

Working across borders

Harnessing the potential of cross-border activities to improve livelihood security in the Horn of Africa drylands

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Key messages

- Mobile pastoralist systems often cross international borders. There is a need for more research, policy and practice efforts to better understand and exploit the potential of cross-border activities to enhance drought management, contribute to national economies, and improve local livelihoods and food security in the Horn of Africa.
- Governments in the region should cooperate in granting legal and economic legitimacy to informal cross-border trade exchanges and step up collective efforts to control trans-boundary animal diseases.
- Regional bodies can play a pivotal coordination role and provide the enabling policy environment and legal framework to regulate cross-border dynamics. Donors should support these processes.

The ecosystems, identities and livelihoods of pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa drylands and beyond have always been regional in nature. Pastoralist communities have long adopted a wide range of activities to protect their livelihoods and livestock production systems to cope with the recurrent climatic variation typical of rangeland environments. Cross-border activities¹ include the joint management and sharing of grazing land and water, the opportunistic use of natural resources through seasonal cross-border mobility, the sharing of information on rainfall, pasture, water availability, and livestock prices, and the trading of livestock and other commodities.

Despite growing awareness within research and policy circles of the need to take a regional approach to addressing the wider

implications of pastoral vulnerability, there is still only limited understanding of the nature, magnitude and value of the range of cross-border livelihood activities in the region. There is a general lack of attention to and support from national and international agencies for the many existing cross-border activities. There is little recognition among national decision-makers of the important contribution of cross-border dynamics to regional, national and local economies, and cross-border movements and exchanges are often hampered by negative perceptions and adverse national policies.

This HPG Policy Brief² argues that harnessing the largely unexplored potential of cross-border activities for the lives and livelihoods of pastoralist communities in the Horn of

¹ In this Policy Brief the terms cross-border or trans-border refer to livelihood-related activities that span agreed national borders.

² This Policy Brief focuses only on cross-border dynamics between Kenya and Ethiopia, which is where the Regional Resilience Enhancement Against Drought (RREAD) Programme is focusing its interventions.



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Pastoralist with camels in the Borana zone (Ethiopia)

Africa calls for a deeper understanding of the wide range of activities, risks and vulnerabilities that span international borders. There is also a need to recognise that a timely, adequate and comprehensive response to drought in order to protect pastoral livelihoods must also focus on border areas and support cross-border activities.

Limited research and policy focus on the cross-border aspects of pastoralism

A growing body of research has begun to shed light on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of unofficial trans-border livestock trade in the Horn of Africa.³ The size and economic value of this informal activity are significant. It is estimated that more than 95 per cent of the regional trade in eastern Africa is carried out via unofficial channels and that it is one

of the fastest-growing areas of commercial activity in the region. In Ethiopia alone, the annual trade of live cattle, camels, sheep and goats sold to Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti generates an estimated total value of between US\$250 and US\$300 million.⁴ This unofficial trade has long co-existed with, thrived and even surpassed the value and magnitude of official livestock exports. In Ethiopia, for example, the total value of unofficial cross-border trade has been estimated at US\$105 million per year, 100 times greater than the average annual official livestock export trade between 1993 and 2000.⁵

This vibrant, yet unofficial, commerce has also significant implications for incomes and food security. Cross-border trade is a key source of earnings for the thousands of livestock producers, intermediaries, traders, trekkers, and others involved.⁶ The trucks that transport livestock from the border to the final destination almost always return with grain and other foodstuff. Through what is known as back-loading, this supplies grain-deficient pastoral areas

³ Aklilu, Y (2002) *An Audit of the Livestock Marketing Status in Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan*, Volume I. Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiological Unit. Nairobi, Kenya: PanAfrican Programme for the control of Epizootics. Organization of African Unity/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources; Little, P (2006) Informal Institutions and Cross-border Livestock Trade in the Horn of Africa'. Research Brief 06-04-PARIMA. University of California, Davis; Little, P (2006a) 'Working across borders: methodological and policy challenges of cross-border livestock trade in the Horn of Africa' in J S McPeak and P D Little (eds) *Pastoral Livestock Marketing in Eastern Africa Research and Policy Challenges*. Place: ITDG; Zaai F, M Ole Siloma, R Andiemma and A Kotomei (2006) 'The geography of integration: cross-border livestock trade in East Africa' in J S McPeak and P D Little (eds) *Pastoral Livestock Marketing in Eastern Africa Research and Policy Challenges*. Place: ITDG; Halderman, M (2005) 'The Political Economy of Pro-Poor Livestock Policy-making in Ethiopia'. PPLPI Working Paper, 19. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative.

