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## CapEx in supporting pastoral development

# Alternative livelihoods for former pastoralists in rural settings

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### Key messages

- The needs and aspirations of people leaving pastoralism are crucial to support finding alternative sources of livelihood, in addition to addressing the factors that are pushing them out of rural areas.
- Appropriate education, vocational and skills training as well as mechanisms for providing credit, stimulating savings and allowing investment are key factors to promote alternative livelihoods in pastoralist areas.
- In addition to conventional entry points for income generation, innovative alternatives such as small-scale agro-processing units or providing paid services can be encouraged to improve the situation of former pastoralists.
- Vocational and skills training centres need to be established and made accessible in pastoralist areas.
- In West African countries young people are recruited by Jihadist groups in the Sahel and by Al-Shabab insurgents in Somalia. Others become victims of human traffickers leading desperate journeys to Europe and America. SDC's development of programmes and strategies needs to take into account such dynamics within the pastoralist communities, so that appropriate targeting is done while promoting alternative livelihoods among former pastoralists in rural areas.



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*Pastoralism is practised on a quarter of the globe's surface and provides a source of food and livelihood for millions of people, especially in areas that are too dry or high for reliable production of food crops. For the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) work in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, pastoralism is a key domain. Having recognised the value of learning from experiences in development cooperation across countries and regions, the Subgroup Pastoralism in the SDC network for Agriculture and Food Security undertook an internal learning process called "Capitalisation of experiences in supporting pastoral development" (CapEx Pastoralism for short). The Subgroup members identified issues about which they wanted to learn more, so as to be more effective in supporting the development of pastoral economies and livelihoods. During the CapEx process, they compiled information and formulated texts on selected topics. This brief is one of a series of briefs that came out of this process. The briefs are intended primarily for SDC and its partners at country and regional level, particularly in West and Eastern Africa, and SDC staff in Switzerland, but also for other development practitioners and donors engaged in pastoral development.*

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**1. Introduction**

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Pastoralists in Eastern and West African countries are recurrently affected by various challenges and disasters, including drought, livestock disease outbreak, rangeland degradation and resource-based conflict. These put pastoralism at risk and are factors that push some people out of the pastoral system. At the same time, factors that pull people in dryland areas away from seeking their livelihood in pastoralism and attract them to cities and rural towns include better access to basic social services and to casual jobs and a general perception of better opportunities in urban areas. Many former pastoralists are engaged in various small-scale or subsistence activities either self-initiated or promoted and supported by donor-funded projects as alternative sources of livelihood. This brief provides insights into and specific cases of supporting promising alternative livelihoods for former pastoralists who remain in rural settings, most often in towns, and highlights entry points and key principles for development cooperation *vis-à-vis* those people, including many young men and women.

Pastoralists constitute the majority of dryland inhabitants in the Horn of Africa, where they have traditionally made optimum use of the natural resource base by practising a mobile and extensive livestock-keeping system. They move according to where and when pasture and water becomes available, and use different herd-management strategies such as herd splitting, herd diversification and herd maximisation to ensure that they spread the risk of livestock loss resulting from droughts, diseases and theft.

In recent years, a number of complex developments have made it more difficult for pastoralists to maintain this resource-efficient livestock production. Firstly, their traditional strategies are underpinned by mobility and are thus effective only in a context that permits them to move their livestock over large areas. To the extent that government development policies and large-scale private enterprise restrict herd mobility, the vulnerability of pastoralists to natural and man-made shocks is increased. Secondly, the increase in human population in pastoral communities – as well as in farming communities that are starting to grow crops in drier and more risky areas – has led to greater pressure on land use, higher concentrations of livestock in more confined areas and sometimes to environmental degradation. Thirdly, climate change has brought longer periods of drought and shorter drought cycles, making pastoral communities increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Beside the natural factors affecting pastoral productivity, there are a myriad of man-made forces that undermine the resilience of pastoralists to shocks and other changes, thereby increasing vulnerability. Factors such as restrictions on livestock trade and movement, low investment in social services and infrastructure in pastoral areas, insufficient and poorly designed state investment in development initiatives and public policy have constrained traditional pastoral mechanisms to manage risk. Although diverse initiatives are underway to help pastoralists cope and prosper, a growing number of people in the drylands find themselves unable to remain within the pastoral production system. These people either engage in small-scale activities to gain alternative sources of livelihood or depend on food aid for survival.

