

## Protection Guidance in Livestock Interventions in Emergencies



Following a natural disaster or a crisis, due to conflict the safety, security and well-being of livestock is often a primary, if not the main concern of affected owners. Patterns of movement for livestock-owning human populations following a disaster can be heavily influenced by the needs of their animals. Furthermore, livestock shelter and settlement infrastructure can play a key role in influencing the human shelter and settlement decisions taken by affected communities. In some emergencies, livestock that were not previously sheltered may develop the need for protection and shelter – for example in severe weather conditions or extreme insecurity.

'The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards' (LEGS) is founded on a rights-based approach, and in keeping with the Sphere Humanitarian Charter, recognizes *the right to life with dignity* and the *right to food* and the *right to a standard of living*. In other words, disaster-affected populations have the right to the protection of their livelihood. LEGS livelihoods perspective also means that the guidelines are concerned not only with immediate emergency response in acute situations, but also with recovery-phase activities and the linkages with long-term development processes.

LEGS aim to ensure the protection of people involved in livestock-related emergency responses and to minimize risk. Preparedness is a significant aspect of disaster response in LEGS, to save human lives and emphasise the importance of the preservation of livelihood assets in order to protect and maintain future livelihoods.

### What are some examples of protection issues in a livestock emergency?

- The distribution of livestock may increase individual households' vulnerability to theft or looting;
- Activities that require women to travel to remote areas, for example in search of feed or water for livestock may place them at personal risk;
- The establishment of water sources without effective management systems can leave individuals vulnerable to exploitation;
- Older persons and those with disabilities sometimes play an important role with livestock that may make them vulnerable to attack;
- The movement of livestock to new areas can increase the potential for conflict between the host and visiting communities, especially in times of natural resource scarcity.

### What does a protection approach to a livestock emergency require?

- Analysis of the local security environment in relation to livestock ownership patterns;
- Analysis of recent history of livestock looting or raiding;
- Understanding of husbandry practices and the need to access livestock services or markets to indicate high-risk practices and activities;
- Analysis of stakeholders and of how different categories of the population are affected by a conflict or natural disaster will ensure a better understanding of the most vulnerable.
- Capacity to prevent potential problems that may arise when
  - moving livestock to insecure grazing areas or water points,
  - using grazing areas that are mined or that have unexploded ordinance,
  - containing livestock at night in unprotected areas, or
  - keeping types of livestock that may be targeted by armed groups.

Assessments should analyse the trade-offs between the protection risks and the potential livelihoods benefits of greater livestock ownership or access to livestock products. In some cases, traditional livestock management practice may be modified to enhance protection.

Particularly vulnerable groups should be targeted in this assessment process in order to ensure that their protection needs are identified. The role of women, children, older persons and persons with a disability needs to be understood.

The relevance of livestock interventions needs to be understood in the context of human rights and protection. Hence livestock aid workers need to be fully aware of rights-based approaches to humanitarian intervention, and humanitarian principles. In addition, workers also need to be familiar with livelihoods-based programming.

### Areas Where Protection Issues Confront Livestock Owners

#### 1. Safety, Dignity and Integrity

The principle of protection relates to the *safety, dignity and integrity of the individual* and draws on international humanitarian law and international human rights. In emergencies, particularly those involving conflict, the protection of the affected population may be compromised and communities and individuals may suffer from

- sexual violence;
- theft;
- looting;
- coercion;
- exploitation;
- attack;
- deprivation;
- the misappropriation of land and/or
- the destruction of services.



In insecure environments, livestock can easily be regarded as a valuable and desirable item by armed militia, police, security forces or criminals. Armed groups and governments will sometimes use livestock raiding as a specific strategic tactic for terrorizing communities and asset stripping. Consequently, in some situations the provision of livestock can place vulnerable communities at increased risk of violence.

