

Animal feed banks in Niger for drought preparedness

The Pastoralist Survival and Recovery Project in the Dakoro region, Niger, was run by Lutheran World Relief (LWR) with its partner Contribution à l'Éducation de Base (CEB). The project followed LWR's emergency food relief intervention during the Niger famine in 2005. It aimed to increase the preparedness of affected communities to cope with future droughts and famine. Based on discussions with communities, four key interventions were identified:

- provision of livestock ("re-stocking")
- feed banks
- water point development
- community forums to facilitate participation in all aspects of the project, to address issues such as conflict between farming and herding communities, and to raise awareness of rights.

The community-run feed banks aimed to ensure year-round access to reasonably priced animal feed. Each of the six banks served as a storage facility, a cooperative, and a financial institution combined, and each was supported by a warehouse and a bank account. The banks were owned by herder associations, which bought feed in bulk when prices were low during and after the harvest, and then sold the feed back to members during the year at cost, plus a management fee. This improved the pastoralists' terms of trade between feed costs and animal sales because it both decreased the cost of inputs and, with better feed, increased the sale price of animals, increasing their income and their ability to purchase food for their families.

The feed banks were established in sites selected by the local herders for accessibility, security, and visibility: generally a herders' meeting point in a village or a temporary settlement along migratory paths. Community members contributed labour and locally available building materials, such as sand and gravel, under the management of a committee elected by the herder association.

Communities anticipated short- to medium-term livelihood benefits in addition to drought protection; namely, improved animal health and an increase in milk production, with the latter leading to better nutrition and/or increased income. The feed banks were expected to reduce livestock deaths in case of drought and also to reduce stress sales of livestock.

The combination of the feed banks and the provision of livestock based on a traditional restocking system (see "Provision of livestock") was seen as having a positive effect on the terms of trade for livestock keepers in the Dakoro region.

Sources:

Burns, J. (2006) *ARVIP Baseline Survey and Mid-Term Visit Report*, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

LWR (Lutheran World Relief) (2005) *Lutheran World Relief Pastoralist Survival and Recovery Program (ARVIP)*, Proposal 2005, Lutheran World Relief, Niamey.

Evariste Karangwa, Meghan Armisted and Mahamadou Ouhoumoudou, personal communication, 2008.