

CROSS BORDER PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES IN SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA

By CARE Somalia

Pastoralists in Dolow Ado district of Ethiopia and Gedo and Bay region of Dolow district in Somalia migrate from one area to another in search of grazing and water resources for their livestock. These movements can be within their clan territory or to other clan territories where access is gained through negotiation and reciprocal relationships.

Inter-clan hostilities have in the past limited this mobility thus increasing their vulnerability to natural hazards such as droughts. CARE Somalia's ELMT program was working with these pastoralists to improve cross border access to vital grazing and water resources.

In June 2008, the program facilitated a community workshop in Dolow Somalia that brought together representatives from communities in Dolow Ado and those of Dolow Somalia. After a three days deliberations on cross border movements and inter-clan hostilities, the workshop nominated five elders to work on promoting cross border community relations in order to improve access to grazing resources. Since then, the committee has been active and has made remarkable progress in reducing incidents of assault, rape, livestock theft and threats.

Mohamed Faaqid Abdi, the chairman of the committee says *"In the past the relationship between the communities in Gedo and their neighbours in Dolow Ado was one of hostility, mistrust and suspicion. Although pastoralists do not have borders and will cross to whichever side that receives rain, whenever, one community crosses to the other, there are incidences of assault, rape, livestock theft, threats and at times physical blockage or forcible return of the animals to wherever they came from"* he adds *" Our work has changed all this. Now people see each other as friends and neighbours. For example: in the past, whenever people from Dolow Ado saw those from the Somalia communities migrating to their side they stop them and vice versa but recently some lost animals from Gedo were returned by the Degodia community signifying a new relationship between the two communities"*

Following the workshop, the committee visited several areas in Dolow district of Gedo region Somalia, where the two communities were living together as a result of migration and they were able to solve some incidences of rape, threats and assault from the host community to their visitors from Dolow Ado Somalia.

The Committee secretary observes, *"We visited many areas of Dolow Somalia where the two communities were grazing together. In Hanan, we organized a meeting of all elders and explained the benefit of allowing free access cross the Somalia/Ethiopia border. We then asked the visitors the problems they had encountered and they told us that one man from the host community raped one of their daughters. We asked them whether they knew the person who raped the girl and how to contact her but she was undergoing treatment in Ethiopia. The elders then agreed that clan where the rapist came from would compensate the girl's family but the decision was not implemented. So we organized for a meeting in a place known as Gohle the following day and pushed them to pay the compensation as earlier agreed between the two parties. We also warned the man that if he continues this behaviour then we are going to arrest him.*

According to the secretary, a meeting with elders was also organized where it emerged that some camels from a community from Gedo crossed to the Bay Region but were sent away by the Fuqi-muhumed clan, who told them that they did not accept their camels to graze in their area. The camel owners decided to move back with their animals and fortunately for them it rained. This attracted the Fuqi-muhumed clan to cross to their region and the members of Gedo community who had been chased from the Bay by this community were up in arms.

He further adds. *“We intervened and calmed down tempers and opened dialogue between the two communities. We explained our mission in the region and assured them that they would henceforth be crossing to wherever it rains and graze their animals without being bothered by anyone. Thus the Gedo allowed the Fuqi-muhumed to graze until the end of the dry season.”*