

## Making Markets Work for the Poor: The Case of Warable Pastoralist Production Group, Garissa, by Mahamoud Haji, ELMT Program Manager, CARE Kenya



Intelligent and articulate, Fatuma Abdi Sanwein strikes one as more of an NGO worker or a Member of Parliament rather than a livestock trader. As the secretary of Warable (pronounced Wa-ra-bley) Pastoralist Production Group (PPG), Fatuma remembers with pain the day in May 2006 some officials of the then budding business group took off with its meagre savings. The two had been entrusted to purchase livestock but thought otherwise. The loss was: Ksh36,000 or around US\$450. Quite a lot at that time and in a region, according to a 2007 livelihoods profiles report for NE Kenya, where 74% of the population were living under the absolute poverty line.

### The LIME factor and Alpha Fine Foods Ltd

Those left – 10 women and 7 men - however regrouped and in late 2006 became involved with the CARE-implemented Livestock Marketing Enterprise (LIME) project. With an initial capital of around Ksh500,000 – provided by the members, the group's capital swelled to KSh2.8 million (around \$35,400) after a windfall profit occasioned by the then drought situation and a herd of 300 heads of cattle (worth about Ksh6,300,000 US\$79,700) by 2008. How did they do it? *"We have come a long way."* Fatuma says. The LIME project trained the group on animal health care, business skills and promoted market linkages by taking them on exposure tours to potential markets and facilitating forward contracts and subsidized transport. The drought of 2006 had made them firmly resolve to trade livestock rather than just being producers who are subject to the vagaries of unpredictable climate. *"We lost a lot of livestock then. I remember one household losing about 80 out of 100 head of cattle"* she reflects sadly.

Links with CARE continued under ELMT and in August 2008, following a CARE-supported tour to terminal and coastal ranches, the group signed a two-month agreement with Alpha Fine Foods (AFF) Ltd for supply the private 20 heads per week. They hope to meet this demand with their current herd of 300. *"The trip was a real eye opener, as we discovered markets we never knew of before."* She says. *"We even met one of our kin who had made it big and he greatly motivated us. It was exciting to note that the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) in Mombasa wanted us to sign contracts with them on the spot!"*

### The cost of fattening and of forgiveness

*"After the tour, we now fatten our animals for 2-3 months as compared to one month in the past. The management of Taita Ranch in Kwale District convinced us that fattening for an optimal time yielded more in terms of carcass weight and price per kg."* she states confidently. Any challenges? *"Plenty."* she confides, while chuckling. *"Many men could not believe women could do well in business. Husbands of the women members were not amused either when some meetings were called outside their village, for instance in Garissa, some 30 km away."* Earlier, villagers falsely accused the group members of getting handouts from CARE while they were not benefiting. However they soon learnt that the support was subsidized transport and capacity building and the group was growing through their own hard work and savings. Fatuma is looking forward to the group establishing the Warable Ranch in the not too distant future. According to her, their own ranch would enable them to earn income from fattening other people's animals as well as their own as is happening on the Coast. *"This is the only way we can scale up our profits and realize sustainable income."* she concludes.