

Working Paper

Asset Building through Community Participation: Re-stocking Pastoralists Following Drought in Northern Kenya

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Abstract

Restocking has conventionally been viewed as a short-term relief or recovery intervention initiated by development agencies for the benefit of destitute pastoralists. In contrast, this case study illustrates how restocking became a community initiated and organized strategy to alleviate poverty in specific communities with support from a development agency. The case study outlines the process that occurred in Samburu district of northern Kenya through which a number of communities designed restocking programs to meet their perceived needs. It presents results of the program, constraints and contrasts with more conventional restocking approaches. This study shows the potential for asset building approaches in the African context and the synergistic effects of linking local cultural traditions with participatory development approaches.

1. Introduction

Responses to drought in Africa mirror in certain ways the income-based approach to welfare in the United States: temporary assistance is given to families affected by misfortune to fill a gap and (ideally) enable them to meet their basic needs, for a time. Giving people food may help them survive a drought, but it does not make them any less vulnerable to the next drought, or to experiencing poverty in general. For livestock herding pastoralists, drought means a loss of assets in the form of cattle, sheep, goats or camels. Food aid does little to preserve these assets, let alone build them in ways that might mitigate future disaster.

In his critique of income-based welfare approaches in the United States, Michael Sherraden (1991) has argued that building assets has far more potential to enable people to escape poverty, sustainably. The benefits of assets, according to Sherraden (*ibid*: 148), exceed financial security and extend into the social and psychological realms—essentially giving people a stake in their own future. In the African pastoral context, restocking is a form of asset building that, if done appropriately, may restore not only short-term household welfare, but also enhance social relationships and standing. By reinvigorating culturally specific reciprocity networks, the backbone of traditional drought coping mechanisms, restocking may have impact beyond short-term survival toward lessening future vulnerability.

Restocking has conventionally been viewed as a relief measure designed to assist households that have lost animals due to drought or disease (Toulmin 1994, Heffernan 1997). The goal was to enable pastoralist households to resume a more or less independent livelihood relying primarily on livestock and to discourage long-term dependence on food aid administered in famine relief camps. In Kenya, the first restocking efforts were implemented by Oxfam following the devastating 1984 drought. By that time, a number of pastoralist communities had concentrated around small towns or centers in order to receive famine relief. Not only was this situation leading to localized environmental degradation, but it also meant that range resources located away from the centers were underutilized. Thus, the decision was made to give households livestock to enable them to leave the centers and resume a mobile pastoralist lifestyle (Hogg 1985).

As drought struck Kenya again in the early 1990s, development agencies again considered restocking as a relief or rehabilitation measure and programs similar to those of the 1980s were implemented in some places. In Samburu District in northern Kenya, where drought had caused large losses of livestock, restocking was also implemented, but with a different emphasis. This paper discusses how restocking was re-conceptualized and implemented as part of a holistic, participatory development program geared toward community-led change. Restocking was viewed both as an extension of traditional Samburu survival strategies and as a way to build the assets of poorer pastoralists in the community. Accordingly, there was no necessary linkage of restocking with drought per se, rather it was viewed as an intervention that could strengthen communal reciprocity mechanisms while also enhancing the welfare and prospects of those households that were barely surviving in the pastoral system.

2. Pastoralism and Reciprocity: Traditional Drought Coping Strategies

Pastoral production systems oscillate between periods of growth punctuated by sometimes precipitous declines in livestock numbers occasioned by drought, disease or other disasters such as raiding and warfare. Pastoralists have developed a variety of strategies to cope with these fluctuations that attempt to secure the survival of the household production unit (Dahl and Hjort 1976, Scoones 1994). One common strategy is keeping several different species of animals that utilize complementary ecological niches and have varied susceptibility to drought and disease. Another strategy is to split herds and to keep them in different localities. A third strategy is to develop large networks of stock associates with whom relationships of reciprocity in livestock are established.

