

Community contributions to herd replacement in Ethiopia

In response to the 2006 drought, Save the Children USA carried out herd replacement in five districts in southern Ethiopia. The activity was designed around traditional restocking mechanisms. In Borana, traditional restocking is called *Bussa Gonifa*. Under this system, pastoralists losing their livestock due to drought, conflict or raiding, and left with fewer than five cows, are eligible for the benefit and have the right to claim a minimum of five cows from their clan to remain in the system as a pastoralist. The Degodia Somali have a similar customary livestock redistribution system.

Save the Children USA substituted sheep and goats for cows, since small stock have a faster reproduction rate and are also increasingly preferred as they are better able to withstand drought conditions. In discussion with the community, it was agreed that Save the Children would provide 15–20 sheep/goats (including one or two males) and one pack animal per participant and that the community would match this number through their traditional restocking mechanism. The total number of livestock was considered a minimum herd size for the priority target households that had lost most or all of their stock in the drought.

The activity was jointly managed by Save the Children USA and representatives from the indigenous community institutions. The latter oversaw purchasing of the livestock as well as identification of participant households and the management of the community contribution. Save the Children vaccinated and treated most of the livestock before distribution.

In two of the districts, the matching of the Save the Children livestock by the community worked successfully. The community contributed a total of 1,364 sheep and goats, and community members took great pride in providing livestock of better quality than the purchased animals. In the other target areas, the community contributions were less successful for two key reasons. First, in some communities the effects of the drought were more widespread, households were poorer, and the indigenous institutions were reluctant to push their clan members for contributions when all of them had suffered livestock losses in the drought. Second, the willingness of community members to make the contributions also appeared to reflect the quality and duration of the relationship with the partner agency: where there was a positive history of community-based development activity, contributions were more easily obtained than in other areas where the links with the external agency were of shorter duration or the relationship less developed.

On balance, Save the Children USA concluded that matching contributions from the community is a useful approach that may be particularly appropriate in the context of more localised droughts in the future, particularly in areas where there is a strong relationship between the operating agency and the community, and where community members have not all been equally hit by the drought.

Source: Gebru, G. (2007) Project documentation from the Save the Children-USA restocking implementation programme in Somali and Oromia regional states, Save the Children USA, Addis Ababa.