



Process case study

LEGS-Driven Livestock Provision for Sustainable Livelihoods in Somaliland

In March 2017, a baseline assessment conducted in the Saaxil region of Somaliland revealed that pastoral and agro-pastoral communities had suffered devastating livestock losses of 70–80% due to a severe drought. This collapse, primarily affecting sheep and goats, significantly reduced household incomes derived from live animal sales and milk production. Migration from the most severely affected villages had already begun, underscoring the urgent need for intervention. Guided by the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS), the Livelihood Improvement Project (LIP)—implemented by the German Cooperation for International Development (GIZ) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)—launched a livestock provision programme from December 2017 until February 2018 to rebuild herds and restore livelihoods as the rains returned, and sufficient water and feed became available.

Planning and Implementation

Targeting and Beneficiary Selection

The project team collaborated with the Ministry of Livestock, regional authorities, and Village Development Committees (VDCs) to identify eight villages—four pastoralist and four agro-pastoralist—based on drought severity and the potential developmental benefits of livestock provision. An initial assessment was conducted to evaluate the situation in the identified areas, understand the role of livestock in livelihoods, and analyze the impact of the emergency through a situational analysis of the region. Beneficiaries were carefully selected, with women-headed households, elders and ethnic minorities being amongst the priorities.

Procurement Process

In line with LEGS Livestock Provision Standard 2, a total of 6,600 Somali blackheaded sheep and local Somali goats, chosen for their adaptability to the harsh climate and feeding conditions, were procured for 380 farmers (200 agro-pastoralists and 180 pastoralists). The animals were selected based on strict criteria, including health, maturity and breeding potential.

In line with LEGS Livestock Provision Standard 3, the procurement process was handled by a local trader, with oversight from the District Veterinary Officer (DVO) who was contracted by the project, ensuring adherence to animal welfare and health standards.

The trader provided the following services and ensured the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the supply chain:

- **Procurement of Healthy Livestock:** Healthy and strong sheep and goats were sourced from local livestock markets in Hargeisa and Burao. Female animals intended for reproduction were required to be mature, potentially pregnant and within their most productive years. Male livestock had to be healthy and possess breeding potential.
- **Transportation:** Animals were transported safely from the markets to the quarantine holding ground.
- **Quarantine Care:** During the seven-day quarantine period, the animals were provided with caretaking services, including roughage, supplementary feed, water, and continual guarding.

- **Final Transport:** After the quarantine period, the animals were transported from the holding ground to the beneficiary villages.

Quarantine and Health Checks

In accordance with LEGS Livestock Provision Standard 3 Guidance Notes, the animals underwent a seven-day quarantine at a holding ground under zero-grazing conditions. Daily veterinary checks ensured the animals were free from diseases, and treatments and activities such as deworming, ecto-parasite control, hoof trimming and ear tagging were done by the DVO. Manure was removed daily, and a thorough cleaning of the quarantine facility was conducted after the distribution of each batch of animals before new arrivals. The DVO certified the animals as fit for distribution.

Restocking approach

The distribution procedure ensured that all animals for a specific village were distributed in a single session (All in All out Approach). This method was implemented to minimize the risk of disease transmission between villages. The process was facilitated by the VDCs and supervised by the project team and local authorities, ensuring transparency and effective management.

The allocation ratio ensured a balance between sheep and goats based on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. To maximize impact, the programme allocated more animals to pastoralists (20 animals: 12 female sheep, 3 male sheep, 4 female goat, 1 male goat)), since their livelihoods purely depend on livestock, and fewer animals were provided to agro-pastoralists (15 animals: 8 female sheep, 2 male sheep, 4 female goats, and 1 male goat), where livestock holdings are smaller, but crops are also grown.

Post-Provision Support

Post-distribution, Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) were trained to address basic health issues and provide advisory services for villages that had received livestock. This training was essential in empowering CAHWs to effectively manage the health of the animals, ensuring that they could identify common ailments and implement preventive measures. CAHWs were linked to regional veterinary coordinators, facilitating a robust network for disease reporting and consultation. This connection allowed CAHWs to seek expert advice and support when they encounter more complex cases that require specialized intervention. Furthermore, establishing a direct line of communication with regional veterinary coordinators ensured that CAHWs have access to timely information regarding disease outbreaks or emerging health threats, allowing for swift action to mitigate risks.

This initiative not only strengthened the capacity of local communities to manage their livestock effectively but also promoted sustainability in livestock production. By fostering local expertise and creating a support network, the project aimed to improve animal welfare and enhance the livelihoods of farmers reliant on healthy livestock for their economic stability. Ultimately, this approach contributed to building resilient agricultural systems capable of withstanding future challenges.

Results and Sustainability

A monitoring exercise conducted a few months after the distribution of livestock revealed significant insights into the status and utilization of the animals by beneficiaries. The findings demonstrated positive effects on livelihoods and community dynamics:

- **Reproductive Success:** Over 46% of the distributed animals had either given birth or were in the late stages of pregnancy. This indicates that the selection criteria of healthy and reproductive females were effective, contributing to the rebuilding of livestock herds and enhancing long-term sustainability for beneficiaries.
- **Social Sharing:** About 14% of the animals were shared with close relatives in need, strengthening social bonds and fostering solidarity within the community. This redistribution highlights the cultural and social importance of livestock in maintaining communal relationships and support systems.

The integration of **Community-Based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)** into the veterinary network played a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable animal health management. By providing timely healthcare and preventive measures, CAHWs contributed to the overall well-being and productivity of the livestock.

Additionally, linking beneficiaries to local traders helped strengthen the regional economic ecosystem. This connection not only supported ongoing trade relationships but also reduced future dependency on aid, enabling beneficiaries to actively participate in market systems and foster economic resilience.

These outcomes highlight the multifaceted benefits of the intervention, ranging from improved livelihoods and food security to enhanced social and economic resilience.

Lessons Learned

- **Targeted Breeds for Sustainability:** Locally adapted breeds like Somali goats and blackheaded sheep are critical for environmental and cultural compatibility.
- **Community-Centred Planning:** Engaging VDCs and local authorities ensured accurate targeting and community ownership of the programme.
- **Comprehensive Health Measures:** Quarantine and veterinary services minimized health risks during relocation, enhancing animal survival rates.
- **Gender and Vulnerable Group Inclusion:** Prioritizing marginalized groups improved equity and broadened the programme's impact.
- **Post-Restocking Support:** Training CAHWs and linking them to regional veterinary systems enhanced long-term resilience.
- **Consideration of Animal Species Based on Geographical Area:** Following distribution of the animals, it was observed that goats were better suited for coastal villages, while sheep were more appropriate for plateau (Oogo) areas.
- **Prevention of early livestock off-take:** Monitoring data revealed that approximately 5% of the animals were slaughtered to address immediate nutritional needs, while another 5% were sold by beneficiaries to meet urgent cash requirements. This practice does not align with the LEGS minimum standards for livestock provision. Such livestock off-take could have been avoided if food security and non-food needs had been assessed in accordance with the Sphere Minimum Standards in Food Security and Nutrition during the initial assessment. These needs could either be addressed by the project responsible for livestock provision or through collaboration with other organizations in the area to cover food and non-food requirements.

Source: Dr. Abdirahman Mohamed Ali

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

