



©FAO/Karel Prinsloo

662 households benefited
8 641 core livestock survived

Project highlight:
Assuring survival of vulnerable pastoral and agropastoral households in Kenya after severe drought (TCP/KEN/3605)

Livelihoods in Kenya’s arid and semi-arid areas (ASAs) are predominantly pastoral, depending heavily on livestock. The ability to move around in order to access adequate pasture and water sources is essential if animals are to remain productive across the seasons.

In September 2016, FAO and Kenya’s National Drought Management Authority set up an Early Warning Early Action system to mitigate the impact of droughts on communities. In November, rainfall data, vegetation indices and livestock conditions, among other indicators, pointed to the onset of a major drought. A short rains assessment conducted in February 2017 revealed yields that were 30 to 50 percent below average, very poor availability of pasture and water, and deterioration of conditions and death of livestock. The drought was declared a national disaster on 10 February 2017.

“I have been a livestock keeper since my childhood and have seen calamities cause havoc to our livestock — diseases, floods and drought,” says Halima Gutu Gababo, a resident of Dololo Dakiye village, adding that the current drought had caused an unusual degree of damage.

Halima, 48 years old, married and with seven children, came to the village with her family in 1997 after a flood displaced a number of people from their homes in Basa centre. Before the onset of the drought, she had 100 cattle, 50 sheep and goats and four donkeys, but as the drought began she lost 30 cattle and 45 sheep and goats.

Emergencies leave vulnerable households with few options. “Waking up at 4:00 a.m. is a routine during the drought situation. We have to cover 10 km each day searching for pasture and water and only return in the evening at 6:00,” Halima explains. During this time, children are left unattended with no one to cook for them.

Regardless of the success of the search for water, water is indispensable and has to be procured. For Halima, though, water was a rare commodity in the area. “I walk over 12 km every two days to fetch it at a price of 5 Kenyan Shillings [USD 0.05] for a 20-litre jerrycan,” she explains.

The TCP project provided bales of hay, bags of 50 kg range cubes and collapsible water tanks with a capacity of 10 000 litres each, allowing nomadic communities to carry them with them. Emergency relief packages were distributed through three partner non-governmental organizations in Kwale, Isiolo and Marsabit counties.

“I used to spend an average of 15 000 shillings [about USD 150] to buy maize to feed the livestock. During the intervention, this money was directed towards meeting other family obligations. Before the project, there was no time for resting, but during the project I had time to rest and even cook for my family.”

Monitoring of certain parameters indicated a positive response, with close to 100 percent survival of the animals in the target counties. By the end of the project, the monitoring data showed a gradual increase in milk production in Kwale County.

The use of the tools introduced by the project spread rapidly. After training and awareness-raising, some beneficiaries embraced and began to practice hay/fodder conservation for their livestock by using tarpaulins. As reported after monitoring missions, the introduction of range cubes was picked up at a commercial level in other ASAs. The work of the TCP has stimulated similar work in ASAs in other counties. For example, Samaritan’s Purse is scaling up work in Tana River County to support hay/fodder production and conservation.

The intervention also brought together relevant partners at county steering group meetings to identify the capacities and willingness to help and coordinate efforts, in order to avoid duplication and maximize coverage. Furthermore, developing the capacities of county government technical officers in Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards shows other donors that supported regions have learned how to prioritize actions and resources. Such work “improves the timeliness and coordination of emergency response work, which stimulates other partners to gather resources for these interventions,” says Joseph Njuguna, Animal Health Unit Manager at FAO.

Stakeholders are now able to look for more resources. The government staff in Samburu country that attended the training used the gained knowledge to raise funds for livestock support.

Since the termination of the project, the physical condition of Halima's livestock began to deteriorate and further support was needed. The drought management plan of the Government of Kenya had a dedicated response plan of USD 263 million for a nine-month period, but extended support in regions where the period of drought lasted longer than expected. After providing timely assistance to rehabilitate communities from the drought, the project also catalysed resources from other donors to support Kenyan pastoral communities.

Project title

Emergency assistance for vulnerable drought-affected pastoral and agropastoral households

Programme country

Kenya

Key results

16 347 bales of hay, 4 578 bags of 50 kg ranch cubes and 20 collapsible water tanks with a capacity of 10 000 litres each distributed.

Close to 100 percent survival of the animals in the target counties.

Survival of 8 641 core livestock belonging to 662 households, of which 298 were headed by men and 364 by women.

Improved milk production, from 2.3 to 2.4 litres, and from 2.8 litres to 3.1 litres in Kwale county.

Catalytic effects

Belgium, through FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation (SFERA), provided USD 300 000 for the project "Emergency feeding of livestock during drought to improve nutrition in women and children under 5 years" (OSRO/KEN/803/BEL). The project provided 250 tonnes of animal feed ranch cubes and procured veterinary drugs and equipment for livestock in Marsabit County, targeting 1 800 households (10 800 people).