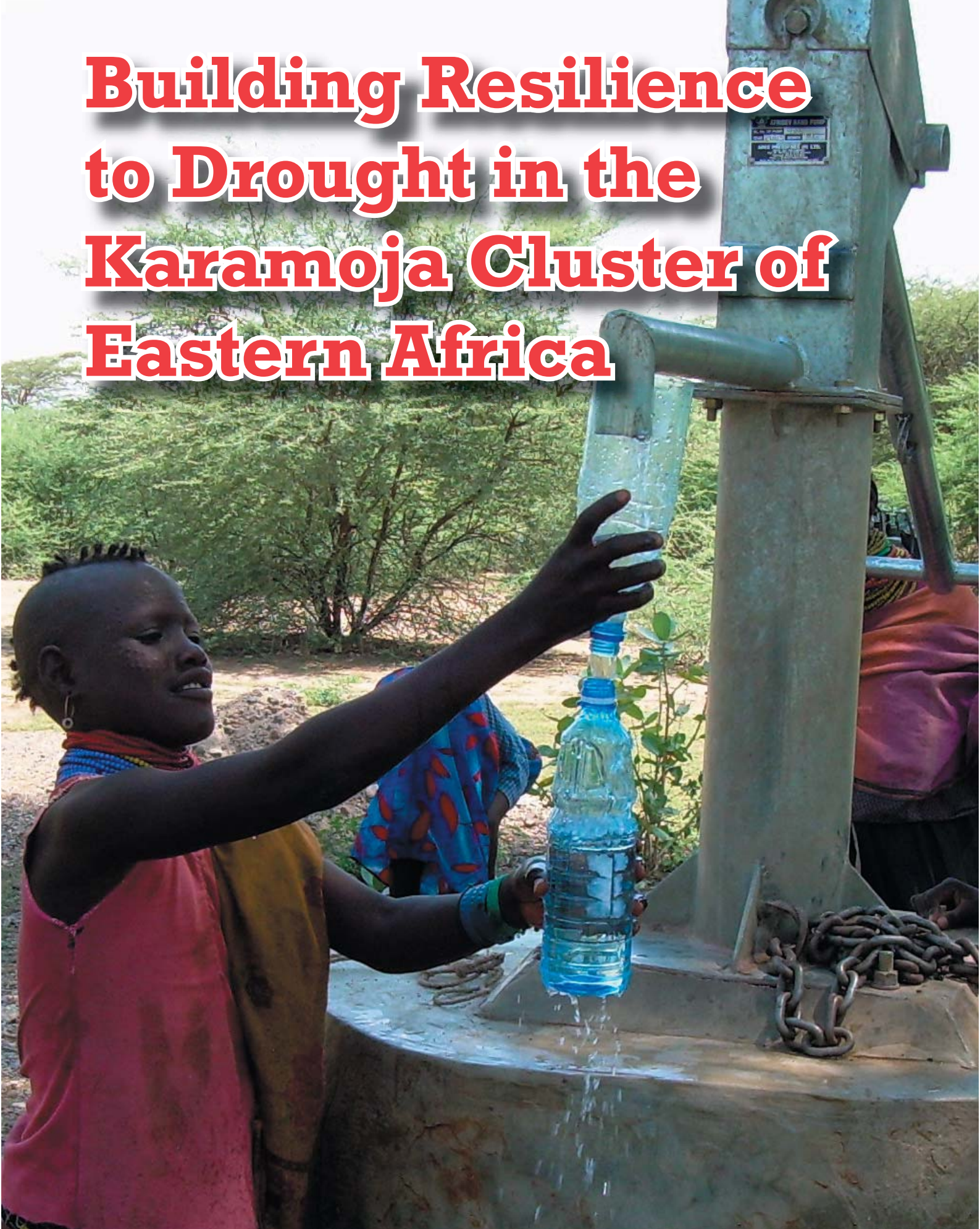


Building Resilience to Drought in the Karamoja Cluster of Eastern Africa





The Karamoja Cluster in Eastern Africa

The Karamoja cluster refers to an area of land that straddles the borders between South-western Ethiopia, North-western Kenya, South-eastern Sudan and North-eastern Uganda. The area is populated by 14 pastoralist tribes who share a common language, culture and way of life. The cluster is composed of semi arid savanna grading into wooded grassland to the north and desert to the south. Rainfall is generally unpredictable and localized, making agriculture an unreliable subsistence strategy. To survive in this habitat, pastoralists have evolved management strategies that are finely tuned to the realities of their environment. Recent studies have affirmed the rationality of these strategies and have demonstrated them to be more efficient than “modern” approaches to resource utilization in these environments. Notwithstanding this, the pastoral way of life is not without risks.

