and people under the tree are exposed to danger. When someone is struck by lightening the survival will have unbalanced charges. To get back to normal condition the person has to lose the excess charges. This is possible by bringing the person into contact with the universal acceptor of charge, the earth.

In Ethiopia the vaccine for smallpox was not a new thing. Ancient people used to inoculate by taking a liquid from the pus of the small pox patient and putting in by wounding the person to be inoculated. With regard to metal works, what is today known as annealing and hardening is very common with every blacksmith without modern education. To soften a metal a blacksmith will put the work piece in a fire until it becomes red hot and cool it down in the air slowly. On the other hand, to harden a work piece a blacksmith puts the work piece in the fire until it gets red hot and put it in a cold water immediately and withdraw it. For instance, a knitting needle is put in an 'ingera' being baked or in the flame of kerosene lamp or 'kuraz' then it will be allowed to cool down slowly in air so that it will not break but bend.

In the agriculture sector also we have many indigenous knowledge, practices and technologies. Around Bale farmers make a kind of trench around a potato plot. The trench can protect the potato from a porcupine. But in Wollo this technique is not known and people always complain about porcupine when asked why they do not produce enough vegetables like potato and carrot. In Gondar farmers shift their barn from one farm land to another on purpose to fertilize the land. This is not common in many parts of the country.

When one visits the area around Kemisie on the road from Dessie to Addis Ababa the cattle are long-horned. But we do not see horn-works in the area. Coming to Woliqite and Woliso area on the road from Addis Ababa to Jima horn-works are

very common. At and around Tlili in Gojam people are skilled in making cups from horn. However in both Tlili and Woliso area we do not see long-horned cattle and there is a shortage of horn material. If the horn-work technology is transferred from these areas to Kemisie, people around Kemisie will have alternative means of living and in the long run produce articles for foreign market.

Ethiopia is highly affected by deforestation. Among the various reasons, the need for construction wood is the one that contributed to the problem. Around Debre Berhan, Tigray and Nefas Mewcha the residents are skilled in building a house from stone, ash and mud. Whereas in South Wollo where there is abundant stone and severe shortage of construction and fire wood people are unable to build the form work of their houses let alone to build their houses from stone. If this technology is transferred it will play a major role in the conservation of forest and soil in many parts of the country.

Similarly there are indigenous soil conservation techniques, veterinary medicine, treatment of various human diseases, food preservation techniques, conflict resolution techniques, etc. If properly utilized, there are resources in our reach which have immediate importance to better our life.

If we consider the brake of horses and mules in rural parts of Ethiopia, it has got an engineering and architectural design worth appreciating. When one sees the design of St. Lalibella rock-hewn churches and the castle of Gondar he asks himself whether these technologies vanished without leaving a vestige. For instance, the castle of Gondar was built not by cement but a mortar that was buried for about three years. Some of the doors and boxes of St. Lalibella churches operate in gear systems. Do not these show that we have indigenous knowledge worth disseminating?

Darla Worden

From: Adane Gebeyaw [adane_gkt@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 1999 2:52 AM
To: usaoffice@cwis.org
Subject: The Attachment



apik.doc

Dear Darla,
I wish you a happy X-mas and New Year. Thank you for
your quick response. Herewith, I am sending you the
attachment.
Sincerely
Adane Gebeyaw Kassa (Mr)

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