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Global Livestock CRSP

Pastoral Risk Management in Southern Ethiopia: Observations from Pilot Projects based on Participatory Community Assessments

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Pastoral Risk Management Project

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The Borana pastoral system has come under increasing pressure as human populations grow and per capita availability of resources declines. Livestock exhibit large, periodic die-offs that threaten wealth accumulation and food security. Several types of interventions may improve risk management here. For example, there may be opportunity for some pastoralists to diversify their livelihoods. Here we report on a community-based process involving pilot projects begun since 2000. We have embraced Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Action Research (AR) as tools for investigation and empowerment of local people. Full PRAs were conducted for semi-settled communities, located near towns, to identify priority needs and self-help capabilities. Communities selected interventions for implementation in partnership with local development agents as part of Community Action Plans (CAPs). Preliminary observations suggest that these people see income diversification as a major issue. To this end they have a high interest in non-formal education, micro-savings and credit associations, and micro-enterprise development. Newly formed women's groups have taken the lead in adopting innovations. Our experience confirms that risk-management interventions are in demand here, and that the people are dedicated and capable of novel achievements. Pastoralists also exhibit much enthusiasm when allowed to lead their own development initiatives.

Background

The Borana pastoral system—traditionally based on cattle husbandry for wealth storage and milk production—has been noted in the past as a good example of sustainable pastoralism in east Africa. However, similar to other African pastoral peoples, the Boran have come under increasing pressure as the human population grows and availability of natural resources declines. Drought, massive livestock losses, and poorly functioning markets create crises. People like the Boran are under increasing pressure to survive.

There are several options that might better manage risk. One, especially for pastoralists near towns, is small-scale income diversification. Here we describe our experiences dealing with efforts to enhance income diversification for semi-settled pastoralists. First we describe our tools and techniques.

Participatory methods

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Action Research (AR) are two of many approaches whereby control over a project is shared among researchers, development agents, and community members. The PRA model involves partnerships for problem diagnosis and implementation of solutions. The AR model is similar, but in this case researchers assist communities and development agents with rapid assessments of constraints that occur when interventions are implemented. Corrective actions are prescribed. In adopting PRA and AR models, researchers and development agents relinquish much of the power they otherwise have over communities in these settings. By taking the lead in problem identification, communities therefore help set the agenda. One drawback of PRA and AR models is that traditional aspects of research process become less dominant. One advantage, however, is that communities and local partners are better empowered. In this case we feel the trade-off is an easy one to make.

A PRA starts with a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of priority problems, as well as development opportunities that a community faces. Properly done, this can take a week or more. The PRA approach puts emphasis on community responsibility to make decisions regarding sustainable development. The major output of a PRA is an implementation strategy called a Community Action Plan (CAP). Proper use of PRA or AR remains uncommon in east Africa, either among researchers or development agents.

The PARIMA project serves this process as a facilitator, policy liaison, and monitoring partner. The main

objective, overall, is discovery of "what problem solutions work" and general capacity building for all participants. The PARIMA project trains development agents from NGOs and GOs in PRA methods, and trainees then engage communities to conduct PRAs. The CAPs are submitted to an Outreach Review Panel (ORP) for funding consideration. The ORP consists of 10 members (Kenyans and Ethiopians) who are well-experienced in pastoral development. Proposal evaluation is based on 10 criteria. Funds to implement CAPs come from the USAID Mission to Ethiopia.

Preliminary Findings

A number of pilot projects of various types have been implemented on the Borana Plateau over the past four years. Here we focus on two that were started at Dida Hara. The residents of Dida Hara number about 10,000. They are typical of semi-settled pastoralists. Illiteracy is high (>90%) and there was a heavy reliance on food relief when the PRA was conducted. The PRA at Dida Hara was conducted in 2000. It involved hundreds of community members and a couple dozen PRA trainees.

The priority problems at Dida Hara—in order of importance in the PRA—were: (1) Lack of food; (2) lack of water; (3) lack of access to formal education; (4) poor human health; (5) poor livestock health; and (6) lack of marketing and economic diversification. The root cause of most of these problems was seen as the low level of livelihood diversification, both at household and community levels. The possible solutions in the PRA included: (1) Improved agronomic practices; (2) organization of livestock marketing cooperatives; (3) establishment of savings and credit institutions; and (4) promotion of alternative income-generation activities. Two CAPs were created. They ultimately focused on non-formal education and savings and credit options to start to deal with the root problem. These were chosen because they were viewed as the most achievable within a short period of time, and were also most likely to be sustainable.

A local NGO called Action For Development (AFD) assisted in preparation of CAPs. The savings and credit project involves 175 pastoralists, of whom 58% are women. The local office of the Oromia Cooperative Promotion Bureau (OCPB), the Oromia Agricultural Development Bureau (OADB), and others became part of the effort.

Formation of savings and credit groups started in 2001 with creation of primary groups having five to seven people. An average of five primary groups then formed secondary groups having 35 to 49 members. Group members started periodic savings based on bylaws regarding amount and frequency. Emphasis was put on encouraging members on the need to mobilize local resources and develop a savings culture. Group members had to mobilize sufficient savings before starting a program of loan extension, as a savings-led approach has been pursued.