Recurrent drought and disease epidemics decimate herds in the Karamoja cluster. In the past, when drought or disease decimated herds, people recouped stock and ensured their survival by exchanging or loaning stock or, in the worst cases, by raiding cattle from neighbouring tribes. Raiding was confined to times of extreme environmental stress and carried out by large groups of warriors armed with spears and arrows. Since the 1970's, however, the nature of raiding has changed. It is now a continuous activity carried out by small groups of men armed with automatic weapons and driven by criminal motivation for profit. The results are devastating. It is estimated that cattle raids currently account for more than 70 percent of deaths among males aged 30 to 39 in tribes that inhabit the region. The proliferation of modern weapons along with changes in traditional rules of engagement have transformed an adaptive practice into a maladaptive and ongoing conflict that has increased poverty and famine in the area, placed vast tracts of grazing land and water sources out of reach of herders and rendered many pastoralist families destitute.

While ecological disasters and livelihood dislocations from war and famine contribute significantly to endemic poverty and underdevelopment in the area, there is increasing acceptance that the root cause for the

crisis lies in the political and economic marginalization of pastoralists and by the failure of governments and development agencies to devise and implement programmes aimed at sustaining pastoral production. In the past, most interventions adopted the position that pastoralism is intrinsically self destructive and that a more progressive approach to development should steer pastoralists into other, allegedly more secure means of assuring their livelihood. After decades of failed development, planners are beginning to realize that the practices of the pastoralists make sense and that optimal use of semi-arid range resources may involve continuing animal husbandry through extensive pastoralism, rather than radical shifts to new technologies of intensive commercial husbandry and dry-land agriculture.

Practical Action's Interventions in the Karamoja Cluster

Practical Action initiated development programmes in the Karamoja cluster in 1992.

Practical Action is an international development agency that works with poor communities to help them choose and use technology to improve their lives for today and for generations to come.

Working in partnership with poor communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, we build on their knowledge and skills to come up with innovative, sustainable and practical solutions to their most pressing problems. Our work is people focused, locally relevant, environmentally sensitive and offers tangible ways to challenge poverty. Practical Action views technology not simply as “hardware”, but also as information, knowledge, skills and capacity to use it.

Our work focuses on four key areas:

1. Reducing the vulnerability of poor people affected by natural disasters, conflict and environmental degradation
2. Helping poor people make a better living by enabling producers to improve their production, processing and marketing.
3. Assisting poor communities gain access to basic services like clean water, food, housing and electricity.
4. Supporting poor communities to respond to the challenges of new technologies and helping them access simple effective technologies that can change lives forever.

Work in Karamoja cluster focuses on strengthening the ability of poor people to use technology: in its broadest sense, to cope with threats from natural disasters, environmental degradation and civil conflict (1 above). Initial projects focused on building secure and sustainable livelihoods for Turkana pastoralists in Kenya. Emphasis was placed

on restoring peace among conflicting tribes and addressing their most urgent welfare needs. A network of peace committees was formed and trained to preempt and manage conflicts using a mix of traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms. Access to clean water, a key concern of the community, was improved by sinking shallow wells and building the capacity of communities to manage these resources. Community based animal health services were also introduced to reduce losses from livestock diseases.

