



General case study

Prioritising emergency response options for peri-urban livestock in Somali Region, Ethiopia

Livestock keeping is often critical for helping ensure food security for at-risk peri-urban communities. During emergencies however, responses often overlook the needs of peri-urban livestock keepers as they tend to focus on rural areas, and implementing agencies may poorly understand peri-urban contexts. This case study explains how planning and implementing the six LEGS intervention areas in peri-urban settings can be different from rural contexts.

Background

Somali Region in southeast Ethiopia frequently requires large-scale humanitarian assistance when the failure of spring and summer rains creates prolonged drought conditions on the rangelands. Whilst 30 or 40 years ago Somali Region was almost exclusively pastoralist, many previously rural households have now become IDPs, living on the margins of towns, and adapting and diversifying their skills and income sources.

Pastoralist 'drop-out' households, who have lost too many of their livestock to be able to continue herding, are now a common feature in the peri-urban areas surrounding towns such as Gode and Jijiga. Despite ten or more years of displacement, many still own some livestock, using their proximity to urban markets to sell fattened sheep or goats, or processed dairy products. They keep a range of species: most households have four or five chickens, a donkey for collecting water and firewood, a small number of goats or sheep, and 3-10 cows. Livestock herding is undertaken collectively in the overgrazed surrounding areas, with a paid herder returning the livestock to their individual households each night.

Use of LEGS

VSF-Suisse in Somali Region has utilised the LEGS Handbook for emergency response in many of its projects, focusing on the provision of livestock feed, water and veterinary support, as well as undertaking livestock offtake and the provision of livestock. Their experienced team noted how these interventions are prioritised differently in peri-urban areas compared to the rural areas:

- Unable to migrate to more remote areas for grazing, peri-urban livestock owners depend on **livestock feed**, including supplementary feeding with Multi-Nutrient Blocks, to keep their livestock alive and maintain their own food security. Even in normal times most peri-urban stock requires some supplementary feed.
- **Water provision** is less of a priority as peri-urban water supplies are generally more reliable and accessible than in rural areas, and the overall numbers of livestock requiring water are lower.
- During droughts, **veterinary support** is a priority in peri-urban areas. Disease transmission between peri-urban livestock sent for grazing in nearby rural areas, as well as higher parasite loads from poor quality and polluted grazing areas, are significant issues when livestock are more emaciated. Although the veterinary knowledge and experience of peri-urban owners tends to be more limited than rural owners, with fewer animals per household, veterinary support is more likely to be given to rural areas.

- The overall lower numbers of livestock mean that during severe rains livestock can often **shelter** with the peri-urban household. Unsheltered and emaciated rural animals by contrast, frequently die in large numbers from the cold and wet when the rains return after a drought.
- Undertaking **livestock offtake** with peri-urban communities can be simpler. Compared with rural owners [or pastoralists], peri-urban livestock keepers may be more used to buying and selling livestock alongside their other livelihood activities.
- When **providing livestock** as an income-generating activity following an emergency, poultry interventions that provide women with 10 laying hens to start a small enterprise can be particularly successful in peri-urban areas.

Lessons learnt

When reviewing which of the LEGS technical interventions are likely to have the most impact, LEGS strongly advocates **participatory approaches** with the target community. In peri-urban contexts this can be more complex as, despite being physically more accessible, peri-urban livestock owners may not form a cohesive or easily defined community. In peri-urban areas of Somali Zone, the only link between individual livestock owners is through their paid herder; the local administration may have no centralised knowledge of the number of livestock owned by households. By contrast, in the rural areas of Somali Zone, information on community members and their exact livestock numbers is well known and more easily accessible for agencies seeking this information. The livestock-owning communities are well integrated and mutually dependent.

Identifying and understanding the important differences between rural and peri-urban contexts can help protect more livestock-based livelihoods during emergencies.

Source: Abdirashid Salah (*pers comm*), VSF-Suisse, Ethiopia.

LEGS case studies demonstrate good practice in livestock emergency response. They cover the six LEGS Technical Intervention areas, the eight LEGS Principles as well as the broader contexts covered in the third edition of the LEGS handbook. **Process case studies** illustrate the application of LEGS guidance and **impact case studies** reflect on the outcomes of LEGS interventions.

- ▶ You can access all of the LEGS case studies at livestock-emergency.net/resources/case-studies
- ▶ For more information see the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards Handbook at livestock-emergency.net

