

Increasing the Resilience of Pastoralists in the Horn of Africa

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An estimated 15 to 20 million people in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan depend on pastoralism for their livelihoods. Raising and herding livestock for a living, nomadic pastoralists move with rainy and dry seasons in search of water and grazing land. In some instances, nomadic families become agro-pastoralists by settling in one area, with some family members raising agricultural crops to meet a portion of household food needs while others go with their animals in search of pasture and water.

Due to their reliance on natural resources, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. Even under normal circumstances, pastoral communities often face extreme challenges in meeting basic

needs. The gradual desertification of arable land, encroachment of grazing land by unpalatable plant species, population growth, increased use of traditional grazing land and water sources for farming, and soil erosion have led to reduced land and water availability. At the same time, nomadic communities throughout the Horn of Africa have suffered both political and economic marginalization within their own countries.

Although these communities have developed ways to survive isolated emergencies, coping mechanisms are frequently exhausted through consecutive shocks. In recent years, pastoralists in the Horn of Africa have increasingly come under threat due to the cumulative effects of crises such as drought, food shortages, disease, cold temperatures, looting, and lack of access to grazing lands due to conflict.

For pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, animals are productive assets. While most communities trade milk, hides, and some crops for food and other products, they rarely raise animals for the purpose of market sale. When they do sell livestock, it is generally as a coping strategy of last resort. As the effects of crises accumulate, household assets, including livestock, are depleted. Even after crises have passed, smaller herds provide fewer products for trade or consumption, leaving pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa food insecure and increasingly vulnerable to the next crisis.

Due to their nomadic lifestyle, pastoralists are often overlooked when assistance is provided to more sedentary, agricultural communities. Additionally, access to services necessary for their livelihood—especially animal health services—are not readily available or are too expensive for nomadic populations to obtain.

In response to these unique vulnerabilities, OFDA has created a regional initiative to support pilot interventions that strengthen these communities' abilities to withstand crises. In FY 2004 and FY 2005, OFDA provided more than \$2.4 million for multi-sectoral interventions in pastoralist



COURTESY OF GOAL

Beneficiaries participate in an OFDA-funded and GOAL-managed livestock fair in Oromiya Region, Ethiopia.



Pastoralists bring their camels to market in Eritrea.

communities.⁴ The following are examples of innovative programs designed to increase pastoralist resilience in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan.

In Oromiya Region, Ethiopia, OFDA is working to increase food security and improve natural resource and water management systems for more than 33,000 Kereyou and Ittu pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in East Shoa Zone. Food security activities include increasing fodder through tree planting and improving grazing resources through small scale flood diversion to stimulate areas of grass cover as pasture. OFDA's implementing partner GOAL is working with local groups to improve training for community-based animal health workers as well as providing essential drugs and equipment. OFDA funding is also improving natural resource management by reducing the demand

for wood and charcoal through fuel-efficient stoves as well as by strengthening water management systems to encourage greater community participation in their construction, maintenance, and repair.

In the North Eastern Province of Kenya and the Oromiya Region of Ethiopia, OFDA is supporting the creation of mini-dairy processing enterprises, targeting primarily pastoral women's groups who are the sole traders of milk commodities. Participating towns include Garissa and Wajir in Kenya and Moyale, Yabello, and Negelle in Ethiopia. By establishing a mini-dairy processing group in each town, the OFDA-funded Tufts University program increases local access to pasteurized milk and milk products, improving the health of the regional population. The program guarantees an income source for the targeted women, empowering them to make their own economic choices. By mitigating the seasonal surpluses and scarcities of milk and enabling year-long milk production, the program also strengthens the resilience of the pastoral

⁴ In addition to the pastoralist initiative, in FY 2005 OFDA provided more than \$100 million for programs in the Horn of Africa, many of which directly and indirectly support pastoral livelihoods.