It is this last strategy that forms an important basis for the tradition of rebuilding herds through gifts or exchanges of livestock. Among the Samburu, important relationships are signified through gifts of livestock. At birth and during other rites of passage, individuals receive gifts of livestock, which forge lifelong relationships between giver and recipient called *sotwa* (literally, umbilical cord). When a family's herd is decimated through drought, disease or other disaster, household members call upon their stock associates for help in a process called *paran* (asking). The stock associates are under an obligation to assist as far as they are able, knowing that the recipient will be obligated to them in a similar way in the future. Through *paran*, herds are reconstituted and at the same time social ties are reinforced.

Establishing stock associations is not only an insurance strategy, but also a way to demonstrate one's worthiness as a person. Among the Samburu, one who is generous with his wealth is respected. As respect (*nkanyit*) is one of the highest values in the culture, people make great efforts to establish themselves as worthy of this distinction. By contrast, the person who is selfish (*laroi*) is unworthy of respect. Thus, establishing stock associates is not only in the interest of the recipient, but also of the giver. In the past, these associations formed a dense network of relationships based on the relative equality of everyone in the society. When disaster struck, these relationships were called upon and enabled most people to rebuild their herds. Of course, in the aftermath of a major disaster, some people did not survive and others were pushed out of the pastoral system, at least temporarily, as happened during *mutai* (the finishing) the combined disasters of drought, epidemic and epizootic in the 1880s and 1890s (Sobania 1991).

3. Reciprocity Today

During the twentieth century, numerous factors have driven a rapid change process among pastoralists such as the Samburu. Their production system has been affected by the delimitation of ethnic boundaries during the colonial period that reduced their access to grazing areas to the north and south of their current territory (Fumagalli 1977). Key dry season pastures were appropriated by the government and converted into wildlife reserves, gazetted forests and farms, to which pastoral producers have little or no access. The imposition of government appointed administrators and elected officials has eroded the power of traditional councils of elders. Formal education has instilled a new and different value system among the younger generations (Lesorogol 2003). People have become increasingly tied to the market system on which they rely for much of their food supply and other basic items (Ensminger 1992, Little 1992). Provision of basic health care, as rudimentary as it is, has decreased morbidity and mortality.

These changes are important in many ways, but here we will only consider their impact on reciprocity relationships and how this relates to the functioning of traditional practices of restocking. Firstly, the change in access to resources along with the emergence of the market economy has changed the nature of pastoral production. Mobility has been curtailed to a point where most Samburu today practice a semi-sedentary form of pastoralism.¹ Second, decreased access to grazing areas has resulted in localized degradation of pastures, as they are not allowed to rest and recover as in the past. This situation is exacerbated by the rise in human population, which constrains movement further since there are fewer unoccupied places to utilize. Third, the dynamics of drought and survival have altered. In the past both humans and livestock perished in droughts. Currently, due to humanitarian relief efforts and provision of basic health services, few people die due to drought. Livestock, however, continue to perish in large numbers during serious droughts. Thus, at the end of the drought the human population is essentially unchanged while the livestock population is greatly reduced. This disparity puts stress on reciprocal relationships historically used to rebuild herds. Since more people are needy, they put more demands on those who fared better, especially in a widespread drought.

However, there are new coping strategies, as well, including, most notably, wage employment. Many men leave their homes, particularly during drought, to seek work (Holtzman 1996, Lesorogol 2002). Some of them succeed in rebuilding their herds, but given the low wages they are able to earn and the high cost of living in cities such as Nairobi, many are barely able to survive, let alone support families left in the rural area. Their absence also affects the whole production system, including their ability to maintain their networks of stock associates.

In addition to the practical problem presented above, there is a more subtle erosion of feelings of mutual obligation which has seemingly resulted from increased interaction with markets, formal education and, more broadly, “modernity”. Both market relationships and formal education stress the importance of individual achievement. Self-interest is given greater emphasis than communal values. Even within Samburu society, there is a tension between individual and collective values. Each individual has an incentive to establish his own assets and to manage them appropriately, i.e. to increase them. However, a strong brake on individualism is exerted by the fact that ultimately, no individual could survive on their own. Social norms dictate a certain level of subordination of personal interest to the collectivity. This was referred to above in the discussion of reciprocity. On the other hand, those who have succeeded in the modern world of education and employment, are less bound by social imperatives as their survival does not depend upon them, and their social identity may be defined in different terms than those of tradition (Lesorogol 2003).

