

## MUSSA SAIDI and CONEX SOMO

Andiamo youth Cooperative Trust's agricultural sector is not only concerned with growing crops. It also rears animals such as cattle. Next to Andiamo's irrigation scheme owned by Get up Stand up, is a kraal that houses more than 20 cows. For these cows to live a health life, Andiamo employed herdsmen to take care of the livestock. **Eugenio Njoloma** and **Paul Sefasi** of Andiamo Website Development Office met **Mussa Saidi** and **Connex Somo** who told of their story as herdsmen. Excerpts:

**Working as a herdsman can be an exasperating job. This job needs brevity and dedication. How do you make it?**

Truly speaking, this type of job is not good. But we work because we have no any other options for survival. The money we receive is meager and working conditions are tough.

**You say that working conditions are poor. What do you mean, Connex?**

Look at my feet, for instance. I don't have shoes on and yet am supposed to enter into this wet khola (kraal). Am I prevented from diseases? Further more, we don't have working suits such as dustcoats and gumboots. When we go into the bushes we are often pricked by thorns therefore causing great pain to our feet. We are not also spared from the scorching sun that heats up the ground and makes wandering a hurdle!



**Mussa, what any other problems do you meet apart from poor working conditions as narrated by Connex?**

Connex is absolutely right. Just to add on what he has said, sometimes we do meet problems at grazing areas. The owners of the grazing fields often chase us away and sometimes affront us because our cattle are grazing in their meadows. This makes us take the herd to distant places for grazing since the area in the proximity is under guard.

**Mussa, you look so young. At your age, you are supposed to be in class. What made you come to work here as a herdsman.**

First of all, I did not choose to work as a herdsman. I was asked by my grandfather who is the manager responsible for livestock at Andiamo to come and herd the cattle. Seeing that I have relentless problems, I could not resist the offer. I dropped out of school in my primary six because I had no cloths and could not afford certain things.

**Is this the same story with you, Connex?**

Yah, I also dropped out of school in primary six. I had nothing to do at home and I decided to look for a job. When I came at Andiamo to seek job, I was turned away two times. But because I was so importunate, I acquired the job and I was asked to herd the cattle.

**We just started with asking you questions, can you tell us about yourself.**

Am Connex Somo and I was born in Dedza district in a family of four siblings. I am 23 years old and currently living in Khoswe village.

**And you?**

Am Mussa Saidi and am 21 years old. I live in Kaumphawi village but I was born in Chikala, Machinga District. We are seven in our family.

**Do you have any last word to say?**

Yes, we just want to ask the top management to look into the problems that we face. We appeal for better working conditions. If possible, we should be provided with good working attire such as gumboots and dustcoats so as to withstand harsh environment out there.

**Thanks guys for your time.**

You are welcome!



*See a photo gallery on the next page*



The giant bull in the kraal



Connex enters into the kraal without shoes



Eugenio admires the beauty of the herd



Paul takes short notes during the interview