## ***2. Protection implications of the provision of livestock***

The provision of large numbers of livestock where resources are scarce may also be a potential source of conflict between farmers and livestock owners, or between livestock-owning groups. Agencies working in conflict areas may also need to ensure that animals for sale have not been stolen. Agencies responding to emergencies have the responsibility to ensure that their interventions at the least do not increase risk to beneficiaries (do no harm), and where possible aim to reduce risk and increase protection.

## ***3. Destocking can be a further source of insecurity***

Protection considerations may also affect the decision whether to engage in destocking activities and how to implement them. In insecure environments livestock can be an additional source of insecurity as they are easily mobile, disposable for cash and/or used for wealth accumulation. Private traders may also be unwilling to venture into insecure areas. Destocking operations (whether commercial or slaughter) could exacerbate a conflict situation as they involve large cash transactions, making communities more vulnerable to risks; while in contrast the distribution of fresh or dry meat, if it can be managed securely, represents a less risky input to individual households. Agencies working in conflict areas may need to ensure that animals for sale have not been stolen. The security of agency staff may also be at risk where large amounts of cash are transported.

A key element to ensure a positive protection outcome is participation. This can improve organisations, mobilise people and enable people to avoid, resist or challenge the threats and policies against them so that they become protection actors and not simply the victims of violations or circumstances. In destocking, indigenous or local organizations can take a lead in beneficiary identification, organizing sale sites, agreeing pricing policies and overseeing slaughter operations. Livestock-owning communities also generally have considerable indigenous knowledge about slaughtering as well as meat preparation and preservation methods. In addition they draw on their indigenous livestock management expertise in the selection of which stock types and which individual animals should be destocked (whether by accelerated off-take or for slaughter) and which should be protected to form a core breeding herd for the future.

In potential conflict areas, destocking may exacerbate the security situation since the transaction involves the movement of large sums of money. The feasibility of moving cash in the areas should be assessed, as well as the extent to which destocking may aggravate existing insecurity before destocking activities are determined upon.

For slaughter destocking, the following need to be considered;

- What slaughter facilities exist?
- What are the local religious and cultural requirements with regard to livestock slaughter?

- What are local gender roles with regard to slaughter, meat preparation, tanning etc.?
- Which are the most vulnerable communities, households, and individuals affected by the emergency who could benefit from destocking
- Should temporary market sites be established to reach remote villages?
- Which vulnerable groups should be targeted to receive the meat from destocking operations?
- Which individuals could benefit from the employment opportunities that destocking could provide?
- Can a system be established to dispose of hides and skins?

#### **4. *Animal Health Intervention can expose animal health workers to increased risk***

The protection implications of any animal health intervention can be identified and should be taken into account. For example, Community Animal Health Worker (CAHWs) carrying cash and/or medicines may be at increased personal risk of robbery or attack, since veterinary drugs can be high in value while low in volume and thus easy to steal. Insecurity can also have animal health implications: animals stolen from a neighbouring group or area can bring disease into the herds.

Service design should take account of the possible exposure of veterinary personnel to violence, abduction or theft. Livestock are often grazed away from more secure settlements and sometimes have to be moved long distances to grazing areas and water points. In conflict situations, veterinary workers travelling to such areas may be at risk. In part, the use of local para-veterinary workers can be appropriate in these situations because they know the local area and the relevant armed groups or security forces, and are able to negotiate access. In areas where livestock are very important to local economies and livelihoods, veterinary drugs are highly prized and as small-volume and high-value items, easy to loot and re-sell.

#### **5. *Vulnerabilities of Disaster-affected Communities***

Emergency situations may be plagued by lawlessness and civil strife, even when they have not arisen directly as a result of conflict. Protection of the poorest livestock keepers who may not be equipped to deal with theft of their stock should be considered. Programmes should consider carefully how continuing protection of the animals involved can be ensured. Where such protection cannot be reasonably guaranteed, options such as destocking may be more appropriate.

Successful livestock feeding programmes should result in livestock that regain or increase their original value and that may therefore be more attractive for looting. Feed camps involving the concentration of large numbers of livestock may attract thieves, particularly in insecure areas.

