



# Cooperating for the sake of our resilience: A rare partnership between private sector and pastoralist herders in Laikipia

Location:  
Laikipia County  
Kenya

Partners:  
Cordaid

Author:  
Zeituna Roba



Ms Jane Maiyani, one of the four women who sit in the 12-member cooperative management committee  
Photo credit: Cordaid



Steers inside Borana Ranch where they are brought by the community for fattening under private/public partnership  
Photo credit: Cordaid

**Herds of livestock grazing in almost bare land is a common sight in parts of Laikipia North Sub-County which is inhabited by the pastoral community.**

*"Our land has been degraded and cannot support a large number of animals. The situation is worse during drought when the animals die and we are left impoverished." Wilfred Mejooli, cooperative society chairman.*

Fenced ranches also dot this landscape and unlike the open rangelands, there is plenty of pasture here, providing adequate forage for livestock and wild animals throughout the year. The constant movement by herders and their livestock has been the pastoralists' ways of life, crisscrossing the communally owned land during the dry and wet seasons.

Whenever severe drought strikes, desperation forces the herders to migrate to Mt Kenya and Aberdare forests where many of the animals succumb to diseases in the extremely cold environment.

Dry seasons come with dreadful consequences for the ranchers, where pastoralists either from Laikipia or neighbouring Counties of Isiolo and Samburu desperately drive their livestock to the privately-owned land.

For instance, in 2017, several privately-owned ranches in Laikipia County were invaded by the migrating armed herders, resulting in confrontations where human lives were lost and property worth millions of shillings destroyed.

But one private ranch in Laikipia County survived the invasions owing to a public-private partnership developed between the ranch management and the neighbouring community.



[www.partnersforresilience.nl](http://www.partnersforresilience.nl) | [partnersforresilience@redcross.nl](mailto:partnersforresilience@redcross.nl)



Steers grazing inside Borana Ranch in Laikipia County where they are brought by the community for fattening. The community has formed a cooperative society to market the beef cattle through a project supported by Cordaid in collaboration with the ranch  
Photo credit: Cordaid

*"In April 2019, Cordaid supported a three-day training programme in several areas of management including Principles of Cooperative Society, Book Keeping and Financial Management something that set the ball rolling." Ochen Mayiani, Secretary Oramat Lenaboisho Cooperative Society.*

The partnership at Borana Ranch, supported by Cordaid's Partners for Resilience (PfR) programme has seen the 32,000-acre private ranch and the community enter into a Memorandum of Understanding beneficial to both parties.

This engagement with members from six neighbouring villages marked the birth of unique livestock marketing cooperative society as a strategy to minimize climate change-related hazards, top on the list being drought, livestock diseases and natural resources-based conflicts.

Members of Oramat Lenaboisho Cooperative Society are allowed to take steers to the ranch for a fattening programme where they are sold after about four months and the proceeds shared in an agreed formula with the livestock owners taking the lion share.

Borana Ranch General Manager Abdi Sora says the engagement with the community is beneficial to both parties. The private farm has successfully established its first line of defence against invasion by herders and the community is now changing the mindset to rear livestock for profits and not keeping hundreds of unhealthy animals for prestige and cultural attachments.

The cooperative society was registered in 2017 and currently has 150 community members drawn from Chumvi, Ethi, Nandung'oro, Ngarendare, Makurian and Sang'a villages.

With teething problem experienced on its formative stages, the entry of Cordaid brought the much-needed support that paved way for prosperity.

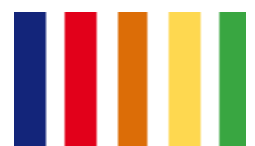
With no background knowledge on running a cooperative society, building the capacity of the 12-members sitting in the executive committee was the much-needed intervention to roll out this programme.

Cordaid stepped in and took up the issue by organising training and education tours to give the members the necessary exposure.

Borana Ranch Community Liaison Officer Ochen Mayiani who doubles as the secretary to the cooperative society says Cordaid and the ranch funded the learning visits for the members to First Choice Nutrifeeds at Chaka in Nyeri County where a farmer buys weak animals from pastoralists, feeds them for three months before selling them to high-end buyers.

The Committee also visited Enonkishu Conservancy's 600-acre piece of land. It is owned by a group of 32 people committed to sustainable rangeland management and has succeeded in creating a livestock enterprise through a holistic management approach.

*"For the first time, women have a say in the proper management of resources unlike previously when they could only sit back and abide by decisions arrived at by men." Jane Mayiani, one of the four women sitting in the 12-member management committee.*



*"As young people, we are now part of this change of moving from traditional ways of keeping herds of cattle for prestige and now viewing this occupation as a business venture." Saita Kitonga, 32, the cooperative society's supervisory committee secretary.*

"The learning visits broadly opened our way of thinking and we started seeing the missing gaps between what we have been practising for years and what we should be doing. Cordaid came at a time of need and this can never be regretted," says Wilfred Mejooli, chairman of the cooperative society.

Back at home, it was time to implement what they had learned, during the capacity building workshops and the learning tours.

In this partnership with Borana Ranch, members of the community who are in the cooperative society are allowed to take a maximum of 20 steers for fattening. Members pay Ksh500 and Ksh2,500 for registration and share capital respectively.

In the same programme, those who are yet to join the Society are also allowed to take in steers provided they come from the six areas as the group continues to woo them into becoming members in the future.

The steers are weighed and recorded at the entry point. Once in the ranch, they feed on natural pasture, are given supplements, dipping and other provisions in animal husbandry services for between four and five months with the sole aim being to fatten them.

"When the steers are ready we contact the buyer directly and this has helped keep off brokers (middlemen) who have been taking advantage of individual herders while selling their animals," says Sora.

After the sale of the animals, the owner gets 70percent of the total sale where 20 per cent goes to the ranch for grazing and other costs incurred during the animals stay at the ranch.

The herders have their internal insurance plan where 10 per cent of the sale is deducted to cater for compensation in case a steer is killed by wild animals in the conservancy.

The success of this project has seen other conservancies in the region replicate this model with Mugie and Ole Naishu borrowing a leaf from Borana Ranch. Through this cooperative society, the herders have an alternative livelihood with a sustainable livestock market where they have so far been able to sell over 1,500 steers, generating Ksh60 Million.

Women who have traditionally been relegated to the periphery by the patriarchal society have now taken leadership roles.

Other benefits accrued from this partnership between the community and the private ranch includes improvement of degraded rangelands owing to the reduced number of animals in the grazing fields.

Youths have also been brought on board and given key positions to guarantee the sustainability of the project.

Plans are underway to register a Credit and Savings Cooperative Society (SACCO) where members can save and borrow money to grow livestock business or to cater for arising personal financial needs.

During the international DRR Day in 2018, Cordaid supported a cleanup programme for Ngare Ndare River whose waters had been heavily polluted owing to human activities upstream.

This was deemed essential as sustaining the SACCO's initiatives goes hand in hand with the conservation of the Ngare Ndare River ecosystem, the main source of water for the villages bordering Borana Ranch.

*"I sit in the board of Ngare Ndare WRUA and Cordaid supported us through IMPACT, one of its implementers of PFR programme to clean up the river and sensitize the community to stop polluting this water source so that communities living downstream can get clean water for domestic use." Abdi Sora, Borana Ranch General Manager.*

