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# **CLIMATE-INDUCED VULNERABILITY AND PASTORALIST LIVESTOCK MARKETING CHAINS IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA AND NORTHEASTERN KENYA (CHAINS): DECEMBER 2012 FIELD RESEARCH REPORT**

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**Field Research Report**

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## Table of Contents

Preamble.....	3
Overview of Field Report December 14-31, 2012 .....	3
Preliminary field observation.....	3
Harobake market .....	3
Didahara qualitative interviews.....	5
Interview with P2, 57 .....	7
Climate variability: from local perspective .....	7
Views regarding market and market infrastructure .....	7
Species diversification.....	8
Foora migration .....	8
Coping with climate variability .....	8
Credit operation: cases of goat traders .....	9
Access to animal health service .....	9
Transport.....	10
Moyale market.....	10
Pasture or farm land .....	11
Conflict .....	11
Mobile use.....	11
Main Problems to Moyale goat traders.....	12

## **Preamble**

This draft report presents preliminary findings from fieldwork conducted during December, 2012. Much of deals with the start up of our household study and the training of research enumerators and initial observations at a few key local livestock markets. The report is written based on qualitative information and observations from field works in Yabello, Didahara, Dubuluq, Moyale, and Harobake livestock market. The interviews were conducted with traders in Dubuluq, traders in Moyale, beverage distributors in Harobake market and Didahara pastoralists.

## **Overview of Field Report December 14-31, 2012**

We departed from Borana on Friday, 14 December 2012 and arrived at Yabello the same day. On Saturday, 15 December, we started training the enumerators with the intent of doing a field test on the following day. Since the vehicle could not accommodate all of us, we sent the enumerators ahead of us and told the driver to collect us afterwards. In the evening we checked the questionnaires filled out by the enumerators and corrected them. On 17 December, we started the household survey. On 18 December 2012, we planned to send the enumerators to Didahara and go to Dubuluq to interview the traders there. Despite serious drawbacks with transport, we managed to complete the household surveys at Didahara, interviewed 19 traders at Moyale, 1 trader at Dubuluq and returned to Addis Ababa on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2012.

## **Preliminary field observation**

### **Harobake market**

This market place was established for livestock in the 1990s. It is located close to Bake pond for which it is named. The livestock market center has fences, weighing scales, veterinary drug stores, loading places, a place for tax collectors, and separate sections for cattle, camels, and small stock. Besides livestock marketing, many other transactions of goods and provision of services take place on the market days. It is one of the fastest growing markets in Borana and the weekly transactions are very high. Currently, the pastoralists get most of the goods and services they need in this market. The number of generators operating for mobile phone recharge and for operating barbers business in this market also showed a dramatic increase: we counted 15 generators on 16 December, 2012. In my previous interview, I found that an individual generator can charge from 50 to 100 mobile phones in a day. 15 generators can recharge more than 1000 mobiles on a market day. All the mobiles charged in this market come from the rural settlements surrounding Harobake market. Other services in the market area include grinding mills, hotels

(three of them providing bed room services), tea rooms, barbers, butchers, drug stores, and tailors. There are more than 300 small houses used as drinking places, shops, tea rooms etc. Predominant commodities sold include: clothes, shoes, food grains, rice, sugar, soap, mobile phones and accessories, spaghetti, macaroni, salt and tobacco.

There are two beer distributors in this market. On the day we visited the market, one of them sold 100 boxes of St. George beer and 50 boxes of soft drinks, while the other distributor sold 70 boxes of Harar beer and 70 boxes of soft drinks (a box contains 24 bottles). When we were talking to the distributor, a pastoralist bought a box of Harar beer and a box of soft drinks that he was taking to the rural settlement for festivities. As collateral for the boxes and bottles, the pastoralist deposited 500 birr, which he can collect upon returning the items. The second distributor also sold 4 boxes of other alcoholic drinks like ouzo (a box contains 15 bottles). One of the distributors rented a house of 4x4 meters made out of wood and mud for 500 birr per month (see figure 1a), while the other distributor used his own house (figure 1b)., Individuals who could not deposit money as collateral for boxes and bottles preferred to transport a few boxes from their own hometown where they know the distributors (e.g. Yabello, finca'a). Moreover, locally brewed and distilled alcoholic drinks are served in every small and big room in the market.