⁴ COMESA (2009) 'Policy Framework for Food Security in Pastoral Areas (PFFSPA). Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III. Consultative Draft'. Place: COMESA. December.

⁵ Halderman, op. cit. (2005); Aklilu, Y (2008) 'Livestock Marketing in Kenya and Ethiopia: A Review of Policies and Practice'. Addis Ababa: Feinstein International Center.

⁶ FEWS NET (2008) 'East Africa Regional Food Security Update: Rapid assessment of Garissa livestock market'. Place: FEWS NET USAID; Legese G, H Teklewold, D Alemu and A Negassa (2008) 'Live animal and meat export value chains for selected areas in Ethiopia. Constraints and opportunities for enhancing meat exports. Improving Market Opportunities'. Discussion Paper No.12. Nairobi: ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute); IIED and SOS Sahel UK (2010) Modern and Mobile. The future of livestock production in Africa's drylands. IIED and SOS Sahel UK 2010.

and provides pastoral communities with imported food items that otherwise would not be readily or as cheaply available in domestic markets.⁷ For example sugar, rice, oil, wheat flour and pasta are regularly imported in this way from Djibouti and Somaliland border areas for onward sale in eastern Ethiopia.⁸

The regional nature of pastoralism and the importance of adopting a regional approach to reducing the vulnerability of pastoral communities to drought, conflict and other risks are increasingly recognised in policy debates. Often as part of broader strategies to promote cross-border cooperation and regional integration, key regional institutions such as the African Union (AU), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), have been developing policies and mechanisms to support and facilitate mobile pastoral production systems and livestock trade across international borders.⁹ Since 2008, for example, COMESA has developed the Green Pass System, a commodity-based health certification that offers opportunities to formalise and facilitate transnational movements and the trade of livestock and related commodities within the region. Moreover, since 2007 the AU Border Programme¹⁰ has sought to facilitate cross-border integration of African states and the development of local cross-border cooperation initiatives within the framework of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as COMESA, IGAD, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹¹

The growing body of research on the informal trans-border animal trade in the Horn alongside recent regional initiatives represent important contributions to a better understanding of cross-border dynamics and a more regional engagement in the drylands. Beyond the livestock trade, however, the nature and dynamics of the many other trans-border livelihood activities in which pastoralist communities engage remain largely unexplored. While regional institutions are well-placed to take the lead on the management and coordination of pertinent cross-border issues, it remains to be seen how initiatives such as the Green Pass System will be implemented or how effective they will be in

addressing chronic vulnerability and improving the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Ongoing constraints on cross-border dynamics in pastoral areas

Cross-border herd mobility – a traditional strategy for livestock trade and production and for mitigating the risks of drought and conflict – has long been constrained. Mobile pastoralist systems are still viewed in a negative light and national government policies have therefore sought to ‘modernise’ pastoralist communities and encourage them to settle.¹² Seasonal pastoral mobility, both internal and cross-border, has also been negatively affected by widespread confiscations of communal pastoral land to make way for agricultural projects, conservation areas, and national parks, and the privatisation of water and grazing land (ibid). The insecurity of border areas, and concerns about the spread of trans-border animal diseases, are also among the reasons why national policies have often discouraged such livestock movements and trade.

