



Regional Learning & Advocacy Programme for Vulnerable Dryland Communities

Drylands recovery and development in the Horn of Africa: the need for community control and empowerment, education and pro-poor infrastructure¹

September 2011

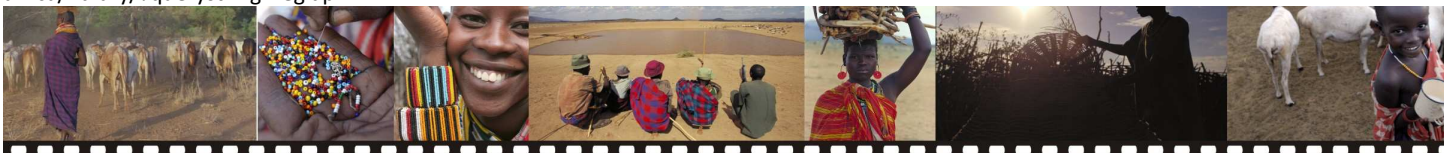
Background

The current drought induced crisis in the Horn of Africa has led to appeals for emergency assistance and increased attention to long term investment in the region. However the priorities have largely been vague or focused on agricultural development, predominantly around irrigated crop production and drought resistant crops. The issues of the drylands are complex, yet with the current level of debate centring on pastoralism versus crop production there is a danger of little progress being made on long term resiliency, and experience shows that the next drought induced disaster is around the corner. Far more is being spent on emergency response than it will cost to improve the situation – if only focus could be shifted to long term resiliency measures that will enable communities themselves to decide their futures.

Studies show that rainfall in many of the drought affected areas is too variable for rainfed crop production and this variability is likely to increase in future. Many areas are already water deficit therefore the costs of irrigation to the overall economy outweigh the localised benefits, since the areas viable for irrigation are usually the drought grazing reserves for livestock keepers. Crop production may have a place as an alternative livelihood option for some, and with consideration can complement livestock production through residues and fodder production, but needs to be carefully planned, and does not offer an option for the majority of the 12.5 million people currently affected by drought.

Mobile pastoral production supports significant numbers of people, contributes strongly to regional economies, and has increasing economic potential. However, in the current context, it is clearly not sustaining the more vulnerable dryland dwellers, with more and more dropping out and becoming dependent on food or cash relief or unsustainable livelihood options. Adequate alternatives are not presently available in many of these remote areas which have neither basic infrastructure nor human capital. The focus must shift from debates about the viability of the pastoral sector towards enabling ex-pastoralists to move into sectors of the economy that instead of competing against pastoralism actually strengthen economic resilience and sustainable growth of the region, including those who remain in pastoralism. Most importantly, dryland dwellers need the capacities and an enabling environment to give them the power and resources to decide their futures.

¹ Copies of this brief and further information about REGLAP can be found on: <http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/east-central-africa/library/?querystring=reglap>



To promote sustainable and resilient livelihoods it is vital that people living in the drylands are enabled to make better-informed choices, at both individual and communal levels. This means individual and institutional capacity to choose between different livelihood options together with the skills and resources to follow a chosen direction. Public and donor investment should be oriented to build these capacities, have clear time bound targets and should be monitored explicitly against how they are enabling locally-driven development and promoting resiliency. There is a need for a serious commitment from all actors, including those involved in drought appeals, to develop and effectively implement an integrated recovery and development plan for the drylands with joint monitoring mechanisms, focused on the following 3 areas:

1. **Building community capacity to determine development priorities, control natural resources and monitor the use of funds.** Currently local communities are losing control and access to land (a key to any sustainable livelihood option)². Mechanisms need to be immediately introduced to protect communal land rights including devolving decision-making responsibilities to properly representative community organisations. Communities need to define development priorities through community planning processes that feed into formal local development plans. The process of community-planning needs to be institutionalised, with the roles of community and local government clearly defined, and with a role for community institutions in monitoring the use of funds to implement locally-defined plans.
2. **Prioritize education at all levels, including appropriate formal and non formal education, business development skills, vocational training, and civic education.** Appropriate education for both men and women is the key to making informed decisions about livelihood options, developing alternatives, addressing population growth rates, and ensuring good governance. Currently primary school enrolment rates in dryland areas are the lowest in these countries. However the content and delivery of education needs to be appropriate to dryland realities and needs to promote informed decision making about livelihood options. Education on rights and responsibilities and how to engage in advocacy and monitoring of local budgets is also fundamental to ensure investments are used effectively.
3. **Invest in pro-poor infrastructure and service development to enable choices, including financial services and market infrastructure, secondary roads, telecommunications, and information provision.** Only with improved road and market infrastructure, information and financial services will both livestock based and other livelihoods become resilient. Infrastructure and services should be developed with careful attention to who will benefit and whether it will promote resiliency of the most vulnerable e.g. secondary roads, accessible financial services etc.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

REGLAP is currently funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) and partners with a range of organisations working on drought resiliency including UNOCHA and FAO.

² REGLAP (2011): Broken lands, Broken lives: the impact of land fragmentation on pastoral resiliency: <http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/east-central-africa/library/?querystring=reglap>

