

### ***Supporting traditional livestock distribution as a drought-preparedness strategy in Niger***

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

- provision of livestock
- feed banks
- water point development
- community forums to facilitate participation in all aspects of the project (addressing issues such as conflict between farming and herding communities and raising awareness on rights)

The four project components were designed and planned in a participatory planning forum. The livestock distribution activity was prioritised by pastoralists in response to the threat of future drought following the 2005 famine. In times of drought, the men travel south with the bulk of the livestock looking for pasture while the women and the elderly remain behind with the small stock. When resources are low, the first assets to be disposed of are these small stock in the care of the women. The communities identified the need to replace and build these assets, to protect the food security of the women, and also to help protect the large stock assets from sale.

This activity was a drought-preparedness intervention rather than an attempt to reconstitute herds, hence the relatively small number of stock involved. The community prioritised sheep over the mix of sheep and goats originally suggested by the project since the former had better market value.

The livestock distribution component was based on a traditional redistribution mechanism called *habbanaye*, whereby animals are given to participants who then keep the first offspring and pass on the original animals to the next participant. Based on community suggestions, each initial participant received one male and four female sheep. The initial 200 participants were identified by their own communities according to community criteria, based on poverty levels. All the first batch of participants received offspring and passed on the original animals to the second batch.

The impact of the project was that the participating women, many of whom had previously had between 7 and 30 small stock of their own, which they lost in the drought, now had at least 4 animals that they could sell in case of hardship or that might reproduce during the following

year to increase their livestock assets. In other words, the distributed animals formed a 'drought contingency fund' for poor women.

The livestock distribution activity was complemented by water development and feed bank initiatives which also helped to keep the livestock alive and thus protect assets.

**Sources:**

ARVIP–Lutheran World Relief Pastoralist Survival and Recovery Program (2005) ARVIP Proposal and Baseline Survey, Lutheran World Relief, Niamey.

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