

## **Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo**



### **Voice of Oromo Liberation**

Information is a right, and information is might. Information is the basis of knowledge and knowledge is power. Informed person is empowered person. Some governments still continue to strive to monopolize information and thereby deny citizens and others the rights to be informed. SBO endeavors to open up access to modern mass-media for millions of people in the Horn of Africa. SBO's aim is to promote awareness in peace & democracy, disseminate knowledge in elementary health care, environmental protection, and gender equality, and broadcast information on improved methods in agriculture, animal husbandry and rural development.

Sagalee Bilisummaa Oromoo (SBO) is a radio program in Afaan Oromoo and Amharic

SBO has over 19 years of experience in radio program preparation and presentation. During these years SBO has covered various topics in its program including promotion of gender awareness and sensitivity, health education, promotion of Oromo language and culture, education on democracy and promotion of peace, etc.

#### **Afaan Oromoo (Oromo language)**

Afaan Oromoo, as the native language of more than 30 million people in Oromia, Kenya and Somalia, is the most widely spoken language in the Horn of Africa and one of the three most widely spoken indigenous African languages. It is also used by millions of non-Oromos as a means of communication and trade in Northeast Africa.

Oromia (Biyya Oromoo) was conquered and annexed by Abyssinian (present Ethiopian) rulers at the end of the last century and today it constitutes one-third to one half of Ethiopia's land area. Nearly 50% of the 71 million inhabitants of Ethiopia are Oromos. Because Afaan Oromo is a crucial unifying and identifying mark of the Oromo nation, it has been a target for the repressive policies of successive Ethiopian regimes, whose aim was Amharising the empire through the destruction of the cultures and languages of the non-Amhara nationalities.

The prohibition of Afaan Oromoo as language of education and work had a devastating effect not only on the development of the language itself, but also on the overall socio-economic and cultural development of the Oromo people. For the vast majority of the Oromo, particularly those who live in rural areas, the prohibition meant a total lack of access to vital information on issues such as improved agricultural methods, animal husbandry, child-health, family planning, and environmental protection.

Recently, after a long political struggle, Afaan Oromo is now accepted as a medium for education and administration in Oromia. However, very little is being done to reach the vast majority of the Oromo population, who live in the rural areas with no information on appropriate technology, health, democracy, environmental protection, etc. Today, the state owned Ethiopian radio allocates

a few hours a week to broadcasting in Afaan Oromo, but much of this air time is spent on the ruling ethnocratic regime's propaganda.

## **Objectives of SBO**

Popularize and disseminate principles of democracy and human rights

Promote public awareness about the importance of environment and ways to safe guard it.

Promotion of Afaan Oromoo, culture and history.

Provide basic education on women's position in the Oromo society, their contributions, their struggle for emancipation and equality, and women's health.

SBO broadcasts its programs for one hour a day and for six days a week in both Afaan Oromo and Amharic. It transmits on 9,485 KHz SW on the 31 meter band and focuses on Northeast Africa with special focus on the Horn of Africa. However, listeners in other parts of Africa, Middle East and southern Europe also do tune in. It is also listened to by speakers of Afaan Oromo and Amharic through Internet all over the world. The broadcasting time could easily be increased if funds were made available. SBO aims to provide information to its listeners in the following fields:

### **I. News:**

It will continue to inform its listeners on regional and international news and current events.

### **II: Democracy and Human Rights:**

People need information to be aware of their rights and obligations. Therefore, the right to information is basic to any democratic society. Mass-media have a central role in providing information and educating people about their basic rights. Today, large sector of the Oromo people have no access to information on subjects that are essential in their lives. In populations such as the Oromo where the majority are non-literate, provision of such crucial information on mass basis is possible only through radio. SBO aims to fill the existing gap in this regard by advocating respect for human rights, and promoting peace and democracy in Oromia and Northeast Africa.

### **III: Culture and Language:**

As in the case of language, Oromo culture and historical heritage were also neglected and denigrated by successive Ethiopian regimes. Suppression of Oromo culture and identity inside Ethiopia has continued unabated. Hence, SBO aims to promote traditional Oromo culture (Gada), music, folklore, poetry, etc., in order to contribute to the ongoing linguistic and cultural revival in Oromia.

### **IV. Economy and Environment:**

The majority of the Oromo (about 85%) subsist on agriculture and livestock breeding. Therefore, SBO aims to transfer knowledge of improved agricultural methods and animal husbandry. Environmental protection is not only vital to economic development, but also crucial for the very survival of life on our planet. Today, the threat to human and animal life caused by environmental degradation is no where so serious as it is in Northeast Africa. It is the aim of SBO, in consultation with experts, to devote part of its air time to information focused on environmental protection. Here SBO aims to draw attention to the rich traditional knowledge and cultural heritage of the Oromo

pertaining to environmental protection, and to propagate the use of such knowledge to stave off the looming disaster being caused by reckless exploitation of our natural resources.

## **V. Health Education:**

Millions of people in Oromia and Northeast Africa are being afflicted by epidemic and endemic diseases which could be easily prevented through public education. SBO aims to include a health program in its transmission and concentrate on elementary health care and campaigning against AIDS. The program is to educate the potential victims on the causes, sources, symptoms, prevention of AIDS and its effects on individual, family and society. The most ideal way and means to reach millions of non-literate Oromo, who are potential victims of AIDS, is by campaigning against AIDS through radio program. Family planning will be part of its program.

## **VI. Gender Issues:**

SBO will have a regular program on women issues, with special emphasis on issues related to problems of rural women.

## **Appeal for Funding:**

SBO broadcasts with the generosity of individuals, Oromo communities, and very few non-governmental organizations. Those who believe in making information available to people who are denied access to information, and also to promote democracy, help stop the spread of AIDS, women's issues, and peaceful co-existence of peoples should financially support SBO to continue and expand these vital services.

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