Figure 1a. Harar beer distributor in HaroBake



## Figure 1b. St. George beer distributor

There were seven people who slaughtered goats under tree shade on the day we visited the market. Other people use houses constructed at this market place. In total about 15 people slaughter goats every week. Women who can not slaughter goats buy the intestines and stomach from hotels, boil them in water and sell the soup that results from it. I counted five women boiling and selling the intestines in this way.

There had been a drop in prices for all livestock types from our last visit. The cause is not clear but in general it was attributed to the lack of demand for livestock from the Middle East. The local demand was affected by Orthodox Christian followers fasting pre-Christmas (45 days). When we visited the same market in October, a kg for live goat was 29 birr while it was 27 on 16 December. The informal interviews with some traders revealed that Adama feedlots are full and there is no demand for bulls.

## Didahara qualitative interviews

Participant 1 (P1), an elderly man, was asked about his perception of changes in livestock marketing. He says that access to markets has increased and people sell more livestock now than ever before. According to him, the number of livestock that could be accumulated in the past was limited by disease and drought. The control of disease increased the livestock population, despite the decline in per capita holding. The need to complement the household milk consumption with grain combined with price increases encouraged more sales than ever. According to P1, cattle are no longer the sole means of livelihood for Borana. He says:

We have camels, we cultivate [crops](#) and people also earn money from different activities. We also learned to invest in construction of houses, deposit cash in the bank, and invest in children's education. The household expenses have also increased, including medication, clothes, taxes, and grain, resulting in increased livestock sales for many households.

According to P1, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, quotas were imposed on households to sell livestock. P1 remembers that his father was forced to sell 7 cattle. He says that despite the negative attitude towards the quota imposition, the Borana learned the importance of selling animals that would have been lost due to drought.

There are diverse reasons why pastoralists sell livestock. For many pastoralists, it is not the price that makes them decide to sell, but the need for the money in the household to purchase food, medication, children's education, etc. However households and individuals prioritize different reasons for selling livestock. For some the purchase of food may be the main cause while for others medication, clothing, or taxation may be the main cause. Some people sell bulls to use

part of the money to fulfill their household needs and replace the bulls with younger cattle. Others sell old bulls and buy many young bulls with the intention of fattening them. There are a few pastoralists who undertake such practices frequently. For instance, one pastoralist we interviewed (a young man aged 26) sold a camel for 14,000 birr in October and bought six young bulls for 21,000 birr on the same day. He has a plan to continue this practice in the future.

The male head of the household decides what and when to sell. However, it is possible to consult the wife and children. If the wife wants to sell the livestock, she must seek the approval of her husband but the husband can sell without the consent of the wife. According to P1, women are not capable of managing the money from the sale of animals and may spend it extravagantly (note that this is no evidence to confirm this). Women who were present during the interview agree with this constraint on cattle ownership. They say ‘we are totally marginalized from cattle ownership’.

Pastoralists in Dikale kebele (Didahara) drive the cattle either to Dubuluq or Harobake market depending on their location in the kebele. The kebele is divided into three divisions: Negele, Eastern, and Damabala aba chana divisions. The Negele and Eastern divisions are relatively closer to Dubuluq while Dambala aba chana division residents go to Haro Bakke. However, both market places require on average two days trekking from their home areas. Pastoralists complain about the hardships related to trekking: long distance travel, lack of food and water on the way, and finding places to stay overnight.

One of the recent developments in this Pastoral Association (PA) is that the bush market for goats and sheep has shifted to the settlement (olla). There are local traders who move from house to house with their weighing scales and collect goats and sheep that fit the requirement for export abattoirs. They collect the animals and call the big traders in Yabello. The traders go to the individual settlements with Isuzu trucks and take the animals to Yabello. There is no opportunity for selling small stock that do not fulfill the requirement for export abattoirs. The price for live weight per kg at Negele division of Dikale PA (25-30 km southeast of Didahara center) is 24 birr per kg liveweight, while it is 27 birr at Bakke market. It is not the lack of price information that caused pastoralists to sell at 24 birr, but the opportunity cost of traveling to Harobake or Dubuluq to sell only one or two goats.