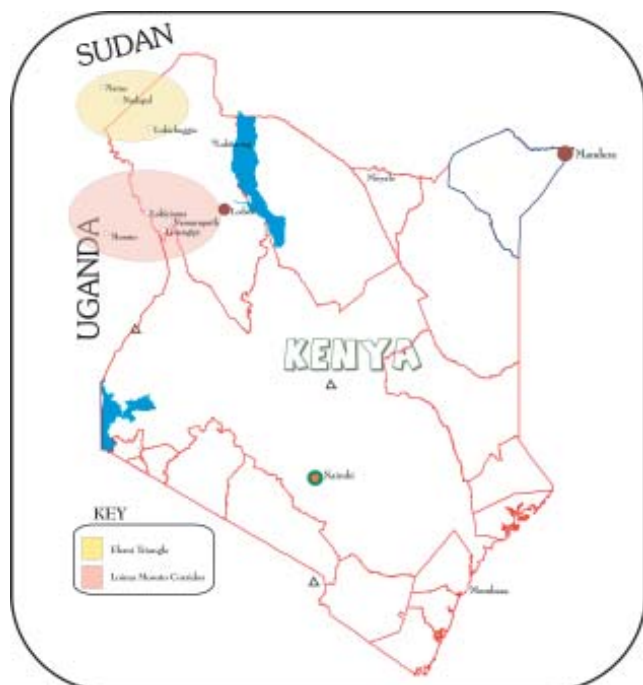
Pastoralists who had lost herds in previous droughts and epidemics were introduced to new enterprises such as the production of products from aloe vera and the propagation and marketing of traditional medicinal plants. Throughout project implementation, emphasis was placed on institution building and several Community Based Organizations emerged that remain active. Despite the successes of these efforts, it soon became evident that development could not be achieved or sustained until a lasting solution was found for dealing with the problems associated with droughts.

Beginning in 2006, and building on the experience and strengths of previous programmes, Practical Action initiated a series of projects aimed at promoting peace and improving drought preparedness among

communities living in the trans-boundary areas of Loima-Moroto Corridor on the Kenya-Uganda border and Eleme Triangle on the Kenya-southern Sudan border.

The two cross-boundary areas possess an abundance of grazing and ground water resources and are strategic grazing reserves for pastoralists from both sides of the border. However, access to these resources can only be obtained through negotiation between users and the community in whose territory they occur. Lack of dialogue between the groups can be disastrous. For instance, during the 2004-6 drought, Turkana pastoralists from Kenya were denied access to the resources by their Ugandan neighbours. This resulted in conflict and the deaths of thousands of cattle.

Inadequate watering points and the decrepit state of existing facilities also hindered access to resources. Prior to Practical Action's intervention in the area, it was established that two strategic boreholes in the





Loima-Moroto Corridor were non functional, forcing pastoralists to trek over 20 kilometres in search of water. Similarly in the Elemi Triangle, 11 shallow wells had dried up leaving only one well to serve over 30,000 pastoralists and their livestock.

Livestock diseases were also identified as a major constraint to livestock production and the ability of communities to recover from drought. Each year and especially during drought, pastoralists in the Loima-Moroto Corridor and Elemi Triangle lose hundreds of cattle and small stock due to diseases that can be prevented if they had access to the right drugs and

skilled veterinary personnel. However, these services are only available at major towns located between 80 to 250 kilometres from the project area.

The first project to get underway was entitled **“Strengthening the Resilience of Pastoralists to Drought in Two Cross Border Areas of Kenya.”** It had a timeframe of 15 months and received funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) through its Regional Drought Preparedness Programme for the Horn of Africa. The project aimed to produce three key results namely: rapid response capacity of community-based animal health workers to disease outbreaks during drought; better access to adequate and reliable water by communities during drought; and improved grazing management as part of a drought preparedness strategy. Activities aimed at achieving these results were formulated and implemented with local communities and development partners including several Community-Based Organizations. The activities included:

- Training and equipping community animal health workers and establishing drug supply chains to facilitate their work
- Rehabilitating and constructing shallow wells and boreholes to meet the needs of over 25,000 pastoralists and their livestock
- Strengthening the capacity of water user associations to manage the water resources on a sustainable basis
- Catalyzing the formation of peace and grazing committees and supporting their work in cross-border peace initiatives and proper management of rangeland resources

At the end of the 15 month project period, 50 community based animal health workers had been trained, equipped and deployed in strategic locations. Currently, 75 percent of them are employing their skills and

replenishing their stock of drugs through supply chains set up by a reputable pharmaceutical firm. An evaluation of the project revealed that the demand for community based animal services was much higher than anticipated. It also confirmed that pharmaceutical firms are willing to support community animal health workers in remote areas. Success

stories are emerging that demonstrate that animal health workers are able to generate income and make modest profits while rendering a community service. These developments hold great promise for sustaining the service in the long term.

A wider impact of the community animal health initiative resulted from the cross-border training of animal health workers. The training brought together workers from three different countries and a bonding seems to have taken place. It has led to new relationships that now enable members of one tribe

to treat the animals of another without fear of suspicion or hostility. The community based animal health workers have in effect become agents of cross-border peace and also play the role of informal “peace monitors”.

