

Community Empowerment Assures Pastoralists' Resilience

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More than 30,000 vulnerable pastoralist households in Arero district, Borana zone in Southern Ethiopia have transitioned from relying on emergency relief handouts during perennial droughts, to actively participating in socio-economic development activities to improve their livelihoods.

Located 670 km from Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa, Arero is one of the 13 districts in Borana zone, Oromia regional state, with 20 rural pastoralist associations. The pastoralists living in this drought-stricken area have been hard to reach and marginalized since for a long time.

Arero district is prone to the effects of extreme weather negatively affecting the lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable communities. The perennial droughts, water scarcity, pasture degradation; inter-ethnic conflicts over resources and prevalence of livestock diseases have further aggravated the vulnerability of the 2,600 households living in four communities of Hallona, Gadda, Kaffara and Web pastoralist communities.



Mr. Dima Haro

Most Arero pastoralists have a limited capacity and lack coping mechanisms to adapt to the risks they are facing due to climate change. Their traditional early warning systems have also not been very effective for weather and climate forecasting. The overall productivity of 200,000 heads of livestock including: cattle, goats, camels, and donkeys have previously been hampered by the poor ecosystem management, resulting in limited incomes for the vulnerable pastoralist communities.

Today, there is a new dawn for the Arero pastoralist community. The pastoralists have become empowered to proactively identify, prioritize and implement their development aspirations in order to mitigate the effects of hazards and shocks from climate change. From 2013 to 2015, Partners for Resilience (PfR) program, through Action For Development (AFD) in Ethiopia catalysed the community empowerment process through the implementation of the Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) approach in Hallona, Gadda, Kaffara and Web pastoralist communities.

Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)

Four minimum requirements:

1. Conduct Participatory Disaster Risk Reduction Assessment (PDRA) and document findings
2. Develop Community Action Plans with information from the PDRA results and hand over the plans to the CMDRR Committee for implementation
3. Establish the CMDRR Committee as a local Community Organization to implement the Community Action Plan through community mobilization
4. Conduct Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and learning with the facilitation of the CMDRR Committee and other stakeholders using a participatory risk review and reflection process to generate information. Thereafter, disseminate the learning to the beneficiary communities

The CMDRR process for defining the community and institutional resilience-building agenda of the Arero pastoralists was led by PfR in conjunction with cultural institutions, civil society organizations, humanitarian, and development partners.

To embark on the CMDRR process, a Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) was conducted in the four target communities in 2012. About 300 community members (199 males and 101 females) participated in the exercise to optimize gender-representation and also ensure community wide consensus on the Action Plans.

The findings of the PDRA, prioritized through community participation, highlighted the following local hazards: drought, rangeland degradation, livestock disease, and inter-ethnic conflicts as the major hazards affecting the lives and livelihoods of the four pastoralist communities in Arero. In addition, the most-at-risk populations were ranked as: women, the elderly, the physically challenged, and children. These specific populations were earmarked for special resilience building efforts through the Action For Development (AFD).

In order to spearhead the implementation of resilience building response to the community priorities, each target pastoralist community in collaboration with the local customary institutions, local government agencies and civil society organizations established a multi-sectoral community-based organization named the Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) committee. The composition of the CMDRR committees ensured the participation of local community opinion leaders for community ownership and sustainability of project achievements.

The CMDRR implemented the Community Action Plans with a focus on resilience building activities such as: strengthening Early Warning Systems, improving access to safe water, quality pasture, and livestock health care services aimed at increased livestock productivity.

Through PfR jointly with Action For Development (AFD), the pastoralists have strengthened their resilience by reducing the overall impact of natural hazards on their livelihoods through:

- a. Improved availability and access to safe water for 720 households and 15,000 livestock by constructing four paved ground catchment cisterns each with the capacity of 100 M³ and four ponds each with the capacity of 20,000 M³.
- b. Improved availability and access to quality pasture for lactating cows, calves, and weak / diseased livestock through rehabilitation of 2,000 hectares of previously degraded rangelands.
- c. Overall improvement of livestock productivity through enhanced healthcare service delivery at Arero district with Community-based Animal Health Workers providing treatment services for about 195,000 cattle and 100,000 shoats owned by about 30,000 households.
- d. Diversified livelihoods by building capacities of three Co-operative Societies (two Saving and Credit and one Livestock Marketing) by providing basic training on Business Management and Leadership skills to the 155 members. The Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies had a total savings of ETB 50,000 during the period of 2013-2015. Each of the members contributed ETB 15 per month. Each member received ETB 2000 loan for six months, repayable at an interest rate of 10.5% per annum. The loans were used to improve the livestock productivity in readiness for sales and also contributed to household incomes.
- e. Increased access and response to people-centred weather and climate information through indigenous and conventional Early Warning systems by equipping Community Information Centre, managed by the CMDRR committee within each target area with TV sets.

Participatory Disaster Risk Reduction Assessment

- Community Profile
- Hazard Assessment
- Vulnerability Assessment
- Capacity Assessment
- Risk Analysis



Mr. Dima Haro is one of the other CAHWs trained with Mr. Galgalo Boru providing Livestock health service

Television climate broadcasts from the Ethiopia National Meteorological Agency were used for regional and national level weather forecasts. The CMDRR committees first processed these weather broadcasts and thereafter information that was relevant to the local context was disseminated to the local community through community meetings and outreach programs. This climate information was also complemented with the indigenous Early Warning signals for drought such as the behaviour of livestock, the position of stars and the colour of clouds. The climate information enabled the community to adequately prepare for droughts by purchasing additional grain stocks for household consumption, purchasing hay and selling livestock.

Community-based Animal Health workers improve livestock healthcare service delivery

Galgalo Boru, 37, a Community-based Animal Health Worker is a living testimony of the community empowerment efforts towards improving service delivery for livestock healthcare in Arero district.

Galgalo was recruited, trained, equipped with kits. According to Galgalo,



Mr. Galgalo Boru

"I am a local pastoralist within the Web Pastoralist Association owning 15 cattle and 20 goats. Our livelihood is directly linked to livestock, thus it is only secured when livestock healthcare service delivery is guaranteed. In 2013, I was identified with 20 other pastoralists by the community for training in livestock healthcare. I was equipped with knowledge; skills and toolkits to conduct livestock disease surveillance, treatment of sick livestock and to also provide vaccination services within my locality in collaboration with Arero District Pastoral Development office. Every month, I report my livestock healthcare activities, including the number of livestock treated, drugs dispensed and disease outbreaks to the Pastoralist office."

Previously, livestock healthcare services were only available at Arero district headquarters located 100 km away. Therefore, livestock disease outbreaks were very common. These resulted in poor livestock productivity and massive losses from deaths.

"Today, my pastoralist community has access to basic livestock healthcare services. In addition to providing livestock health services, I also established an Agro Vet drug shop at Web market. Currently, my business is flourishing. I have purchased five cattle as an additional family asset. I also cater for the needs of my family, including my school-going children from the business profits. I am a testimony of rendering voluntary services to my pastoralist community, while supplementing my income through the knowledge and skills acquired from the Action For Development (AFD)," said Galgalo.