Veterinary Vouchers to Improve Drought Resilience 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.

To improve livestock production (1) and enhance households’ ability to adapt to crisis (2), pastoralists were provided access to veterinary inputs and services. This activity proved to be particularly successful and improved the health status of livestock that was severely affected by the drought, as well as the collaboration amongst pastoralists and key stakeholders.

**STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS**

The project focused on fostering collaboration with and improving business relationships between local government, Private Veterinary Pharmacists (PVPs), Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) and livestock producers.

For more information, go [here](#) or get in touch with [Michael Jacobs](#).
### APPROACH

**A rapid market assessment** was conducted to determine the price of veterinary drugs or the **voucher value**, respectively, and to identify essential drugs during periods of drought.

**Key market actors**, like registered PVPs, CAHWs, and veterinary drug wholesalers, were identified.

For **increased information-sharing and coordination**, the coordination with local government officials, international and local NGOs was improved.

Selection criteria were elaborated with **local committees**, who also facilitated the identification of the most vulnerable households.

A list of veterinary parasite drugs approved by the administration and authorities was prepared, and **veterinary vouchers** were issued. This list was shared with participating **Private Veterinary Pharmacists (PVPs)** for distribution. The PVPs were selected and contracted based on their location, operation, capacity, available registration and license. The processes of the veterinary voucher scheme were introduced and discussed during a workshop.

The vouchers were distributed in collaboration with the local government and Community Animal Health Workers. The PVPs submitted the collected vouchers and were reimbursed through their bank account.

### IMPACTS

**Strengthened supply and producer linkages**: Each PVP collaborated with five to eight CAHWs who are in regular exchange with pastoralists. The majority of the CAHWs indicated that the demand increased and they received more pastoralists per day (on average 20; compared to five before the intervention). In addition, the collaboration between PVPs and wholesalers intensified as a result of improved confidence to provide veterinary products on a credit basis and in bulk. In turn, regional wholesalers observed an increased sale of products, lowered their wholesale prices, and offered improved credit services.

**Enhanced public-private partnerships**: The public sector recognised the importance of the private sector during times of emergencies. If the public sector faces constraints, they may revert to functioning markets to cover the need for necessary drugs.

**Reduced livestock death**: An increased animal health and reduced livestock death was observed.

**Reduced households' transaction cost**: Pastoralists were able to save expenditures and time in search of drugs.

**Increased access to new quality products**: The voucher system introduced new veterinary products, such as multi-vitamins, to introduce alternative products and diversify the products.

### LESSONS LEARNED

**Government involvement** is important to follow-up and monitor the process and prices of veterinary products and services.

The **verification and approval of vouchers for redemption** was time-consuming and resulted in delays which in turn slowed down the implementation.

Poor access to remote areas and **timely localisation of pastoralists' seasonal movements** remained challenging throughout the project.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of **locally adapted mechanisms for data collection** may improve the monitoring of the number of livestock treated.

To be able to track the location of and reach out to pastoralists, the **identification of local agents along nomadic routes** may increase information-sharing and communication.

The introduction of new drugs needs to go along with **increased mobilisation and awareness-raising** on drug handling and management. The contextualisation of information and knowledge is key for the communication (written vs oral information).

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