



Empowerment of Pastoralist Women

Partner: PENHA (Pastoral & Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa)

Country: Sudan

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I. Summary

Poor pastoralist women in Eastern Sudan have improved their livelihoods by producing alternative animal feed from local resources. They are able to do so after a training received from a local pastoralist organization, supported by Oxfam Novib's partner PENHA. The women managed to improve the productivity of their goats so that they produce more milk and give birth to more kid goats. The increased household income is used to improve health and support the education of their children.

II. Full description

Aim

The overall objective of the two year program has been to improve food security among pastoralist communities in Kassala State of Eastern Sudan by stimulating the fodder production in a sustainable and locally owned manner. Food insecurity has many root causes and contributing factors. This program however aimed to provide immediate and practical solutions to empower community members to tackle food insecurities themselves, particularly those occurring as a result of drought or poverty, and with rapid effect.

Context

Some of the world's most abject poverty and suffering and greatest level of inequality can be found in the rural areas of the eastern region of Sudan. Most of the people in the region live on agriculture or pastoralist production. Their livelihoods are threatened by increasingly hostile environmental conditions due to pressure over natural resources and climate change. Women are often the worst affected by poverty and inequality. Overcoming unfair patriarchal structures, attitudes and beliefs and related discrimination against women remains a challenge.

PENHA works in Kassala State, one of the three states in Eastern Sudan, near the Eritrean border. The large pastoralist community has been joined by an influx of refugees from both Ethiopia and Eritrea. The gradual loss of grazing land is resulting in a major change in the life of a people who used to be nomadic.

Eastern Sudan experiences long drought moments during the dry season. The way of life of the pastoralists is that the men move away with the cattle to remote areas of the grazing lands. The women remain in the villages assuming the

responsibility of looking after the children. The main source of income is generated from the cattle. However, as this income generated starts to fluctuate and become unstable, families have to search for alternative resources to survive the harsh situation. This is where the project comes in.

Main actors

Pastoralist men and women are the main beneficiaries of the project. PENHA is the counterpart of Oxfam Novib in this project. PEAKS (Pastoralist Environment Association in Kassala State) is a local community organization in Eastern Sudan. APRC (Animal Production and Research Centre) is a Sudanese research organization and partner of PENHA.

Why did Oxfam Novib get involved?

PENHA is a long term partner of Oxfam Novib in several countries of the Horn. Oxfam Novib supports this project because it fits its strategy of strengthening the resilience of local communities against adverse situations such as drought and since the project targets marginalized groups.

Methodology

The main activities of this phase of the project include the capacity building of PEAKS by PENHA and the training of pastoralist women on the production of alternative animal feed (by PEAKS, with support from APRC and the Community College of the University of Kassala). In previous phases of the project, relationships have been established with pastoralists in Kassala which has led to the establishment of PEAKS. Research has been carried out in collaboration with APRC to develop the production of an animal feed using local resources available in this part of the country. Choppers were also developed to cut the fodder as part of this project.



Results

More than 2,000 pastoralists, mainly women, have been able to increase the productivity of their animals (mainly cattle and goats). They are able to do so because 105 pastoralist and agro-pastoralist women have received training to become trainers in the preparation, conservation and use of fodder for their animals. They have then reached out to at least 2,000 other women. Moreover, 25 choppers have been distributed to women's groups in villages in Kassala State. They are being used by 1,500 men and women and facilitate the cutting of fodder. Also animal feed rations have been sold to the PEAKS members at a subsidized price to enable them to provide the feed to their animals in the dry season.

The capacity of PEAKS has been enhanced. It has been legally registered, it has more than 100 members who pay subscriptions. The committee members received management training and on-the-job guidance and its office is equipped with a computer and other supplies.

Impact

PEAKS is now really representing the voice of the pastoralists at Kassala State level. At household level, the women are empowered because they have got access to new knowledge and experience. The increase of productivity of their goats provides the households with more milk to supplement the diet. The surplus can be sold. With the sale of the milk and the male baby goats the women can fulfill other household needs such as in education and health.

A practical change is that instead of letting the goats roam around to feed themselves, the women now start feeding the

goats in order to make them more productive. They have clearly seen the benefit of this new practice. Also the fact that the women themselves are allowed to participate in training outside the village is a very significant change in itself.

III. Lessons learned

The success of this project is partly due to the strong relations of the partner with the local actors. PEAKS provides the entry point and full trust of the local pastoral communities and APRC provides the entry point to the Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries. The project also has good relationships with the local government and other local organizations.

The trust that has been built with the local communities resulted in the pastoralist men allowing their women to participate in a PEAKS-training. Traditionally, these women would not be allowed to do so. They are because the training organization is trusted with the training given close to the village and with all trainers being women.

Another component of the success is that the project meets a clearly felt need. The women are suffering when their husbands are far away with the cattle and they have to survive the dry period in the village with their children and a few goats. PENHA offered them a way of surviving and improving their livelihoods. The research has provided them with a source of fodder that is locally available and affordable.

Tips and more

- Make sure the project is strongly rooted in the local society.
- Organize the training in such a way that women are allowed to participate.
- Make sure the project offers a solution to a problem which is locally felt and ensure that the solution is appropriate for the local situation.

IV. Read on..

For further reading have a look at the PENHA website: www.penhanetwork.org

V. Colophon

Counterpart: PENHA is partner of Oxfam Novib since 2001, SAP CP number 503371

Project: the project number is p-6460, the project period was from 1 May 2009 till 31 December 2011 and the financial contribution was 200,000 euro for Eritrea and Sudan (this case focuses on the Sudan component only).

Bureau/field office dealing with the project: Horn of Africa Bureau, ON The Hague

Country and further context: Oxfam Novib's work in Sudan aims to increase the resilience of communities and civil society organisations. Oxfam Novib has been active in Sudan since the seventies. Five programmes are being implemented. The focus under ON's programme 1(sustainable livelihood) is on small scale farmers, (agro) pastoralists and fisher folk in selected rural areas of Sudan. They have limited access to resources and mainly depend on family labour. The majority of Sudan's poor work in small holder agriculture (agriculture, livestock, and fisheries) and poverty reduction can only be achieved when these people are able to increase their food production and become less vulnerable to shocks. Women are even more deprived of access to resources, especially micro finance services, than men.

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Aim of the Case:

Selling (for fundraising) and Campaigning (for strengthening lobby and campaigning)

Telling (for sharing insights and trust) and Learning (for sharing and learning from experience)

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