Furthermore, falling per capita livestock holdings and the concomitant difficulty of recovering from drought mean that there is a larger group of chronically poor pastoralists who increasingly depend on support from others to survive. Thus, reciprocal relationships increasingly resemble patron client relationships where positions of wealth and poverty are more or less static. All of these factors mean that reciprocity relationships are less effective than in the past in rebuilding herds following drought or other disaster. It is in this context that the restocking program described below attempted to build on the concept of reciprocity while taking account of the current constraints on its effectiveness.

¹ There is still a range of mobility, with pastoralists in the drier lowlands being more mobile than those in the higher, plateau region. Also, people will still move when they have to, as was evidenced by a mass migration of people out of the northern region due to cattle raiding in 1997. Some moved over 100 km. to escape the situation.

4. Samburu District Development Programme and the Participatory Development Process

Samburu District Development Programme (SDDP) was a bilateral technical cooperation program between the governments of Kenya and Germany that operated from 1993-2000.² The primary objective of the program was to contribute to improved quality of life of pastoralists by enhancing their capabilities to cope with their rapidly changing environment. The program designed and implemented processes of community dialogue and decision making to enhance community members' ability to identify critical issues, craft innovative solutions, plan and implement the solutions and evaluate the results. These processes drew upon Freirean principles of dialog and conscientization and incorporated values and practices of Participatory Rural Appraisal, as a philosophy of people centered development (Freire 1970, Chambers 1997).

One of the characteristics of the approach was working both with traditional institutions (e.g. the elders) and those members of society historically marginalized from processes of public dialogue and decision-making such as women and younger people. While valuing the elders' knowledge and experience, SDDP recognized that other groups also have much at stake and much to contribute to the process of change and development. In practice, most communities accepted this reasoning and allowed participation by these groups.

SDDP engaged community members in a process of joint analysis, planning and action. Specific tools and methods were designed for each stage with the aim of facilitating genuine dialog and sharing of ideas and knowledge among community members. The next section describes how restocking emerged from this process.

5. Identifying Poverty as a Key Issue

Beginning in 1994, SDDP began working with six communities in Baragoi and Nyiro divisions of Samburu District. During the analysis stage, communities identified the problem of lack of livestock and resultant poverty. Large numbers of livestock perished during the prolonged drought of 1990-1993 and as a result many families were left poor, forced to rely initially on famine relief rations and, after famine relief ended, on the support of friends and relatives. This dependence on other community members was of concern both to the poor families themselves and to those who bore the brunt of supporting them. The poor members were highly dependent and their social standing was threatened by their poverty. For the better off community members, the burden of supporting additional families indefinitely was a great strain on individual family resources. Ameliorating the situation of the poor, in a sustainable way, became a priority for the communities.

Discussions of poverty included underlying reasons for poverty such as droughts, cattle raids, diseases, and poor livestock management. The effects of poverty were wide ranging, including the necessity to beg for food or animals, male out migration in search of work, and the break up of families when children were sent to live with relatives or men abandoned their families due to their inability to support them. People also mentioned problems such as alcohol abuse, malnutrition and social stigma. After analyzing these issues, community members thought about solutions to the problem. Restocking the poor families by giving them animals was one possibility that emerged during these discussions. Community members pointed out that restocking through *paran* on an individual or family basis was still taking place. However, the

² The author served as Community Development Advisor to SDDP from 1993-1998.

scale of poverty due to the severe drought was too great for individual mechanisms to address adequately. They felt that in order to cope with the situation, the whole community needed to be involved. They also commented that while in the past, stock associates willingly gave livestock, these days the sense of obligation was fading and needed to be reinforced.