Cross-border activities and economic exchanges are also significantly constrained by the lack of a common institutional framework to enable the harmonisation, regulation and promotion of cross-border issues in the region. For example, the pre-dominantly one-way flow of informal livestock trade from southern Ethiopia to northern Kenya that Kenya has benefited from substantial livestock imports and generation of local revenues without the corresponding payments of foreign exchange.¹³ In contrast, Ethiopia regards this trade as illegal and unofficial, citing tax evasion and consequent loss of local and foreign exchange revenues among the main reasons.¹⁴ The opportunities to manage the externalities arising from cross-border exchanges – for example, through the synchronisation of vaccination campaigns – are often not fully exploited because of poor communication and coordination among state veterinarians of both countries.¹⁵ The different incentives operating in Ethiopia and Kenya, and their diverging approaches to common veterinary issues arising from the trans-border livestock trade such as prevention and control measures, run counter to the ideal joint coordination and regional management of the externalities deriving from cross-border exchanges.

There have been some positive recent initiatives, such as the Regional Resilience Enhancement

7 Ibid., (2010); Little, P (2009) ‘Hidden Value on the Hoof: Cross-Border Livestock Trade in Eastern Africa’. Policy Brief 2 February. Place: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme.

8 Ibid., (2010).

9 COMESA, op. cit 2009; IGAD (2008) ‘IGAD’s Livestock Policy Initiative. Project Summary’; African Union (2007) Declaration on the African Union Border Programme and its Implementation Modalities as Adopted by the Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues. Addis Ababa, 7 June.

10 The Declaration on African Union Border Programme was adopted at the Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues in Addis Ababa on 7 June 2007.

11 Ibid., (2007).

12 IIED and SOS Sahel, 2010, op. cit.

13 Aklilu, 2008, op.cit.

14 Ibid., 2008; Umar A and B Baulch (2007) ‘Risk Taking for a Living: Trade and Marketing in the Somali Region of Ethiopia’. Place: UN OCHA-PCI, April.

15 Ibid., 2008; Bayissa B and A Bereda (2009) ‘Assessment of Veterinary Service Delivery, Livestock Disease Reporting, Surveillance Systems and Prevention and Control Measures across Ethiopia/Kenya Border. Enhanced Livelihoods in Southern Ethiopia (ELSE) Project, unpublished.

Against Drought (RREAD), the Enhanced Livelihoods in Mander Triangle/Enhanced Livelihoods in Southern Ethiopia (ELMT/ELSE) as part of the Regional Enhanced Livelihoods in Pastoral Areas (RELPA) programme in East Africa, and the Regional Livelihoods Advocacy Project (REGLAP) funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO). Despite this welcome trend, international engagement and support for effective cross-border interventions remain inadequate. For instance there is a general lack of documentation on cross-border initiatives with pastoral communities in the Horn, programme evaluations, good practice and lessons learned.¹⁶ Aid agencies working in pastoral areas also tend to take a national rather than a regional approach. Overall, there is limited understanding and appreciation of the range of cross-border linkages among pastoral communities and of the implications of the many shared risks and vulnerabilities for drought preparedness, management and response.

The RREAD initiative: supporting cross-border activities in Kenya-Ethiopia border areas

Since its inception in 2008, the Regional Resilience Enhancement Against Drought (RREAD) programme, funded by ECHO¹⁷ and implemented by CARE International, has aimed to promote livelihood-based interventions to strengthen communities' resilience to drought in the dryland areas of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya.¹⁸ The partnership between RREAD and the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) entails practical guidance on livelihoods programmes, drought-cycle management, and learning support, and has contributed to documenting and strengthening good practice to enhance the evidence base and stimulate changes in policy and practice.¹⁹

Stemming from the recognition, during the first phase of RREAD, of the potential that a cross-border approach may have in reducing pastoral communities' vulnerability to drought hazards, the second phase has focused more on cross-border dimensions. Building on the strategy, planning and implementation of RREAD II, the third phase of the programme will continue to focus on and seek to strengthen the cross-border dimensions.

