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SUCCESS STORY

Innovative Drought Response Builds Pastoralist Resiliency

Through USAID-supported livestock markets, traders reported more than \$1.7 million in sales despite ongoing drought conditions.



Photo: Food for the Hungry

“We could not believe that small amounts of money saved over a short period of time could lead to such a visible change in our lives. The intervention and its multiplier effects have greatly reduced our dependency and increased self-reliance among women pastoralists.”

—Fatuma Mohamed, ARC beneficiary in Lagdera District

The Horn of Africa is experiencing the worst drought in 60 years, and more than 13 million people require assistance. For communities in northern Kenya that rely on livestock to meet their basic needs, inadequate rainfall has reduced water sources and decreased pasture resources on grazing land that animals depend on for food. As animals grow thinner, they produce less milk, which families rely on for nutrients. In addition, when families sell animals in poor condition as a last resort, the thinner animals fetch lower prices in the market, leaving families with less income to buy staple foods, like maize and sorghum.

The USAID-funded Arid and Marginal Lands Recovery Consortium (ARC) program increases income for livestock owners by supporting pasture irrigation, constructing safe watering holes, enhancing access to veterinary services, and improving livestock marketing practices. In December 2008, USAID provided \$15 million for the three-year ARC program, benefitting more than 663,000 vulnerable pastoralists and subsistence farmers across northern Kenya.

As of August 2011, eight ARC-rehabilitated livestock markets were operational in Marsabit District—one of the largest pastoralist districts in northern Kenya. At each market, newly-formed livestock market management committees received business development training and affordable veterinary services. Through an ARC guarantee fund, livestock owners secured \$60,000 from Marsabit banks to increase trading capacity.

Despite ongoing drought conditions in northern Kenya, these USAID-supported markets registered more than \$1.7 million in transactions and a profit margin of more than 10 percent between January and June 2011. With enhanced access to markets and credit, pastoralists in Marsabit District gained higher, more stable incomes, decreasing their reliance on traditional food aid during the current drought.