Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, recurrent droughts exacerbate food insecurity by causing chronic food shortages, livestock mortality, and conflict over scarce natural resources. Since 2013, the Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) project supports pastoralist households in Afar, Oromia, and Somali Regions to build resilience to drought-induced animal mortality by facilitating market systems development. The near failure of three consecutive rainy seasons (Guu, Karan and the following Guu rains) in 2015-16 resulted in drought and massive displacement of pastoralists in search of pasture and water. Livestock suffered stress and their susceptibility to serious diseases, like internal and external parasites, increased.

An evaluation of four heavily drought affected woredas in Fafan Zone in Somali Region revealed that short- and long-term activities had effectively enabled households to quickly recover, maintain or improve key food security measures in the face of drought. The multi-year and flexible funding along with an integrated approaches were important factors for resilience-building of pastoralist communities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
The main objective was to build resilience of pastoralist households through (1) improving livestock production and competitiveness, (2) enhancing households’ ability to adapt to climate change, (3) increasing livelihood diversification and long-term market opportunities, (4) innovation, learning and knowledge management, and (5) improving the nutritional status of children and mothers.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS
The activities were implemented with the support of the Aged and Children Pastoralists Association (ACPA), Action for Integrated Sustainable Development (AISDA), Care, Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD), Haramaya University, Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee (HAVOYOCO), Kimetrica, SOS Sahel, and the Friendship Support Association (FSA).
**APPROACH**

The following integrated approach and mix of activities was implemented in the evaluation area, including:

**Access to financial services** was increased by identifying and engaging with formal, semi-formal and informal institutions (e.g. microfinance institutions, commercial banks, village savings and loan associations, rural savings and credit cooperatives).

**Access to weather and market information** was improved by empowering local experts (e.g. meteorologists, traditional forecasters). Local experts and community representatives were invited and encouraged to discuss and interpret climate information, explore scenarios and potential impacts. Together with the communities, contingency plans were developed.

**Access to natural resources** was enhanced by applying soft as well as hard approaches, i.e. the rehabilitation of existing or construction of new infrastructure went along with trainings, information-sharing, and discussion to develop context-specific frameworks.

**Livestock production, management and marketing** was improved by expanding access and availability of feed, fodder and animal health services, capital to boost trade, and market information to strengthen the dairy value chain.

**IMPACTS**

Selected categories of food security and wellbeing measures were evaluated for households in PRIME and non-PRIME communities.

**Food Security**: On average, households in target communities had a higher food diversity score than others. By contributing to an increased income-generation and/or access to markets, the households could purchase and consume more nutritious foods, even during acute crises.

**Economic Status**: Households could maintain important assets in times of crisis. The target groups’ asset values were 1.4 times higher than those of the comparison group. Target households were also less likely to fall under the poverty line.

**Livestock Health**: Beneficiaries could maintain healthier herds during drought; they were less likely to experience animal deaths, and could protect their breeding cattle - a critical component of healthy and resilient herds. The lower animal mortality rate suggests that PRIME’s support to veterinary care and animal markets allowed households to avoid losing weakened livestock.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

Innovative investment and long-term resilience-building strategies contribute to mitigating the effects of natural disasters, and protecting development gains. The efficacy of multi-year, multi-sectoral approaches that are integrated provide opportunities to strengthen local systems (markets, ecological, livelihoods), and enable communities to respond and adapt to major shocks.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Increase investments in building resilience in contexts experiencing recurrent crises by providing multi-year and flexible funding to cover short-term humanitarian needs and contribute to long-term development.

Strengthen local systems by increasing investments in market, ecological and governance systems that reinforce household ability to effectively manage shocks and stressors.

Dedicate sufficient time, technical and financial resources to effectively evaluate complex resilience-building programmes, and ensure that research components are included in program design and proposals.