

### ***Vouchers for livestock distribution and veterinary support in Somalia***

In the Hiran region of Somalia, rural households derive 50 to 60 per cent of their income from livestock. In 2011/12, a drought led to widespread loss of human lives and livestock, and poor households lost on average 54 sheep/ goats. In 2012, Save the Children International initiated a livestock distribution and treatment project with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AusAID, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The aim of the project was to protect and rebuild livestock assets by means of the provision of livestock and the use of veterinary support to reduce livestock disease and bolster livestock nutrition.

Baseline studies reported original herd sizes, access to veterinary services, income and food sources, and disease prevalence. The project targeted participants using vulnerability criteria, such as the number of livestock losses by poor households and the level of child malnutrition. Following agreement on livestock age and types, traders were contracted to provide livestock through an open bidding system, and a standard veterinary kit was designed and procured. Local Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) were also given refresher training and treatment kits.

Each participating household was given vouchers to procure 5–10 animals according to the specifications and livelihood zone; they were also given vouchers for treatment for 20 small stock. The livestock traders brought the animals to the villages where the participants could exchange their vouchers for livestock. A local 'livestock professionals association' provided veterinary teams who collected the medicines from contracted pharmacies and travelled to the villages where the participating households could redeem their vouchers for treatment and training. A complaints mechanism was established to enable participants to give feedback on the project. In total, 2,583 households received livestock, and 3,310 households received animal health treatment. The use of vouchers and local vendors was significant in overcoming some of the logistical challenges of transporting supplies in an insecure environment.

An external evaluation of the project reported improved access to milk, increased livestock holdings, improved animal health, and increased drought preparedness among the participating households. More than two-thirds of the participants strongly agreed that their household productivity had increased, as had their resilience to future disasters. Other positive impacts included the support provided to local businesses such as pharmacies, veterinary professionals, CAHWs, and transporters, as well as the nutritional benefits brought by increased milk supplies to children of women-headed households, which constituted 35 per cent of the participants.

Key lessons included the importance of distributing pregnant or lactating animals for increasing access to milk within a short time period. Also, the use of vouchers enabled accountability to participants and ensured an audit trail; it also facilitated distribution in an insecure environment. Finally, a comprehensive package of livestock support – provision of livestock, treatment, and training – was important for increasing impact.

**Source:** Save the Children International (2013) Drought Early Warning and FSL Needs Assessment in Hiran and Puntland; Livestock Baseline for Hiran, DFID Project; Evaluation of Livelihoods/Resilience Activities, Hiran; and Livestock and Cash Grants Project Baseline for Hiran, Save the Children International, Nairobi.