We interviewed one local trader (eastern division of the kebele) who collects goats and sells them to Yabello traders. He buys goats for 26 birr per kg and sells them at 27 birr per kg. He started his goat trade with 2 goats and now he can buy up to 65 goats at a time. He has already established small agents who buy goats and supply them to him. Recently he lost 15 goats (10 died of a disease called Sirgo and 5 were eaten by wild life). Acknowledging his integral role in the community, residents organized a fund-raiser to help him recoup some of his losses. He received 4000 birr and 7 goats.



### **Interview with P2, age 57**

P2 described the route of livestock trade in the past as: The Gedeo come and buy in Bush market called Haro Dimtu (between Haro bake and surupha). Then the driving continues via Surupha-Finca'a-Bule hora-Chafe. At each location, transactions take place. In the past the trader would trek his own animals. P2 drove cattle to Haro Dimtu and Surupha in the 1970s. Then, moving with unsold cattle to the next market place was common. The drying up of Haro dimtu pond and the opening of HaroBake pond forced the market place to shift to the current Bake market. Now bulls are directly trucked from HaroBake to Adama. The route for this type is complex and follows the demand.

### **Climate variability: from local perspective**

Climate variability is explained by pastoralists in different ways: erratic rainfall, spatial and temporal variability, delay of onset of rain or early ending of rain. In all cases, it affects the availability of pasture and water resources, impacting the quality, productivity, and health of the animals. When the rain is good, pastoralists survive on milk supplemented by grains produced or purchased from the sale of small stock. When the rain fails, there is no milk and the pastoralists have to depend on grain alone, forcing them to sell livestock. By the time they decide to sell the animal(s) it may be too late; the deteriorated body condition of the cattle from lack of pasture grazing may force the pastoralists into an unfavorable bargaining position.

The spatial variability of resource availability was observed within the same PA in our December trip. The Negele division had very nice pasture (still green) and in some cases grasses were more than 50 centimeters tall. The second division-Damabala aba chana-had good pasture, but less abundant than at Negele. The third division-Eastern, is more mountainous and cattle had already migrated to Gomole (close to Surupha) in search of pasture. Even though our visit was immediately after the rainy season, this part of the kebele had very little good pastureland. It is such resource variability that often necessitates migration.

### **Views regarding market and market infrastructure**

Pastoralists welcome the development of market infrastructure, including the fences. In particular, the fences eased cattle management during transactions and the informants do not consider the tax for fences a constraint except when they are forced to pay taxes on unsold livestock. They are also aware that the presence of the facilities attract more traders and hence promote competition among buyers. One of the informants (P2) says that the construction of market facilities is part of advertising the Borana cattle to the world so it has been a favorable development. He says that it also improves security and encourages more traders to come. Traders are not concerned with the security and transport problems now because they can keep the cattle fenced until they can hire trucks. Fences have made cattle management easier for traders as well as pastoralists during the transaction and afterwards.

## **Species diversification**

Borana pastoralists are now inclined towards camels and goats. The reasons include: camels are more drought-resistant, fit into the current Borana ecology, give more milk than cows, and fetch more money if sold. However, owning camels is only possible for middle and upper wealth class people. The poor cannot afford to buy camels. The second most preferred species now is goat, as it is another drought-resistant animal. Goats also mature fast and provide milk to the family. However, informants attest that unfortunately goats and camels are susceptible to many diseases. The other problem is that the Borana informants say that they lack camel management skills while they have managed cattle for generations. They do not know how to treat the camel when it is sick. Despite the tendency to shift to camels and goats, cattle have maintained the central role in Borana ritual, cultural, and political activities.

