

Fura kebele declared *open defecation free environment*



This huge gathering is not celebration Epiphany, and not the Founding of the True Cross either. The crowd is enjoying the ODF celebration of Fura communities.

September 2, 2007 was a special day for communities in Fura kebele, Shebedino Wereda of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region. This was the day when Fura community declared open defecation free (ODF) environment: the first ever ODF celebration in the region, and may be in Ethiopia at large. The celebration was held in the compound of Fura School.

The school and its surroundings were adorned with slogans and mottoes that magnificently promote the importance of sanitation and hygiene. The signboard prepared with the support of Plan Ethiopia Shebedino Program Unit as recognition to the community reads, ***“Fura: the kebele where all households constructed pit latrines on their own initiative, and where all use latrines, saying ‘no to open defecation’”***. Another slogan reads, ***“Bury faeces not people!”*** The other reads, ***“Fura enters the New Ethiopian Millennium open defecation free!”***



Signboard with messages that recognize Fura ‘open-defecation-free’



Children sheltered under the shade of the tree where 'stop deforestation' is posted are attending the ODF celebration.

And a slogan posted on a big indigenous tree reads, 'stop deforestation!' Still another slogan bears messages related to prevention of HIV/AIDS and condemns stigma and discrimination on PLWHA. These suggest that the sanitation and hygiene efforts also have multiple edges.

Following the start up prayer, while welcoming the gathering and guests of the event, the Kebele Health Extension Worker Ms Assefash Kifle said, "We are happy today because we are recognized as sanitary and hygienic communities." Chairman of Community Natural Leaders Mr. Seyoum Hamesso on his part said, "During the CLTS training we were overwhelmed with shame and disgust because we learnt that open defecation was common in our villages. That time we promised to end that malpractice and we met our promise in four months

time. Proud of that, we organized the ODF celebration to express our happiness and to share our lessons and experiences to other communities." Also the kebele Chairman Mr. Argachew Boa expressed his happiness and thanks to the community and to the different agencies including Plan Ethiopia Shebedino Programme Unit who technically supported the CLTS progresses in the kebele.

Shebedino Wereda Administrator Mr. Mussie Duressa, Shebedino Wereda Health Office Head Mr. Mengistu, SNNPR Health Bureau Deputy Head Mr. Kare Chamicha, Plan Ethiopia Programme Support Manager Dr. Tezera Fisseha, and SNNPR Water Resources Development Bureau Deputy Head Mr. Agosa Abate expressed their appreciations to the community and passed congratulatory messages.

For example, Dr. Tezera said,

I am lucky being here today because it is my first time to be in an open defecation free kebele in my 30 years service in the Health Sector in Ethiopia. This is a remarkable achievement for the communities, for the government offices, and for Plan Ethiopia. I strongly urge the chairpersons and Health Extension Workers of the other kebeles to draw lessons from Fura. And I promise Plan Ethiopia will continue to provide technical support to kebeles that would practice CLTS. Congratulations Fura!



Dr. Tezera says, "Fura's success is exemplary. All of us should ask why and how Fura did it and why not other kebeles."



Poem, drama and choral songs that condemn open defecation but promote safe sanitation and hygiene behaviours were presented by community members. The gathering expressed its excitement with resounding applauses and bright faces.

Asnakech Hamesso from Fura presenting a poem and community natural leaders attending her messages. She kicks off with remarks, "If there is good hygiene, there is good health; if there is no good hygiene, there will be no good health. Thus, good hygiene is mother of good health."



Community members demonstrating in drama how they punish open defecators

The kebele Health Extension Worker, Village Health Communicators, community natural leaders and community members who worked with commitment to end open defecation in their kebele were awarded certificates.



SNNPR Health Bureau Deputy Head handing over certificate

Plan Ethiopia staff members with awardees



Community members were in high pitched moods of happiness, and they promised to keep their kebele always ODF. It looks not only latrine numbers soared but also hygiene behavior is improving. Communities are inculcating good sanitation and hygiene behaviors into the minds of their siblings. For example, even four years old boy Binsafa Hussien who was with his father said, "When I need to defecate, I go to our latrine; I never do it out of the

*"I defecate in the latrine not in the field",
Binsafa.*

NB: Wereda is an Amharic equivalent to district. 'Kebele' is an administrative structure under wereda.

latrine hole.”

Also the sense of competition created in chairpersons and community representatives of other kebeles was too inspirational. Chairman of Midre Genet kebele Mr. Hagerso Geletu says, *“I jealous of Fura for the tremendous achievement. I am now determined to mobilize my kebele people and make our kebele the second to celebrate ODF environment. And we are only communal latrines away for that.”* And Mr. Michael Hamaya who is Chairman of Dulecha Taberako kebele contends saying, “No, I will materialize it before Midre Genet and make my kebele the second ODF kebele; I don’t want it even to be third.



Around 500 people attended the celebration. These included Fura kebele communities (children, women, men, elders), community natural leaders, Health Extension Workers, Village Health Communicators, Wereda Health Office Head and staff members, Sidama Zone Health Office Deputy Head and some staff, Deputy Head of the SNNPR Water Resources Development Bureau, staff from Plan Ethiopia and the partner NGO Water Action, Wereda Action Research Team members, members of the Regional Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Group for the Action Research.

To pass the lessons and experiences to other kebeles, chairpersons and Health Extension Workers of the 35 kebeles in the wereda were invited to and attended the celebration.

The kebele Health Extension Worker Ms Assefash Kifle, Chairman of community natural leaders Seyoum Hamesso, and the kebele Chairman Ato Argachew Boa organized the ODF celebration in collaboration with the kebele communities and the Shebedino Wereda Health Office.

Previously, it was noted that all 1265 households in Fura have latrines. Among those latrines, 465 household latrines and seven (now eight) communal latrines for passers-by are constructed after the introduction of community-led total sanitation approach in February 2007.