6. Why Restocking?

As explained above, replenishing individual herds by giving families animals is a traditional practice in Samburu district. In addition, after the 1984 drought, an international non-governmental organization, Oxfam, carried out restocking in Baragoi. Some people remembered the program and saw it as a positive effort to assist poor families. Thus, it was not surprising that the communities came up with the idea of restocking as a solution to the poverty caused by drought.

The difference in this case was that the impetus and organization of this program was the people themselves, not the agency. In most restocking programs, an agency takes the leading role in organizing the process and contributes one hundred percent of the costs for the exercise. Since restocking emerged as one strategy among several that the community decided to undertake, the responsibility for organization, planning, and implementation rested primarily with them. The challenge for planning then became how the people themselves could design and carry out the program, starting from their own resources, and only later asking for external assistance, if and as needed.

7. The Restocking Process

Four communities initially expressed interest in the restocking concept. Later, seven other communities embarked on their own restocking programs, gaining from the experience of the first four communities. This paper documents the experiences of the first four communities in Baragoi and Nyiro divisions. Two communities (Ngilai and Masikita) are ethnically Samburu while the other two are ethnically Turkana (Natiti and Nachola). Both Samburu and Turkana are pastoralists and Turkana have similar reciprocal restocking traditions as the Samburu. The communities differed in size and location and each community implemented restocking in its own way (e.g. different numbers of beneficiaries, different number of livestock given, different selection criteria for committee members). The following discussion distills their collective experience, but provides data disaggregated by community.

Once restocking had been identified as a possible solution, a community action plan (CAP) was devised with facilitation from SDDP and government staff. These plans included:

1. Formation of a committee to plan and coordinate the restocking exercise. Community members popularly selected the committee in a public meeting. Criteria for membership were decided on and included such factors as local residence, reliability, willingness to work on the project, good knowledge of the community and its members, leadership qualities. Both men and women were selected as members.
2. Developing selection criteria and choosing the beneficiaries: who should receive animals?
3. Raising community contributions, generally in the form of young female goats and sheep.
4. Soliciting outside contributions from other organizations
5. Organizing the distribution process
6. Monitoring the performance of the restocked families and the impact of restocking on the community

Selecting Beneficiaries: Wealth Ranking

Households were selected for restocking through a discussion process focusing on how communities define well-being (wealth and poverty). First, people were asked to characterize a well off family. Large holdings of cattle, sheep, goats and camels were the primary characteristic of the wealthy, along with a large family and several wives. A wealthy man was considered influential in community affairs and someone whose advice was listened to. In some cases (especially in communities with more contact with towns or the educational system), employment or ownership of other assets such as plots of land in town or a modern house were included in the wealth classification.

The poor family was the mirror image of the wealthy one. Low numbers of livestock were the defining characteristic, with the poorest families owning no livestock at all and therefore relying entirely on relatives, friends or other sources of income (e.g. selling firewood, charcoal or home-brewed alcohol) for their livelihood. Poor families have difficulties in meeting basic needs for food and other necessities. The poor man would not play an important role in community affairs.

Having characterized the extremes of wealth and poverty, the groups then identified two or three intermediate groups between wealthy and poor. Once the classification was complete, a wealth ranking exercise was carried out. The name of each household was written on a card or slip of paper. Then, in a small group, the name of each household was read out and the card was placed on a pile according to the wealth classification (e.g. wealthy, fairly wealthy, average, poor, poorest) in which the group felt the household belonged. Since these communities are small enough that everyone knows everyone else, this did not prove very difficult. If there was disagreement on how to classify a household, the group discussed the specific situation and, with the assistance of the facilitator, agreed on where the household belonged in the wealth classification. At the end of the process, the poorest families were identified and prioritized for restocking.