A number of challenges were faced in the planning and implementation of cross-border components.²⁰ Because of the huge size and remoteness of the border areas, project staff found it difficult to reach communities often enough to develop robust linkages and conduct the necessary monitoring and supervision of project activities. Furthermore, these activities were not underpinned by an in-depth analysis of the historical relations and a comprehensive assessment of the multiple risks and vulnerabilities affecting adjacent communities. Poor familiarity with and knowledge of the role and functioning of formal and informal institutions and mechanisms in regulating cross-border relationships and activities also affected programme implementation and limited the possibility of tapping into relevant institutions for more substantial support and partnership. Lastly, the short timeframe of the programme of only 12 months hampered the ability to gain a solid understanding of communities' linkages and needs and of the overarching regulation.²¹

Despite these challenges, some positive steps were taken towards supporting cross-border activities. The first example relates to CARE International's engagement with the pastoralist community of Burduras located in Mander West in Kenya, 5 km from the border with Ethiopia. Thanks to the close proximity of Burduras with the community of Hardura in Ethiopia, and in the absence of a physical demarcation of the border, both communities have long benefited from cross-border linkages. Since February 2009 CARE International has sought to strengthen and expand these existing relations in order to improve both communities' resilience to drought. The work in Burduras has focused on the establishment of a women's milk and meat group, a livestock-marketing group, and a Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Early Warning (EW) committee. In August 2009 a meeting between the two communities was organised to foster discussion of NRM issues, exchange of EW information, and marketing of livestock through the Burduras group. During this meeting the two communities jointly decided on the demarcation of wet and dry season grazing patterns and on the alternate, rather than simultaneous, use of available water pans. Since the agreement on the joint management of their common natural resources, tensions over access have decreased and there have been very few incidents of infringement.²²

¹⁷ RREAD has been funded as part of the Horn of Africa DG ECHO's Regional Drought Decision.

¹⁸ In the Borana zone in southern Ethiopia and in Mander Central and West districts in northern Kenya.

¹⁹ As part of the learning support, HPG Policy Brief

35, 'Taking Drought into Account: Addressing chronic vulnerability among pastoralists in the Horn of Africa' by S Pantuliano and S Pavanello, May 2009, documented two encouraging livelihoods initiatives implemented during the first phase of RREAD.

²⁰ The challenges, successes and opportunities of the RREAD II activities have been distilled from a two-day workshop facilitated by the HPG in February 2010 attended by RREAD project staff and local government representatives of both Kenya and Ethiopia.

²¹ Initial delays reduced the implementation time to only 10 months.

²² Personal conversation with CARE International representative in February 2010.

The EW and NRM committee has also started to liaise with the Hardura community to exchange EW information on pasture and water depletion and livestock diseases. Access to information on the situation across the border is having a positive impact on cross-border mobility, particularly in relation to the route and timing of migration. Moreover, the catchment area of the livestock marketing group goes beyond the border to include Hardura. While it is too early to assess the volume of livestock off-take, the existence of the group is improving market access for both communities by creating a direct link between livestock traders and producers. In the words of Okash Ibrahim, the group chair, the livestock marketing group provides a 'ready and accessible market for [Hardura] pastoralists who would otherwise be forced to walk long distances and probably lose some of their animals to diseases and wild animals'.²³

This example points to the variety and potential of livelihood support in border areas and shows that initiatives that are planned and implemented on one side of the border can also have a substantial impact on adjacent communities. As Ibrahim noted, 'we now look beyond our borders'.²⁴ Indeed, efforts aimed at forging relationships, improving existing cross-border mechanisms, or restoring linkages and peaceful exchanges, particularly in contexts where they have been damaged by conflict or other hazards, have the potential to improve the lives, livelihoods and resilience of bordering pastoralist communities.

The second initiative relates to a vaccination campaign of Bovine and Ovine Pasteurellosis of 22,000 head of livestock in Moyale *woreda* in Ethiopia, bordering Kenya's Mandera West district. The vaccination campaign was conducted between October and November 2009 in collaboration with the FAO and state veterinarians of Ethiopia, who jointly provided technical expertise, manpower and vaccines while CARE International contributed logistical support, such as transport, fuel and per diems. It is important to note that this activity was conducted jointly with another mass vaccination campaign promoted by CARE International in Moyale and in other *woredas* under the ELMT/ELSE project. While it would be difficult and beyond the purpose of the present discussion to disentangle the specific outcomes and opportunities of the two vaccination campaigns, some useful insights can nevertheless be drawn.