The first loans were disbursed in March 2002 to 90 members of the group. Forty-five percent of loan recipients were females. The loan term was six months. The average size of each loan was Birr 660 (or USD 82) per applicant. It was found that all those who had taken a loan made a profit of Birr 500 (USD 62) on average, and this enabled all recipients to pay back the loan principal along with the interest of 10.5%. Loans were invested in a wide variety of activities. About 18 loan recipients (19% of the total) were involved in livestock trading or petty trading, with the remainder (81%) involved in cattle and goat fattening (growing). For the latter, animals were bought before the start of the rainy season in March, and allowed to grow and fatten when forage conditions were good during April, May, and June. Animals were then sold early in the dry season. A second loan amounting to Birr 81,600 was disbursed in a similar manner for 85 members who had been waiting for the repayment of the first loan to get their chance. The loan size for each recipient was raised to Birr 900 (USD 112) for some recipients and Birr 1,000 (USD 125) for others based on their level of savings. Seventy percent of the recipients of the second round loan were females.

During the first year a total savings of Birr 24,688 (or USD 3,100) was achieved across the 175 members. The approach of AFD has mechanisms to enhance performance. These focus on peer pressure. Loan recipients were selected based on criteria such as credit worthiness, ability to engage in the business of their choice, and possession of savings amounting to at least 10% of the borrowed amount. The loan procedure adopted involves a loan application to the applicant's primary savings and credit group and preliminary appraisal of the application by the primary group. If the review is positive, the application is forwarded to a secondary group for further debate. Disbursement of a loan will occur only if the secondary group also approves the application. The loan ceiling is determined by the availability of resources, the amount of savings, and the type of project.

The second pilot project deals with non-formal education (NFE) begun in 2001. The project is an intervention aimed at creating an enabling environment for adults, school-age children, and dropouts to have access to basic education through establishment of community education centers. There was only one formal primary school (grades 1– 4) with three teachers in the 2000/01 academic year in the vicinity of Dida Hara. School enrollment was only about 250 pupils from a potential population well exceeding 10,000.

The NFE project was designed to provide an organized,

systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system. It provides selected types of learning to particular sub-groups (adults and children). The project was gender-sensitive by giving special attention to the enrollment of females. The community used locally available materials to construct two school buildings within pastoral settlements. The institutional arrangement for implementation of the project involved local community organizations, AFD, PARIMA, and the Oromia Education Bureau at various levels, as well as other local authorities.

Rapid progress has been achieved with the non-formal education activities in the two centers. The flexible scheduling has helped instruction to occur in three shifts per day, which led to excellent attendance. The overall results indicate an increasing level of literacy and numeracy among school attendees. Almost all students (58 females and 129 males, including adults and children) attending the NFE have achieved a rudimentary level of literacy and numeracy within six months. This allows participants in the savings and loan program to track their figures.

To rapidly build capacity to deal with savings, credit, and micro-enterprise development, PARIMA has facilitated training and tours for participants. This includes training courses for the illiterate offered by the Fura Institute of Development Studies (FIDS). Tours for Ethiopians to visit successful women's groups in northern Kenya have also been arranged, and as a consequence many women's groups have been created in southern Ethiopia in the past two years. Kenyan female mentors visit Dida Hara and other Ethiopian sites each year to provide expert advice and boost morale.

Practical Implications

The overall goal of PARIMA's activity is to help promote sustainable approaches for risk-management intervention. Perhaps the greatest lesson we have learned so far is that a true participatory approach can unleash a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm for positive change, even in a pastoral setting. This is especially apparent for newly formed women's groups. We have also seen that, with appropriate technical oversight and training, people having little formal education appear capable of implementing activities involved with micro-finance and income diversification. We have also witnessed the great effectiveness of pastoralist-to-pastoralist extension methods that confer rapid transfer of knowledge and skills.

Further Reading

Desta, S., Coppock, D.L., Tezera, S., and F. Lelo. 2003. Pastoral risk management in southern Ethiopia: Observations from pilot development projects based on participatory community assessments. Invited paper. Pages 1921-30 in Allsopp, N., Palmer, A., Milton, S., Kerley, G., Kirkman, K., Hurt, R., Brown, C., and R. Hobson (eds) *Rangelands in the New Millenium—Proceedings of the Seventh International Rangelands Congress*. Held 26 July to 1 August at the International Convention Center, Durban. Published on behalf of the VIIth IRC by Document Transformation Technologies, Irene, South Africa.

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The GL-CRSP Pastoral Risk Management Project (PARIMA) was established in 1997 and conducts research, training, and outreach in an effort to improve welfare of pastoral and agro-pastoral peoples with a focus on northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The project is led by Dr. D. Layne Coppock, Utah State University, Email contact: lcoppock@cc.usu.edu.

The Global Livestock CRSP is comprised of multidisciplinary, collaborative projects focused on human nutrition, economic growth, environment and policy related to animal agriculture and linked by a global theme of risk in a changing environment. The program is active in East Africa, Central Asia and Latin America.

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