Depending on the resources ultimately mobilized by the community, it was sometimes necessary to reduce the number to be restocked. Then, the committee considered other factors such as the ability of the family to take care of the livestock, or the size of the family (larger families being more needy). Some communities refused to reduce the number of beneficiaries, and this meant that each beneficiary got less livestock. Committees felt that it was better to give all families something than to leave out very needy people. The SDDP team felt that the program would be more successful if fewer people were given an “adequate” number of animals. However, in the end, the decision of the committee prevailed. The monitoring data a year later showed that, in fact, those who received more benefited more, and this was fed back to the communities. It was also used as evidence in new communities where restocking was undertaken, to encourage them to assist fewer families more substantially.

Raising Contributions: building on “*paran*”

After identifying beneficiaries, the committees embarked on collecting contributions in the form of live animals from members of the community. The committees built on traditional methods of soliciting contributions from relatives and friends. For example, the committee would visit the *sotwa* of the beneficiary, explain the program and urge him to assist his friend by contributing an animal or two. The added presence of the committee was effective in encouraging people to live up to their obligations. Different committees were more or less successful in the collections. Two committees raised over 1000 animals, while others raised 200-300. The level of success seemed to correspond to the use of the *paran* strategy. The fact that the *paran* system enabled people to control their contributions, to the extent that they knew who would receive their animals and that the social relationship also applied, may account for the success of this effort. The givers were not simply throwing their animals into an anonymous pool, but rather knew who would receive the animal and that certain conditions would obtain, both from the stock associate relationship and according to the stipulations agreed upon by the committee.

SDDP Contributions: The restocking package revisited

Discussions were held at this point regarding the type of assistance to be given to the beneficiaries. Oxfam had given an average of 40-70 small stock (sheep and goats) per family, one pack animal, food for a year, a machete, a jerry can, plastic sheeting and veterinary support. Given the more limited resources available to the communities at this point, it would not be possible to exactly duplicate this package. Thus, the committees discussed the most vital items to be given. Generally, a reasonable number of animals were the first priority followed by food, a pack animal and veterinary support. Food and the pack animal were not possible at that time, although SDDP gave the committees the option of using part of the SDDP contribution for those things. No committee opted for that. As for veterinary support, a training program for community based animal health workers was being carried out in all the communities simultaneously. Once trained and equipped, the animal health workers would provide services to the community members, including the restocked families. They would charge for the drugs and services, but it was felt that the restocked families would have to find ways of taking advantage of their services. Committees were also encouraged to visit other organizations to ask for contributions, which they did, but since most agencies did not have funds specifically for restocking, assistance was not readily forthcoming.

The committees requested SDDP to contribute animals in addition to those raised by the communities. In the event, SDDP was able to secure additional funds from the German government (through the Drought Recovery Programme) for this purpose and provided funds to match the community contributions. The funds were given directly to the committees who were responsible for purchasing appropriate animals and accounting for the funds. This is in contrast with most other restocking programs where either the agency buys animals directly or it contracts a trader to purchase the livestock. SDDP believed that giving real responsibilities to the committee, including managing funds and purchasing animals, was the best way to build capacity. In addition, it was acknowledged that pastoralists tend to be the best judge of livestock and by selecting the livestock, they would be more accountable to the beneficiaries. Of course, this approach entailed a certain amount of risk, but the communities entered into a legally binding contract with SDDP regarding the use of funds, and all animals for restocking were physically verified by SDDP and Kenya government staff and were branded for identification.

The committees purchased most livestock locally. Since the drought had been over for about a year and a half, there were adequate numbers of animals offered for sale. This aspect of the

program also had the benefit of providing a market for livestock, temporarily, and it meant that the proceeds of the sales re-circulated in the local economy and were not exported to other areas. It also meant that there was no impact on the environment since it entailed redistributing the same livestock among different people. The total number of animals on the range remained the same.

The animals were distributed in public ceremonies attended by local leaders and the government administration. Table 1 shows the numbers of households restocked and the small stock received (half from community contributions and half from agency). The public ceremonies were considered an important way to validate the community process and to enhance the accountability of the committee to the community. The monitoring data has shown, however, that in spite of these efforts to ensure accountability there were still a few anomalies when beneficiaries did not receive what they were entitled to. However, on the whole, committees discharged their responsibilities well.