In addition to expanding access to animal health services, and protecting and improving the health and productivity of livestock, the vaccination

campaign has provided a good foundation for collaboration and coordination on animal health-related issues among state veterinarians of the two countries. In April 2009 during CARE International's support of another vaccination campaign in Moyale, state veterinarians from both Kenya and Ethiopia started to discuss issues and services relating to animal health. Livestock disease surveillance and reporting systems were further strengthened through the regular collection and dissemination of relevant cross-border information. Crucially, the district veterinary departments of both countries took the lead²⁵ and to date they continue to exchange information on a regular basis.²⁶

The promotion of vaccination campaigns in border areas can protect livestock assets and improve the livelihoods and resilience of pastoralist communities. Furthermore, by involving relevant state authorities, such campaigns can also contribute to laying the foundations for ongoing information exchange on disease control and surveillance across borders, and for potentially expanding regional collaboration to regulate, control and ultimately reduce the effects of negative externalities, such as trans-boundary animal diseases.

Whether to follow the changing availability of scarce natural resources, trade livestock or share information, pastoralist communities in the Horn have long crossed international borders and have relied on trans-border community-managed strategies to manage and mitigate drought and other risks. Today it is increasingly clear that many of the key challenges to long-term pastoral development such as the increasing frequency and intensity of drought, the recurrence of conflict, insecurity and livestock diseases, also have strong regional or cross-border dimensions.

Despite some encouraging recent trends, there is still poor understanding of the rich range of pastoral livelihood activities and exchanges that transcend international borders—and, crucially, how to support them. The planning and implementation of cross-border initiatives as part of a livelihoods-based response to drought remain largely unexplored in both policy and practice. Given the regional nature of pastoralism and the challenges this poses, there is an urgent need to develop a better understanding of cross-border dynamics and take full advantage of their potential to contribute to a strategic and more appropriate livelihoods-based response to drought in the Horn of Africa

25 Care Ethiopia (2010) 'No-Cost Extension One (NCE1) Progress Report for the period 1st September – 31st December 2009 CARE Ethiopia'. Unpublished report. Enhanced Livelihoods in the Mandera Triangle (ELMT)/ Enhanced Livelihoods in Southern Ethiopia (ELSE).

26 Personal conversation with CARE International representative in February 2010.

23 O'Connell, L (2010) 'Looking for markets beyond our borders: Burduras Livestock Association'. Unpublished report. CARE International.

24 Ibid., (2010).



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Borana pastoralist on a termite mound in Ethiopia

drylands. This support needs to be premised on the recognition that the existence of cross-border linkages makes bordering communities likely to be exposed to similar risks and have interdependent or correlated vulnerabilities. It is imperative, therefore, to undertake comprehensive cross-border risk and vulnerability assessments in the early programme planning stages as the basis of appropriate strategies and activities.

Notwithstanding the unexplored potential to work across the long and porous borders between the countries of the Horn of Africa, more significant and strategic engagement necessarily requires substantial technical and operational capacity, not least because of the remoteness and size of border areas. As such, it is important to redress the negative perceptions of trans-border activities so that national and local government authorities explicitly recognise and support the sizable opportunities that these areas offer in terms of improving drought preparedness and mitigation, food security and increased revenue collections. Given the inevitability of cross-border exchanges, governments in the region should also take urgent steps to legalise and grant economic

legitimacy to informal cross-border livestock trade and commodity exchanges and step up efforts to prevent and control trans-boundary animal diseases.

Because of the externalities that inevitably arise from cross-border activities, governments should favour joint rather than unilateral action. Activities aimed at forging regional cooperation are particularly important. Regional bodies can play a pivotal role in this regard, particularly in coordinating and ensuring that governments act together. Initiatives such as the AU Border Programme provide the legal basis and the enabling framework for the formalisation of cross-border cooperation and the regulation of cross-border dynamics in the Horn of Africa and beyond. International donors should build on the momentum created by such efforts to expand their engagement in regional cooperation and increase funding for local cross-border initiatives in the Horn. To improve the lives and livelihoods of pastoralist communities and strengthen their resilience to drought and other risks, bolder steps are needed to bring the border areas of dryland Africa from the periphery to the core of policy, research and practice.

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