Linking Ethiopian and Kenyan Pastoralists & Strengthening Cross-Border Collaboration

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Opportunities and challenges in the pastoral production systems of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia are laced with cross-border issues. Any measure that hinders free movement of people and livestock across the common border will limit access to grazing and water. This situation can reduce the mobility of pastoral herds. Because of the high spatial and temporal variability in rainfall and hence forage production and the recharge of water points, mobility is essential for pastoralists. Constraints on mobility increase the incidence of conflict among pastoralists who live along the common border as they resort to violent competition rather than cooperation to access scarce resources. In addition to movement restrictions, the imposition of various trade barriers makes cross-border livestock commerce more difficult. This constraint can have negative effects on pastoral livelihoods, especially for those primarily dependent on cross-border trade. Because of growing human populations, pastoralists in the PARIMA study area increasingly require well-functioning markets for their survival.

The Outreach Unit of the Pastoral Risk Management (PARIMA) project of the GL-CRSP is involved in dissemination of research information and facilitation of cross-border dialogue among pastoralists, traders, development agents, and policy makers in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The goal, using a bottom-up approach, is to help identify practical means to overcome common problems that improve pastoral risk management and human welfare. The Outreach Unit facilitates cross-border meetings that improve relations between northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia at the grass-roots level. It also has helped organize cross-border field tours that link Ethiopian and Kenyan women’s groups as well as provide opportunities for development workers to explore common problems and transfer community-based solutions from one country to another. One of the biggest obstacles for PARIMA and partners to overcome has been obtaining permission for workshop and study tour participants from one country to visit the other given the lack of formal passport documentation. After much effort, we are happy to say that emigration officials on both sides of the border have agreed to regularly facilitate this flow of people and information.

Two cross-border workshops were organized for pastoralists, development agents, livestock traders, and local government officials from Ethiopia and Kenya. The first workshop was held during May 2001 in Moyale, Kenya. There were 18 participants from southern Ethiopia and 35 from...
Kenyan workshop participants after visiting the livestock market at Dublak discussing with Hussien Galgelo, Borana Zone, Deputy Administrator, the need to liberalize cross border livestock trade.

northern Kenya. The second cross-border workshop was conducted in Yabello, Ethiopia during September 2001. It was attended by 110 participants (102 male and 8 female), of which 30 (3 female and 27 male) came from northern Kenya.

Two of the Kenyan women participants are members of the dynamic Umoja and Borole Women’s Groups from Sololo. Both women made a presentation on their group experiences over the past decade, and received a standing ovation in the plenary session. The two workshops directed the attention of the pastoralists, traders, development agents, and government officials to common local problems and then work towards mutual solutions. The workshops have had value in terms of transferring skills and knowledge from one side of the border to the other. The workshops have also created a feeling of hope. In both of the workshops participants focused on major problems such as drought and cross-border access to grazing and water, marketing, animal health, and conflict in which they can work together for mutual benefit. As a result four “cross-border committees” were formed around the four themes i.e., drought and natural resource management, livestock marketing, animal health, and peace building. A steering committee was also formed to maintain and strengthen interaction across the border and oversee and assist the four working committees in their efforts to achieve their objectives. The workshops also created an opportunity for the entire group to begin to think about lobbying on policy-related matters. Participants at the workshops demonstrated considerable enthusiasm to strengthen their collaboration to deal with their common problems.

The cross-border steering committee, which consists of members from pastoral representatives, local administration, policy makers, GOs, and NGOs in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia had its first meeting on December 10, 2001. The steering committee assessed impacts of the two previous workshops on cross-border interaction between the Ethiopians and Kenyans. It was indicated that a growing sense of trust is developing between the two peoples. The livestock market in Moyale is functioning smoothly. Cooperation between pastoralists in both regions is growing and it helped to facilitate peaceful movement of livestock across

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the border for water and grazing. Another cross-border livestock market center is in the process of opening up in Sololo, Kenya, and pastoralists from as far away as Mega in Ethiopia are safely traveling to conduct business transactions.

The two workshops and the steering committee meeting were co-hosted by PARIMA and CIFA (Community Initiatives Facilitation and Assistance) of Kenya. Vital roles have also been played on the Ethiopian side by the Borana Zonal Administration, the Oromia Agricultural Development Bureau, the Borana Zonal Agricultural Development Department, and the Southern Rangelands Development Unit. For the Kenyan side, the Moyale District Commissioner, the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, and the Moyale District Agriculture and Livestock Extension Office (DALEO) have played critical roles in organizing and facilitating activities.

Many pastoral women's groups in northern Kenya have made fairly remarkable achievements over the past decade in terms of wealth accumulation, economic diversification, and provision of community social services. We first became aware of these groups in 2000 when on routine field tours in the region. These women's groups could serve as development models for similar situations in Ethiopia. We see linking Ethiopian women with these Kenyan women's groups as a vital step to build awareness of possible risk management activities among the Ethiopians. A one-week field tour was carried out in late December 2001 that took 15 pastoral women leaders and five development workers from southern Ethiopia to northern Kenya. Two journalists from Ethiopian Television (ETV) traveled with the group and recorded and documented the tour. The members were taken on a tour of Moyale, Sololo, Marsabit, Bada Hurri, and Kalicha in northern Kenya to see what the Kenyan pastoral women have achieved over the past decade by primarily using their own resources combined with visionary efforts. The tour group visited various development initiatives including financial service associations, education centers for pastoral children, a pastoral health insurance scheme, and other integrated programs. This activity was a milestone to link Ethiopian and Kenyan women on this tour, and the Ethiopians were amazed. The ETV journalists...
Women participants at the Yabelo workshop. The four on the left are Borana pastoralists from Ethiopia. The two in long black dress, on the right, are from Kenya and they are members of the pastoral women’s group in Sololo. A representative from each of the two groups made presentations at the workshop about the experience of their respective women groups.

have recorded and documented the whole tour and it is being aired on the ETV Oromifa language program. Special acknowledgements are due to Ato Seyoum Tezera, PARIMA Outreach Field Supervisor, who led the tour. The partners of PARIMA in northern Kenya, CIFA, ALRMP, and DALEO participated in the organization and facilitation of the tour. Mr. Mollu Dika from ALRMP and Mr. Adan Wako from CIFA accompanied the tour group as well.

Once the Ethiopian women have returned to their homes across the Borana Plateau they become the seeds of vision, hope, and leadership for their local communities. Their energies will be effectively channeled as part of pilot intervention activities being carried out by various governmental and non-governmental partners that are funded by the USAID Mission to Ethiopia. The PARIMA project serves the pilot projects as a facilitator, monitor, and donor conduit. An Outreach Review Panel consisting of Ethiopian and Kenyan development professionals approves pilot project concepts. The PARIMA project will continue to stimulate new thinking and interaction in the region at the grassroots level. Dissemination of high-quality research results as briefs and news notes, both in English and local languages, will strengthen the flow of critical information to pastoral communities, development agents, and policy makers alike.

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All photos by Seyoum Tezera, PARIMA Outreach Field Assistant

Tour participants attending presentation by Umoja women group in Sololo.