### Key terms

**Pastoralists** are defined here as people who derive more than 50% of their income from the products of livestock that graze natural pastures; these products include milk, meat, hides and skins, manure, traction etc.

**Former pastoralists** are people who no longer derive their primary source of income from grazing livestock and have left the pastoral livelihood system and settled in villages, rural towns, peri-urban areas or market centres in search of non-pastoral options to make a living.

**Vocational and skills training** emphasises the development of practical skills and knowledge required for a particular job or function; this could include, for example, carpentry, artisanship, masonry, small enterprises, making hay or feedstuffs for sale, beekeeping, or livestock fattening.

**Value chain** refers to the full range of activities required to bring a product to its final consumers, passing through the phases of production, processing and marketing. The actors along the chain are linked by flows of products, finance, information and services. At each stage in the chain, the value of the product rises because it becomes more available or attractive to the consumer.

There are basically three ways in which such people are moving out of pastoralism. The first is sudden departure because of unexpected events such as drought and conflict. The second is departure because of chronic poverty that gradually forces households to give up pastoralism and seek alternative sources of livelihood. The third, which particularly applies for the youth, is through gaining access to formal education, which provides them with opportunities to engage in formal employment. In addition, in West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, young people are recruited by Jihadist groups active in the Sahel. Some former pastoralists remain in the rural areas or migrate to live in or near rural towns, and this brief focuses on this group.

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## 2. Specific cases

There are thus far few examples of successful intervention by development cooperation to support people in the drylands who are seeking alternatives to pastoralism as sources of livelihood. Some promising examples supported by non-governmental development agencies are given in the following boxes.

### Case 1: Promising alternative livelihoods in natural-resource-based cooperatives<sup>1</sup>

In many dryland areas, the high economic potential of natural products such as honey, gum, incense, Aloe vera and scentwood can be exploited to provide non-livestock sources of income. Currently, such activities by poorer pastoralists have been limited mainly to harvesting rather than adding value to the products. Harvesters of wild products receive low prices. People in pastoralist communities lack the skills and the appropriate physical and socio-economic infrastructure to process high-quality natural products and to sell them on national or international markets. They need appropriate equipment to be able to process, store, pack, label and deliver products as required by the market and to ensure a consistent supply of the necessary volumes. To be able to gain a livelihood from natural products, local people need to be trained on-the-job to handle this equipment and also need access to computer and Internet facilities to keep up to date about market requirements and statutory standards for export and import of the products.

In the Borana lowlands of Ethiopia, SOS Sahel and the Cooperative Promotion and Marketing Office are helping former pastoralists set up cooperatives dealing with non-timber forest products (NTFPs), primarily the production and marketing of gum Arabic, gum resins (frankincense and myrrh), Aloe soap, scentwood and honey. Borana is richly endowed with plant species in the genera Acacia, Boswellia, Commiphora and Aloe, which are the sources of promising opportunities for income diversification.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: SOS Sahel Yabello Field Office Report 2013; Gelgelo Gebabo, personal communication 2015.

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SOS Sahel provides training in harvesting, sorting, cleaning, grading and storing of gum and incense products. It supports construction of NFTP-processing centres, shop facilities and offices; it injects seed money to start up new enterprises and uses a value-chain approach to support market development. The Cooperative Promotion and Marketing Office provides technical training as well as capacity building to strengthen the cooperatives. Thus far, the Borana Milkii Union, comprising 16 cooperatives producing and processing NTFPs, has 480 members (70% women) and over USD 125,000 financial capital.