Twenty shallow wells were rehabilitated and equipped with windlass technology. These wells are currently being accessed by 30,000 pastoralists and their livestock. Two bore holes were sunk in the Loima-Moroto Corridor and two more rehabilitated in the Elemi Triangle. All four boreholes are located at strategic locations where they serve the

needs of 4,000 pastoralists and obviate the need for herders to trek their animals into areas previously regarded as hostile.

“The construction of watering troughs for livestock means that animals spend 30 minutes at the watering point as opposed to half a day as it used to be before. These animals therefore have more time to spend grazing instead of standing around the watering point. Their condition will be better than before”

Herder, Elemi Triangle



Water User Associations in both areas were strengthened to manage the water facilities and the revenue they generate from users. In order to ensure proper maintenance of the facilities, maintenance and emergency plans were formulated and formal agreements entered into between the water user associations, the District Water Office and a service provider. Supply chains for spare parts were also set up linking suppliers with the water user associations. The current system for providing water seems to be working well and to the satisfaction of users, however, it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to build the management capacity of user associations and improve revenue collection. The utility of the system at the height of a drought has also to be evaluated.

Two peace and grazing committees from the Loima-Moroto Corridor and the Elemi Triangle were formed and received training in conflict and grazing management. These committees fulfill the role of traditional institutions that have been weakened or have ceased to exist. Both government and communities have recognized the committees as legitimate representatives of the community on matters of conflict resolution and grazing management. Cross border peace meetings and dialogue between the two committees have yielded encouraging results. Stolen livestock have been traced and returned to their rightful owners. In one incident, Turkana women from Kenya recovered stolen animals from their tribesmen and returned them to their rightful owners in Uganda. This in the opinion of local residents could never have happened before. Herders from opposing tribes across the border were also reported to be sharing grazing areas and water sources without incident, a situation not seen in over ten years.

“There is more peace now and cross- border trading has increased between Turkana and Karamojong people. The Karamojong come to sell kerosene lamps and other goods in exchange for money or goats. They also bring sorghum, axes, tobacco and shoes. The Moroto livestock market in Uganda is now open and the Turkana take livestock there to sell”

Local Resident, Loima-Moroto Corridor



Taking advantage of the prevailing peace and the easy access to water, women found time to participate in peace rallies with their counterparts from across the border.

The development coordinator of a partner agency based in the area confirmed that: *“cross border initiatives had improved. The peace structures we have now can be relied upon to respond, manage and preempt violent conflicts. There is now integrated grazing, joint businesses and children are going to the same schools”*

Following closely after the “ECHO” project, Practical Action rolled out two projects funded by CORDAID. The first aims at extending the influence of the ECHO project in the Karamoja cluster, consolidating the peace work and strengthening interventions geared towards building sustainable livelihoods for pastoralists and those who have dropped out from pastoralism. The second focuses on building a network of agencies to coordinate and harmonize the peace and development work being carried out in the area. Soon to be initiated is a Drought Management Initiative funded by the European Commission and implemented by a consortium of development agencies including Practical Action. The initiative aims to scale up interventions in the livestock and water sector that will strengthen the ability of pastoralist communities to cope with drought.

So what have we learned?

Practical Action’s work in the Karamoja cluster has strengthened our conviction that conflict not only arises from drought but aggravates its impacts on the human population. Conflict management should therefore be an integral part of any drought mitigation strategy in conflict prone areas. Our work in the cluster demonstrates that communities are willing to find peaceful ways to settle disputes. However, an external agent appears to be necessary to catalyze the process.

The project has demonstrated the value of using simple cost-effective technologies to improve access to water in drought prone areas. It has also shown that given the right training and orientation, communities can undertake the management and maintenance of these resources and pay for their upkeep. However, in order to adequately address the problem, such interventions need to be replicated to achieve geographical coverage. The idea of sinking contingency boreholes in grazing reserves and using these areas exclusively during drought has been successfully employed elsewhere and holds promise as a viable strategy for building resilience.



Mobility is a key management strategy employed by pastoralists to deal with the unpredictable weather conditions and availability of resources in arid environments. Restrictions imposed on their movements undermine their livelihoods and their ability to cope with drought.

The provision of timely veterinary services can play a crucial role in reducing livestock mortality during drought. However, in the absence of qualified veterinary personnel, community based animal health workers (CBAHWs), properly trained, equipped and supervised can effectively fill the gap. Adequate geographical coverage by the CBAHWs is crucial for the success of this intervention.

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