Table 1. Communities, Beneficiaries and Numbers of Small stock Distributed

Community	Households Restocked	Number small stock per household	Total contributions of small stock
Ngilai	106	20	2120
Masikita	52	40	2080
Natiti	155	15	2325
Nachola	13	20	260
Totals	326		6785

8. Following Up Restocking and the Evaluation

Day to day monitoring of the performance of restocked families and their herds was the responsibility of the restocking committee. The committee regularly reported on the progress of restocked families during normal development meetings and follow up visits by SDDP staff. The communities and SDDP agreed that it did not make sense for SDDP staff to attempt to closely monitor the situation of the restocked families since this would be very time consuming and not feasible given the workload of SDDP staff. Furthermore, as a community program, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating it rested with the communities themselves.

Committees tried to keep track of the productivity of the restocked herds and any deaths or sales of livestock by the restocked families. In most cases, the committee instituted restrictions on the ability of the families to sell the restocked animals. If an animal died, the owner presented the skin of the animal to the committee and explained the circumstances surrounding its death. If the committee felt that the restocked families were not taking appropriate care of the animals, they reserved the right to reclaim the animals for distribution to someone else. So far, however, this extreme measure has not been taken.

Most reports from committees over the first year suggested a fairly good, but mixed, performance of the restocked families. Most herds were reported to be growing, but there were some deaths of livestock due to disease. One constraint on close monitoring was the tendency of restocked families to move the animals to better grazing areas beyond the contact

of the committee. Although this limited the committee's ability to monitor the animals closely, it was generally favorable for the survival of the animals.

After one year, SDDP took the initiative to conduct a more detailed monitoring exercise and designed a questionnaire that elicited the major areas of interest in terms of herd growth and the impact of restocking on the family. With the assistance of the committees this questionnaire was implemented in August, 1996. Two university students from the district were employed to carry out the questionnaire. They visited the restocked families at their homes, usually in the company of a committee member. After completing the questionnaire they confirmed the number of livestock owned by physically observing them in the homestead or in the grazing areas. Since they stayed in the communities for some time, they were also able to get impressions about the restocking programs from informal discussions and contacts with community members.

Results of the Questionnaire

One hundred and seventy (170) restocked families were interviewed out of a total of 326, or 52%. The basis for interviewing was primarily availability. By community, the numbers and percentages interviewed were as follows:

Table 2. Details of Respondents

Community	Number Restocked	Number Interviewed	Percent of Total
Ngilai	106	80	75
Masikita Simiti	52	44	85
Natiti/Kawop	155	36	23
Nachola	13	10	77
Total	326	170	52

According to the figures, 46 widows were interviewed, or 27% of the sample. There were, however, cases where a husband was reported as being alive but not residing with the family, so the number of de facto female-headed households is higher.

Livestock Holdings Before and After Restocking

A major objective of the questionnaire was to try to confirm the actual livestock holdings of the beneficiaries before and, particularly, after restocking. Interviewers attempted to physically verify the numbers of livestock reported as owned currently by the respondents. It should be noted that it is normally difficult to get accurate figures on livestock holdings among pastoralists as people are reluctant to reveal such information. The involvement of beneficiaries in the restocking exercise, however, required them to be open about their assets. Thus, while these figures appear to be quite accurate, some distortions are to be expected and the data cannot be considered one hundred percent reliable.

Monitoring data reveal that the great majority (91%) owned less than ten head of smallstock before restocking (Table 3). Five percent owned between 11 and 20 head while only 4% owned more than 20 head of smallstock before the restocking exercise.

Table 3. Beneficiary Smallstock Holdings Before and After Restocking

Smallstock Before	0-10	11-19	20-23
No. respondents	154	8	7
% respondents	91	5	4
Average smallstock before restocking	3	14	21
Average smallstock after restocking	31	35	40

Following restocking, the average number of small stock for those owning less than ten head rose from 3 to 31, for those owning between 11 and 19, from 14 to 35 head and for those owning 20 to 23 the average rose from 21 to 40 head. The livestock received were overwhelmingly breeding stock. Thus, absolute numbers of livestock rose substantially for all beneficiaries. While there is much debate in the literature regarding minimal viable herd size, the communities considered those with thirty or more head to have a reasonably viable herd (Heffernan 1997, Fry 1988).

