

MAKING MARKETS WORK FOR THE POOR: THE CASE OF WARABLE PASTORALIST PRODUCTION GROUP

By CARE Kenya

Intelligent and articulate, Fatuma Abdi Sanwein strikes one either as an NGO worker or a Member of Parliament instead of a livestock trader. As the secretary of Warable (pronounced Wa-ra-bley) Pastoralist Production Group, Fatuma remembers with pain when two of the group's officials who had been entrusted to purchase livestock, took off with all their savings. The loss amounted to KSH 36,000 (about US\$ 450). That was a considerable amount at the time and in a region that, according to the 2007 livelihoods profiles report for North Eastern Kenya, has 74% of its population living in absolute poverty.

The remaining 10 women and 7 men regrouped and in late 2006 joined CARE's Livestock Marketing Enterprise (LIME) project. With an initial capital of around KSH 500,000 (about US\$ 7000), the group's capital managed to grow after a windfall profit spurred by the drought to KSh2.8 million (US\$ 35,400). By 2008 the group also had a herd of 300 heads of cattle (worth about KSH 6,300,000 (US\$ 79,700).

How did they do it? The LIME project, explains Fatuma, trained the group on animal health care, business skills and promoted market linkages through visits to potential markets. LIME also facilitated contracts and subsidized transport. The drought of 2006 had increased the group's 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," says Fatuma. "I remember one household losing about 80 out of 100 head of cattle. We have come a long way."

The collaboration with CARE continued under the ELMT program and in August 2008, after a visit sponsored by CARE to terminal and coastal ranches, the group signed a two month contract with Alpha Fine Foods Ltd, a local dairy firm, for the supply of 20 of livestock 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," says Fatuma. "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 in Mombasa wanted us to sign contracts with them on the spot!"



According to Fatuma, after the visit, the group has started the practice of fattening their animals for 2-3 months as compared to one month in the past. "The management of Taita Ranch in Kwale District," explains Fauma, "convinced us that fattening animals for an optimal time yielded more in terms of carcass weight and price per kilogram."

"Many men did not believe that women could do so well in business," says Fatuma when asked about challenges encountered. "Husbands were also unhappy when some meetings were held outside of their village, for instance in Garissa, some 30 km away."

She adds that some villagers accused group members of getting handouts from CARE, which is not the case. Eventually they learnt that CARE only subsidized transport and invested in capacity building but that the group was growing through its 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, this ranch would enable them to earn income from fattening other people's animals in addition to their own, a practice that is already happening on the Coast. "This is the only way we can scale up our profits and realize sustainable income," concludes Fatuma.