### Case 2: Making charcoal out of the invasive weed *Prosopis*<sup>2</sup>

In the 1980s, the use of an introduced leguminous tree *Prosopis juliflora* was widely advocated by international organizations as a way to combat desertification in dryland areas. This soon turned out to be a mixed blessing, as the plant is invasive and spread to cover large areas of Ethiopia and Kenya, especially where the water table is less than 15m deep. If cut back, the plant sprouts again, and it can also come up from seeds spread by wildlife and livestock who eat the pods. The NGO FARM–Africa (now known as Farm Africa) was supporting pastoralists in Afar Region of Ethiopia to combat this invasive weed by making it into something useful: charcoal is made and sold by people who can no longer survive from livestock production alone. Because charcoal making is illegal, the NGO had to assist the Afar in obtaining certificates that prove they have the right to make charcoal from *Prosopis* (but not from indigenous trees). Economic calculations by FARM-Africa in 2008 revealed that making charcoal from *Prosopis*, which regenerates naturally and needs no external inputs to grow prolifically, was more profitable per hectare than was large-scale irrigated farming in the Awash River Valley.



Making charcoal from *Prosopis* in Baringo, Kenya (Credit: Ann Waters-Bayer)

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## 3. Lessons for development cooperation

### 3.1. Situation analysis

#### Forces that push people out of pastoralism and pastoral areas

Some of the factors that cause people in dryland areas in sub-Saharan Africa to leave pastoralism and seek alternative sources of livelihood in urban areas are:

- Loss of livestock as an asset base because of recurrent droughts, animal diseases, livestock raids and insecurity resulting from resource-based conflicts;
- Lack of opportunities for alternative livelihoods in pastoral areas and limited access to financial services to allow engagement in alternative income-generating activities; in Ethiopia, for example, there are microfinance institutions to support development of small and micro-enterprises, but it is difficult for former pastoralists to fulfil the requirements to access the credit;
- Reduced access to grazing resources because of competition for land use mainly between cultivation and grazing land, privatisation of communal grazing lands by richer pastoralists and degradation of the natural resource base;
- Weakening of traditional restocking mechanisms because of more extreme and recurrent disasters that have made large numbers of pastoralists poor or destitute;
- Inappropriate policies that favour sedentary cultivation at the expense of mobile pastoralism. Policymakers have limited understanding of pastoralism and contemporary research findings related to it. The general attitude of policymakers and urban people toward pastoralism leads to a feeling of hopelessness among pastoralists, especially the youth.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Admasu (2008); Wolfgang Bayer, project evaluator 2008, personal communication 2015.

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### Major economic activities of former pastoralists

In the face of the forces pushing people out of pastoralism, some of these people turn to new sources of livelihood on their own initiative, such as:

- Rainfed cultivation;
- Contract work: some former pastoralists become contract herders for rich pastoralists, investors and traders; livestock trekkers for traders; or night guards or stock attendants in livestock markets, and a few graduate to become brokers in small transactions or even small-scale traders and big brokers;
- Work as watchmen and casual laborers in rural towns;
- Petty trading such as running tea shops or selling chat (a narcotic plant);
- Charcoal production and firewood collection;
- Creating own micro-enterprises such as charging mobile phones;
- In the case of young women in certain areas, e.g. along major transport routes, working as prostitutes.



Fulani youth's shop in Benin for selling and recharging cell phones (Credit: Georges Djohy)

Project-initiated activities – often implemented by NGOs – are generally limited to providing assistance to youth and women to organise themselves into groups or cooperatives to generate income, e.g.:

- Natural resource-based cooperatives for gum and incense and making aloe soap (see Case 1);
- Village community banking groups;
- Milk marketing cooperatives.

Some major projects with components focused on former pastoralists in Ethiopia include PRIME (Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion) implemented by Mercy Corps, CARE, SOS Sahel, Kimetrica and Haramaya University and the European Union-funded projects EU-SHARE (Supporting the Horn of Africa's Resilience) and EU-RESET (Resilience Building in Ethiopia). On the government side, the Cooperative Promotion and Marketing Offices, Micro Finance Institutions, Pastoralist Development Offices, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Technical, Vocational and Education Training Colleges (TVETs) could play a greater role in schemes to support alternative livelihoods.

