

Camel distribution in response to climate change

**Case studies from Moyale District (Liben Zone, Somali Regional State)
and Dhas and Arero Districts (Borana Zone, Oromiya Regional State) of southern Ethiopia**

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1. Introduction and Background

As climate change drastically alters the African landscape, raising camels could replace crops and other livestock in the hardest-hit arid areas of the continent that are no longer suitable for agriculture (Kaufmann and Binder, 2002; Jones and Thornton, 2008). The potential of camels in arid and semi-arid areas – such as for generating milk or providing income from their sale (Sperling, 1987) – was initially dismissed as uneconomical. However, their value is now becoming increasingly acknowledged (Hjort *of Ornäs*, 1988).

Able to digest alien bush species that are rapidly invading pastoral farmland, camels are suitably adapted to the lowlands of Ethiopia and can therefore contribute very constructively to the food security of pastoralist households. Also suitable for the conflict-induced migration that Ethiopian pastoralists often face, camels are increasingly important in areas such as Liben and Borana Zones.

Save the Children US works with pastoralist communities throughout southern Ethiopia to improve the food security of vulnerable families.

Among Save the Children's impact areas are **Arero and Dhas Districts** — located in Borana Zone of Oromiya Regional State — and **Moyale District**, located in Liben Zone of Somali Regional State. All three areas are characterized by typical pastoral modes of life.

2. Approaches to Restocking

Camel distribution was carried out in the Dhas and Arero Districts of Oromiya Regional State and in Moyale district of Somali Regional State, the aim being to improve the livelihoods of the respective communities and to restore their hope in food security.

Needs assessments were undertaken before restocking activities were begun. Some of the indicators took into account the conditions of the three districts in relation to climate change, such as **ever-shortening rainy seasons, encroachment of invasive thorny bushes, pastoralists' modes of living, and the socio-economic value of camels.**

Pastoral communities have traditional social support mechanisms which help them deal with shocks such as drought, flood, conflict, and disease epidemics. Historically, such customary institutions have ensured the resiliency of households affected by such disasters. (In Borana, for example, they are called *Busa-Gonofa*.) Although these systems have been weakened in recent years, they still retain some of their functions and authority. Recognizing the role of the customary institutions in their respective communities, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with community elders, during which beneficiaries were selected, and a cost-sharing strategy for the project, involving contributions of some animals, was negotiated.

In an effort to revive tradition, Save the Children US distributed camels, sheep and goats to destitute communities and ex-pastoralists. The restocking project was implemented in collaboration with local government officials, customary institutions and other key partners, the aim being to target the beneficiaries through discussions and planning meetings.



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3. Households impacted by the SC/US initiative

In Moyale District in January 2009 the initiative targeted 90 beneficiary households who had lost most or all of their livestock assets. Each household received two camels and 20 sheep and goats. Ten of these sheep and goats were contributed by the community, the rest by Save the Children US. In Dhas and Arero Districts in August 2009, 80 female camels were distributed to 40 households (ie. two per household). This was complemented by customary institutions, who provided seven breeding sheep and goats to each household.

In Dhas and Arero Districts, community perception of the herd diversification was assessed. Beneficiaries were pleased to have been selected not only for restocking, but particularly for camel distribution in particular, given the benefits of milk provision and social status attached to owning camels. (See Case Study 1.)

After the intervention in Moyale District, mini impact assessments were carried out in 3 PAs. Beneficiaries talked of various strategies that they have used in order to cope with the loss of their livestock, such as the sale of firewood, the sale of wood for construction of houses, or minding livestock for better-off households. For the latter they can earn milk or a lactating cow as payment. (See Case Study 2.)



Beneficiaries have reported a significant increase in milk availability following restocking, as their shoats have given birth to offspring.

Some of the distributed camels are now pregnant, meaning that there will be a larger resource of milk for the children of each beneficiary household, and increased consumption overall. In addition to positive

hopes for the future brought by this increase in milk, beneficiaries also say that owning camels has greatly improved their social status in the community.

Furthermore, while shoats, which are fast-breeding animals, allow households to build assets quickly, camels are recognised as providing longer-term security to beneficiaries in terms of milk production and improved social status.

Case Study 1 Loko Tari Kafara PA, Arero District

“The poor always live in hope; I live with a vision and a hope to have milk and other products soon.”

Comparing this program with the food-based Pastoral Safety Net Program (PSNP), Loko Tari says: “It is good to receive food [from PSNP], but there is no milk, no butter and no meat, and the food does not reproduce itself. Also, I have no control: it can stop at any time. But camels and goats are my property: I have a title of ownership over them.”

Following recurrent droughts, camel pastoralism is expanding among the well-to-do Borena. The majority of the poor, however, cannot possess camels because of their high market price. “This program is unique in addressing the neediest people like me.”



Case Study 2 Mudo Edin Age: 50 Children: 5 Mubarak PA, Moyale District

“I lost 30 of my 45 shoats to drought. I lost all hope, and began selling wood. With the money from that I purchased milk and maize to feed my children.

“As milk in the market is expensive, my children would mix it with tea. They became weak and thin. I took them to hospital once. The doctor told me that they were sick because they were not getting enough food. So with the money I generated from selling wood, I purchased maize instead of milk as my children would get more of it than the milk. My relationship with people was not good during that time. I asked them for things but they did not have respect for me. I was not invited to social events or to participate in community decisions.



“Receiving 20 shoats and 2 camels from Save the Children US changed everything. 7 of the shoats gave birth and one of the camels is now pregnant, and so now there is milk all the time in my house. My children can have it twice a day. Once the camel has given birth I expect to get even more milk. I will use some of it for my children and sell the rest to buy clothes, sugar and other food for the family.

“I am not a beggar any more. With the money I get from selling wood, I purchase maize. I am not as desperate as before. My social status has also changed: people have started respecting me more, including me in social events and decision-making.”

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4. Achievements to date, and looking ahead



Save the Children US' camel distribution initiative comes at a time of rapidly-growing interest in camel husbandry in pastoral areas of Ethiopia. In addition to this initiative, a two-phase training of trainers of Veterinary Professionals has been conducted by ELSE-ELMT (Enhanced Livelihoods of Southern Ethiopia / Enhanced Livelihoods in the Mandera Triangle), a consortium led by CARE, partnership with Save the Children US and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) Suisse.

Save the Children US and CARE, on behalf of the ELSE Consortium and in conjunction with the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) and the MoARD (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), have also organised a national camel forum in order to establish a country-wide camel working group.

In addition, refresher trainings have been given to Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) subsequent to the training of trainers in the areas of camel health, husbandry and management.

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