## **Foora migration**

Pastoralists say that migration to foora herding camps can affect access to market and livestock marketing depending on the location of the grazing area. Most of the foora areas do have their own market outlets; there are a few areas like Galana Konso, where pastoralists may not be able to access markets. It is the location and trekking distance from the secondary markets that affects access to markets and hence the price. The status of the animal is another determining factor. If the animal is healthy and able to walk, it is possible to drive to it to market. This depends on resource availability, and migration to disease free areas.

## **Coping with climate variability**

Pastoralists cope with climate variability differently depending on wealth, geographical location, and available means at hand. Some store grain for people and hay for the animals, while many pastoralists are increasingly feeding animals with tree leaves. During the 2011 drought, many pastoralists bought concentrated feeds and hay for their animals. One of the pastoralists we interviewed bought hay for 5000 birr (a bale was 40 birr) at Didahara. During the drought he lost 10 cattle while 70 survived. He used water from a cemented well (cistern) for weak animals and water from a traditional well for the others. Another informant at Dubuluq paid 56000 birr for hay and concentrates during the 2011 drought; while a rich pastoralist, Participant 3 (P3), at Didahara claims that he paid 58630 in three months' time in 2011 to help sustain his flock. P3 paid 38000 birr during 2008 drought to buy hay and concentrates (a bale was 18-35 birr). During the last drought, he paid 3600 birr for a vehicle to bring hay from Sululta. Despite his effort, he lost 66 cattle during the 2011 drought. P3 says that migration due to drought exposes cattle to disease. It is also a source of conflict, because migration may deviate from the usual routes, following the availability of pasture. P3 uses a motorcycle for transportation.



## **Credit operation: cases of goat traders**

Selling on credit is one of the main problems for big and small traders alike. A trader interviewed at Dubuluq sold 1300 goats to a trader from Adama who sold the goats to an exporter. The value was estimated to be 1.2ml birr. The buyer agreed to pay in 2-3 days after trucking the goats. This was early October. However, the seller did not get the money until late December. According to this informant, the other trader also sold the goats on credit and is waiting for the money. This shows that there are people who are operating in the livestock trade without having operational capital. This trader collects the goats from Dillo and treks them to Dubuluq. He pays 6 birr per goat to the trekkers. After arriving at Dubuluq, he employs herders for 60 birr per person per day to keep about 100 goats. According to this informant, the longer they keep the goats the more they lose. There is considerable ecological differences for the production of goats within Borana. For this trader, buying goats from Dillo area and trekking them to Dubuluq is costly as Dillo is free of ticks and Dubuluq is full of ticks, which affect the body condition and expose the goats to skin disease. This trader collected 1370 goats in September to October. Due to changes in the physical environment, 70 of the goats did not fit the market requirements and were rejected even from being sold for credit. 13 of the 70 goats died. This was a big loss. Therefore, he prefers to sell on credit rather than keeping the goats for additional days/weeks.

At Moyale, it is common that butchers and hotel owners also take goats on credit from small traders, whom they pay back after selling the meat. Some traders have lost their money to butchers who changed their address and could not be traced. P4, an informant, recalls that she lost the value of 4 goats in the last 6 months. A Gari man took a goat on credit (600 birr) and another Burji butcher took 3 goats on credit (1500 birr). P4 lost a higher proportion of her operational capital in the credit transaction. Despite the loss, she still sells on credit. On the day I interviewed her, she sold a goat for 850 on credit to a butcher. If she collects the money back, the profit is 30 birr. She now gives credit to women only since they are considered to be more trust worthy.

The credit operation has a long history in Borana. GB recalled that his father lost about 700 cattle to an Arab trader towards the end of the imperial regime in the 1970s.

## **Access to animal health service**

Access to modern drugs for livestock has increased in Borana. Every household we visited has one or more drugs in the house. It is common to find tick removing drugs in the houses. There are many pastoralists who are capable of giving injections to the animals.