### **3.2 Entry points for development cooperation**

The following issues should be considered as entry points and strategies in development interventions to support former pastoralists who remain in the rural areas, including small towns:

- Beekeeping is one of the activities known to be viable in many rangeland ecosystems. Honey is one of the most available, but often neglected, products in pastoral areas of Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. Refining and packing honey is a simple process that could bring added value for selling in major towns and cities, if appropriate marketing support were provided to beekeeping groups;
- Adding value to livestock (e.g. cattle fattening, dairying, preserving hides and skins), including the establishment of small-scale industries such as for milk processing and marketing by women and investment in keeping livestock such as poultry;
- Exploiting natural products (e.g. gum Arabic, Moringa) and trading in consumer commodities, livestock feed, grain etc. are other potentially viable activities that could be particularly important for young women and men. The potential of these activities should therefore be explored and – where they are viable – enhanced; and appropriate training should be provided, where needed;
- Providing access to different forms of education through boarding or mobile schools or TVETs, tailoring the curricula to the needs and aspirations of the local people;
- Facilitating the access of former pastoralists to affordable credit;
- Advocacy work to lobby governments at different levels to formulate and implement policies that address the needs of poor and vulnerable pastoralists. Key among these would be safety-net programmes that help poor pastoralists maintain their assets and avoid having to leave pastoralism.

### 3.3 Interacting with policy processes

In many countries, there is an overly centralised approach to policymaking and programme planning in pastoral regions. In Ethiopia, this is evidenced by the dominant role of the Ministry of Federal Affairs in pastoralist regions. Pastoralists need to be equipped to engage directly with a “literate” world – with government, the media and donors – and it is clear that political literacy is a key to empowerment.

Furthermore, the curricula of the government-led pastoral learning institutions need to respond to the needs and aspirations of the former pastoralists. Increased education levels in pastoralist areas would mean that: i) former pastoralists will gain better skills and be able to access better-paying jobs; and ii) they will be able to participate more fully in civic activities and the democratic process by lobbying for improved policies and programmes for their communities.

### 3.4 Key principles to guide this development cooperation process

To be able to guide interventions in supporting former pastoralists to build up alternative sources of livelihood, development cooperation partners, government programmes and NGOs need to:

- Identify the strategic and immediate gender needs of former pastoralists during project/ programme planning; sensitising men on gender issues is equally important as working with women in mainstreaming these issues;
- Analyse the own initiatives of former pastoralists and providing appropriate support to make these more sustainable;
- Take into account customary institutions and seek to understand their role when seeking strong youth participation in building up alternative livelihoods;
- Communicate with key development partners involved at local, national and international levels in supporting alternative livelihoods for former pastoralists; this can be done through existing networks – e.g. CELEP (Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism; [www.celep.info](http://www.celep.info)) and Inter-réseaux Développement rural ([www.inter-reseaux.org](http://www.inter-reseaux.org)) – to ensure continuous learning based on practical experiences gained by not only Swiss-funded but also other projects and programmes.

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## Acknowledgements

CapEx Pastoralism is an activity of the Subgroup Pastoralism in SDC's Agriculture & Food Security Network. This learning process was coordinated by a core group comprising Marc Bloch, Felix Fellmann, Manuel Flury, Pascal Rouamba and Laurence von Schulthess and was facilitated by Ernst Bolliger and Ann Waters-Bayer. This brief was written by Ababu Lemma Belay ([lemma-belay.ababu@eda.admin.ch](mailto:lemma-belay.ababu@eda.admin.ch)) and Ann Waters-Bayer and was reviewed by participants in the CapEx workshop on 9–13 November 2015 in Isiolo, Kenya, particularly by Pascal Rouamba. Wolfgang Bayer contributed the information for Box 2. Editor: Ann Waters-Bayer. Layout: Martina Hickethier. Published by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Global Cooperation / Global Programme Food Security, Berne, 2016. Cover photo: Ethiopian pastoralists engaged in trade (Credit: Wolfgang Bayer).