Herd Growth

Average herd increase for small stock was 16% for the entire sample³. This compares well with the norm for growth among pastoralist herds, which is eight to nine percent (Heffernan, C., personal communication). Average growth rates varied among the communities as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Herd Growth by Community

Community	Herd Growth Rate
Ngilai	13%
Masikita	13%
Natiti	10%
Nachola	-20% ⁴

These growth rates translated into increased milk production for the household, which was cited as a benefit by 72% of respondents. Increased access to milk was considered an important benefit of the program, especially since milk is the traditional staple food and highly nutritious. The increased milk supply particularly benefits young children who normally get first priority for milk consumption and could contribute significantly to improved nutritional status of these children.

Social Benefits of Restocking

While the quantitative benefits of restocking are illustrated by figures on herd increase and growth rates presented above, there are other, more intangible benefits identified by the restocked families. The most consistently mentioned benefit of restocking relates to the social status of the family. When asked the open-ended question: “How has restocking

³ Herd growth was calculated as follows: percent difference between: initial herd size and initial herd size – deaths + births

⁴ In the case of Nachola, very few cases were considered and the low growth rate appears to be highly influenced by anomalies in a few cases in which people received very few animals and/or experienced high death rates.

affected the family?”, eighty percent of those interviewed claimed that restocking had improved their social standing in the community. They were now able to interact more freely with their neighbors, offer hospitality to guests, participate actively in community activities and meetings and generally be considered full members of the community.

Their self-respect and status in their communities had improved as a result of restocking. While this response is not surprising given the important linkage of livestock with social identity in these communities, it is nonetheless an important benefit of asset building. Poverty is not just an economic condition, but a social situation (Rank 1994, Sherraden 1991). When people lose livestock, they also become marginal to many social processes in the communities. If restocking is able to restore, even partially, the social status and capability of people to participate with others in their communities, then this constitutes a significant step in reintegrating poor people into the social fabric.

Impact of Restocking on Women

In general, livestock are a resource controlled by men in Samburu and Turkana societies. While women are allocated livestock to which they have access and some degree of control, they are generally disadvantaged in terms of the ownership of livestock resources. Thus, as restocking increases the livestock of a household, it might be expected that men would be the primary beneficiaries. However, the data do not support this hypothesis. Out of 170 beneficiaries interviewed, 46 were widows. Combining the data gathered with community reports on beneficiaries, twenty to forty percent (depending on the community) were widows. On the other hand, it is often the case that even widows only have partial control over their animals. Control is also exerted by male relatives (especially brothers of the deceased husband) and by the woman’s older sons.

In order to get an idea about who has primary responsibility for decision making regarding restocked animals, the beneficiaries were asked: “Who makes decisions regarding use/management of the animals, and how are such decisions made?” Surprisingly, 46% of those interviewed claimed that women had the primary responsibility for making these decisions, while only 36% indicated that men had this responsibility. About twenty percent claimed that decisions were made jointly, with neither men nor women dominant in the process. This finding suggests that, at least as far as restocked animals are concerned, women appear to have an unusually high level of decision-making authority.

One possible explanation is that most committees allocated the animals to the family member with the best ability to take care of the animals, regardless of gender. Committees acknowledged that there were cases where either the husband or the wife had in the past shown poor judgment regarding livestock management. Thus, they agreed to stipulate the more responsible partner as the custodian of the livestock, although this is a departure from the normal cultural practice. Such arrangements may account for the high rate of women’s control over decisions regarding livestock management. Another explanation may be the fact that many men do not live with their wives: either they have more than one homestead (in the case of polygynous households), or they are away in wage employment or for other reasons. Especially in the latter situation, women may gain more autonomy for livestock management on a day- to-day basis.