Figure 2. Drugs stored by one of the pastoralists at Negele division of Dikale PA

## Transport

Goats sold in Moyale town arrive from different locations and by different means of transportation. Pastoralists and traders that are located close to the town trek the goats to the market, while others truck the goats. Since most goat traders in Moyale are operating with limited finances, the goats are transported in the luggage compartment of public buses (figure 3). Traders trucking goats to Moyale mostly buy from Hiddi (65 km from Moyale), Bokku (55km), Erdar (80km), Borbor (about 100km), Dubuluq, Mega, and Yabello areas. The picture below shows the most commonly used means of transport. The transportation cost depends on the distance between the origin and destination.

## Moyale market

There are four marketplaces in Moyale town: one for camels and cattle on the Somali side, another for cattle on the Oromia side and two for goats and sheep (one on each side of the region separated by asphalt road). Most goats and sheep sold in both markets are for local consumption and the actors are small traders who buy and sell a few heads of goats daily. In the most popular mode of operation the vehicle arrives with goats (see figure 3), the local traders run to the vehicle and hold the goats while unloading. This is like marking the animal to buy. Other traders who cannot get one from the vehicle can buy from other small traders and sell the goat again. According to informants, a goat can be sold 3-4 times in the same market before its meat ends up for sale in a hotel or butchery.

The traders complain about the unfavorable condition of goats' trade during our visit. Their reasons are similar. From the supply side, pastoralists are now less compelled to sell because

milk is abundant and their cash need is at its lowest level. From the demand side, the consumers replace milk for meat and consumers reduce their meat consumption. Traders say that they are not benefiting from the business. This shows the seasonality of demand in the livestock markets. In addition, competition has increased with the number of small traders.

A young man who is a school dropout raised an interesting issue that has increased competition among traders. According to this young man, many high school students are dropping out and joining the livestock business. The reason he presents is that college graduates are told to create their own jobs rather than seeking government employment, which was the common goal of many students until recently. The number of unemployed college graduates has increased drastically and this has forced the government to repeatedly tell the young people to create their own jobs. Many young people now see higher education as a waste of time; they drop out of school an early and try to make their own way.

## Pasture or farm land

Selling land rights that surround existing farmland is becoming common throughout Borana. Once the land is fenced with the pretext of protecting the farmland, individuals can leave the land uncultivated and sell the pasture. There are many such cases of land use in our interviews. Participant 5 (P5) is a goat trader and owns farmland close to Moyale town (5km). He lost his oxen in the 2011 drought and was unable to cultivate his land. Since the drought he has used the land for pasture. Last year, he earned 4500 birr from the sale of pasture. He is now waiting for the peak of dry season to sell the pasture.

## Conflict

The recent conflict at Moyale between Garre and Borana affected many goat traders. Four of the traders interviewed say that they lost goats during the conflict. One of them, P4, lost 4 goats and a donkey. Now, he has no operational capital and is acting as *dilala* (broker) and earns a sales commission of 20 birr per sold goat. Another trader, P5, also lost 6 goats worth 4300 birr during the conflict. The conflict also resulted in a separation of marketplaces for the two regions and is now operating on both sides of the asphalt road. According to informants, the division was polarized after the recent conflict, and restricted their movement.

## Mobile phone use

Some wealthy pastoralists use spare batteries for their mobiles to keep them operating for the full week. Those pastoralists living far from towns send the battery with friends and get it recharged in the market to avoid frequent long distance travel for everyone; whoever goes to the

town takes the batteries and recharges them. The price for recharging batteries differs depending on the location and source of energy. At Yabello (hydroelectric) it is 2 birr per phone recharge, while it is 3 birr at Dubuluq (hydroelectric). Didahara and Harobake use diesel generators and charge 5 birr for a single recharge. Pastoralists use the mobile for discussing herd management (talking with herders about the safety of the animals and herders, resource availability), social issues with family members living elsewhere, and to a lesser extent, livestock marketing issues.

### **Main Problems to Moyale goat traders**

- Credit operation
- Lack of finance for women traders
- Lack of market place (goats and sheep market is located on the side of asphalt road).
- Inability of women to move in the rural area to buy goats (security concern)
- For married women, restriction from husbands not to move outside the Moyale town

Note: Crossing the border to and from Kenya seems uncontrolled, albeit temporarily. There is no restriction on both sides, but taxes are collected on both sides.