



Livestock market secures livelihoods in Marsabit, Kenya

1. Background

Increased and protracted drought as a result of climate change has increased the vulnerability and threatened the livelihoods of people in arid and semi-arid land areas of northern Kenya. In Ol-Turot village in Marsabit county, pastoralists used to sell their livestock just to meet their basic needs and not for profit. Due to their cultural attachment to their animals, the people could not see their livestock in terms of money.

Chronic drought, food insecurity, poor infrastructure and lack of credit facilities have further undermined efforts to encourage pastoralists to expand their investment in livestock trade as a means of income during droughts. In any event, there was no proper established area where buyers from other regions could come and trade livestock. The original Ol-Turot livestock market had been supported by the Anglican Development Services through the construction of a small livestock yard, which eventually became run down. The villagers lost interest in marketing. There were no women traders, water or sanitation facilities. The community required a larger market to accommodate different species of livestock in different sale yards.



Pastoralist taking livestock to selling yard

2. The project

Vétérinaires sans Frontières-Germany (VSF-G) through funding from the European Union's Horn of Africa's Resilience (SHARE) Programme supported a project on the marketing of livestock and livestock products with the aim of commercialising the enterprise in Ol-Turot village of Mt. Kulal in Marsabit County, Kenya.

The village community, with support from VSF-G, first carried out an assessment of hazards facing them and prioritised them through development and contingency planning. The upgrading of livestock marketing ranked as number one. Through a proposal and with technical support from the Department of Livestock Production (DOLP) of Marsabit county, the community requested VSF-G to support livestock market upgrading.

A survey carried out by VSF-G and DOLP also supported the need for an upgraded market. VSF-G engaged all stakeholders, community leaders and the county government of Marsabit for approval of market upgrading. An Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out before construction started.

VSF-G engaged the community to source for local materials, and hired skilled and non-skilled members

of the community for the construction. The local Community Disaster Management Committee was fully involved in the supervision of the construction. The technical staff from DOLP were also fully engaged and supervised construction and training. About 10,000 people from six villages in the Mt. Kulal area participated in the project.

The project covered the construction of: a traders' shade, a livestock sale yard, holding pens for livestock, a loading ramp, income generating activity (IGA) stalls, elevated water tanks, livestock watering troughs, washrooms for men and women, and water supply/piping.

In collaboration with Marsabit's DOLP, VSF-G constructed the new livestock market in Ol-Turot from October to December 2015 and launched it in January, 2016. This empowered pastoralists to form a Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) and link to markets such as Arapal, Kargi, Laisamis, Meri Ile, Illaut, Arge and Jirime in Marsabit town, leading to an increase in local sale of livestock. The completed market was handed over to the LMA after a series of training workshops for members on market management, record keeping, proposal writing and finance management.

3. Outcomes

The project has led to an increase in local livestock sale and strengthened the livelihoods of vulnerable pastoral communities. The upgraded Ol-Turot livestock market has attracted other traders such as wholesalers of maize flour, sugar, and clothes; and stimulated other market activities leading to improved incomes especially among women traders. Women sell tea and other products to people during market days. The market has also led to the stabilisation of prices of food and non-food items due to increased competition and access to these items by community members. Furthermore, there is improved security around Mt. Kulal due to agreements among the resident communities to foster peace and reap the dividends from the market.



"I look forward to market days because I know I will sell my items and use the money to solve any problems I may have."

Ado Munyette, pastoralist from Ol-Turot

Livestock sale figures improved significantly from January to September 2016, but then drought set in again. Owners took their livestock away from Ol-Turot and Mt. Kulal catchment areas in search of pasture and water.

This affected all primary markets including Ol-Turot,

Korr and Illaut. Livestock started streaming back to the Mt. Kulal area only when the rains came between April and June 2017, which were however scattered. Ol-Turot market has since then struggled to attract buyers for the small number of livestock being presented for sale (Table 1). The market operates twice a month.

Table 1. Livestock market data of Ol-Turot from October 2014 to September 2017

Species	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1
	1 Oct 14 - 31 March 15	1 Apr 15 - 31 Sep 15	1 Oct 15 - 31 March 16	1 April 16 - 31 Sep 16	1 Oct 16 - 31 March 17
Sheep	547	610	1137	1069	176
Goats	405	351	811	761	73
Cattle	105	109	118	62	7
Camels	19	18	37	40	6
Donkeys	46	111	93	34	5
Total	1122	1199	2196	1966	267

Recurrent droughts leading to out-migration of pastoralists with their livestock in search of pasture and water has been a major challenge to the growth of Ol-Turot as a primary livestock market. Poor road and telecommunication infrastructure has also hindered access to the market especially during the rainy season. In addition, community culture and practices still do not recognise women as owners of livestock. This has

hindered women's involvement in livestock marketing activities.

The VSF-G team in Marsabit has had meetings with the LMA and DOLP over how to revive the livestock trade. With VSF-G's support, the LMA has requested for a small grant under the SHARE project to enable the community to work on this objective.



4. Conclusions and recommendations

Involving community members in analysing their problems and deciding on their own contingency and action plans is important to ensure the sustainability of any intervention. It is important to engage communities and support them in making wise decisions on the kind and levels of support that they require to improve their livelihoods. Supporting communities in the creation of small business hubs can stimulate trading activities that create alternative livelihood sources for community members.

Pastoralists really value their livestock and are willing to offload excess livestock commercially, especially

during drought periods, in order to get cash for household expenses such as food, children's school fees, and medical fees. A lot of informal trade and exchange of resources happens at livestock markets, which can be harnessed and formalised.

There is a need to mainstream the co-management model being practised by the project's LMA in county and national livestock policies. This will lead to recognition of LMAs and to the democratic sharing of market revenues. It is also necessary to recognise and enhance the role women play in livestock rearing and marketing including carrying out petty trade in the market.



“

“I am now able to get a closer venue for the sale of my livestock and I can therefore cater to my family's needs on time.”

Fadhayo Burcha, pastoralist from Ol-Turot.

Supported by:

THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE
FOR EASTERN AFRICA

Author: Isaac Lubutsi, VSF-Germany, Kenya. (Isaac@vsfg.org)

Editor: G. Clare Westwood, Third World Network

March 2018

This AFSA case study is part of a series highlighting good practice in Agroecology, Pastoralism, Land Rights and Seed Sovereignty. See all at www.afsafrica.org/case-studies/

AFSA encourages the use and reproduction of this case study for non-commercial use provided that appropriate acknowledgment of the source is given.