Restocking and Animal Health

Animal disease is an important constraint on production. An overwhelming 90.6% of beneficiaries reported having purchased veterinary drugs. Livestock drugs were not included as part of the restocking package so it is perhaps not surprising that a high percentage of beneficiaries purchased drugs on their own. Other data gathered on household income (Heffernan, C., 1997) confirms the expenditures on livestock drugs in all communities and also gives clues as to sources of income used to purchase the drugs. Sales of milk, hides and skins and, in some cases, of livestock, were mentioned as sources of income which would provide money to purchase drugs. Different interpretations of this information are possible. On the one hand, if livestock drugs had been provided then people would not have needed to use other sources of income to purchase drugs and might have built up their assets more quickly. On the other hand, the data reveal that in most cases people were able to buy drugs on their own initiative without further subsidy from the restocking program, indicating improvements in independence.

Program Constraints

Three important constraints experienced in the program were:

- Animal disease limited herd growth in some communities. In spite of the animal health program that was initiated at the same time as restocking, there were still problems of mortality from disease.
- The unwillingness of some communities to reduce the number of beneficiaries so that each could receive more animals and, hence, a viable herd. The tendency to want to give everyone something overrode the need to provide enough animals to sustain the family.
- Some communities were not very effective in their role of monitoring the restocked families. In some cases, committee members did not keep good track of the restocked families. If they had done so, some of those who experienced serious losses could have been discovered earlier, and special measures might have been taken to mitigate losses. Improving the quality of monitoring remains a challenge for future programs.

9. Samburu Experience Compared with other Restocking Efforts

There are a number of differences between the approach taken in Samburu and many other restocking efforts undertaken in Kenya. First and foremost, restocking was a community led process and primary responsibility for initiating, designing, implementing, contributing and monitoring the program rested with community members themselves. The agency role was to facilitate the process, to provide a matching contribution and to carry out major monitoring periodically. Second, restocking was approached as a medium to long term asset building strategy rather than a short term relief or recovery intervention. Communities used restocking to sustainably reduce the dependence of very poor families on friends and relatives for their basic survival. Although the beneficiaries have not gained complete independence, in that they still rely on other income sources, they now have a substantial livestock base, which will contribute significantly to their food security. Indeed, even better off pastoralists rely on a diversified portfolio of income sources. Restocking was done among people who continue to live in pastoral communities, not among urban destitutes or relief camp “refugees”. These beneficiaries were still pastoralists and boosting their assets enabled them to begin to regain their economic and social standing. Third, restocking was carried out as part of a holistic, participatory development process, not as a one-off intervention. This enabled an ongoing and in depth relationship to develop between the communities and the agency. Restocking occurred alongside other interventions, such as

animal health, water improvement and environmental conservation. Thus, many aspects of the pastoral situation were addressed simultaneously with the potential for more lasting benefits. Finally, restocking provided a context in which community members could build their capacities to analyze, plan and act. These skills can be transferred to future efforts of many types.

10. Conclusion

Building on the experience of the Baragoi communities, another two in Baragoi and six in other parts of the district, implemented similar programs. In total, 796 families were restocked since 1995. The approach used here was further replicated in another district in Kenya. The latter programs in Samburu borrowed heavily from the Baragoi experience, especially the aspect of building on the tradition of restocking, or *paran*, to raise community contributions. More attention was also paid to designing simple but effective monitoring forms to be used by the committees to follow up the restocked families. SDDP staff also played a greater role assisting committee members to carry out regular monitoring.

These programs demonstrate the potential for restocking to improve the situation of poor pastoralists. The community based approach used in Samburu shows that communities themselves, with appropriate facilitation, can organize and execute such programs. While risks cannot be eliminated from the system, community based restocking promises material, social and institutional benefits which are worth pursuing. Strengthening pastoral communities will make them less vulnerable to future droughts and may ultimately reduce the necessity for expensive, logistically difficult and humanly demeaning dependence on food aid.

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