Where large numbers of people have been displaced and moved with their livestock into camps, grazing may be available outside the camp but at the risk of violence or personal insecurity, in which case the provision of feed to the camp or nearby area may be appropriate.



## **6. Establishing Safe Distribution Networks**

The risks to the personal safety of beneficiaries and staff in transporting feeds for use in emergency programmes should always be of paramount importance. The disruption caused by emergencies is very often associated with a degree of lawlessness and the cargo and trucks used by distribution networks can offer a tempting target for robbery. Most international relief agencies have well-established security guidelines that account for this and are generally able to implement these effectively, often in collaboration with local or other security agencies. However, it may be difficult for small-scale local initiatives with limited resources to achieve a similar level of protection. Establishing a safe distribution network to ensure the safety and security of beneficiaries travelling to and from and at distribution points should be a priority.

## **7. Water Users**

Protection of water users should be taken into account. For example people watering animals at water points may be vulnerable to livestock rustling, robbery or attack, in particular women.

Water point management must be addressed prior to rehabilitation or establishment in order to avoid potential ownership conflicts as well as to ensure equitable access and sustainable systems for the future. Issues of water management are particularly important to ensure the protection of water users around refugee or Internally Displaced People's camps – for example when the camp residents need access to water points outside the camp for their livestock and may come into conflict with the host populations. Negotiation with all stakeholders beforehand can help to minimize potential conflicts.

## **8. Location of Livestock Shelters**

The location of livestock shelters can also affect the protection of livestock owners. For example shelters built at some distance from human habitation may expose people to risk, in particular women or children, especially in conflict areas. The process of shelter construction may also have security implications if women are required to look for construction materials in remote areas. Livestock settlement should provide for safe cohabitation of livestock and human communities. This is particularly important to reduce the risk of disease transmission from animals to humans and to prevent vector-borne disease transmission from animal faeces.

In addition to physical shelter for housing livestock, there may be need for settlement infrastructure to enable safe, sustainable livestock management. This may include advising on or providing access to water and food sources, and protection from theft and predators using site enclosures. All settlement infrastructures should be designed using indigenous knowledge and building practices.



As part of the analysis the following are important

- Responses need to meet the livestock shelter needs for protection, access, security, and management of the beneficiary communities and participatory assessment methodologies used.
- The beneficiary community must participate in the initiative and
  - Local knowledge used in design and construction;
  - Local materials sourced;

- Management structures established where necessary to maintain communal shelters;
- Beneficiaries involved in monitoring and evaluating the initiative.
- Access to livestock and livestock products needs to be maintained for vulnerable groups.
- Participants' views of the benefits of the initiative collected.
- Newly constructed livestock shelters and settlement infrastructure needs to take future disaster mitigation into account in siting, design and construction.
- Focus group discussions with affected vulnerable groups, take into account gender, age, HIV-status and other variables.
- A gender and/or protection analysis will assist targeting.

Although the focus of humanitarian protection is beneficiaries, protection and security also apply to implementing agency staff. The physical safety of agency staff and their ability to access and operate in affected areas can also be severely threatened by insecurity, which can also lead to high implementation costs due to the need for good communications systems, extra vehicles, armed-escorts and so on. Consequent delays in implementation may lead to inappropriate timing of interventions and/or last minute changes that may affect the quality and impact of the response.

For groups like Food Security Clusters protection considerations may be linked to other cross cutting issues like the environment. Slaughter destocking generates waste that needs to be disposed of safely, requires water that may be in short supply, and can contribute to soil, air and water pollution. On the other hand, it may be that destocking on a very large scale can have a beneficial effect in that it may relieve the pressure on natural resources during a time of scarcity (such as a drought). Where the biodiversity of livestock species is under threat, care should be taken to ensure that destocking activities do not exacerbate the loss of local livestock biodiversity through the preservation of core breeding herds and species.

*LEGS Project (2009), Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, UK*  
<http://practicalaction.org/publishing>

For further details on LEGS Project activities including the global training programme and free download of the LEGS Handbook, please see the LEGS website: [www.livestock-emergency.net](http://www.livestock-emergency.net)



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