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CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY SERIES | ETHIOPIA

Integrating climate change into market-based development programming

Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) is a five-year multi-agency project that focuses on supporting pastoralists via expansion of markets and long-term behavior change. As part of its approach, PRIME integrates strategies aimed at helping communities become more resilient to climate change and its affects on society at various levels. Launched in 2012 in the Afar, Oromia, and Somali regions, PRIME aims to increase the incomes of 250,000 households. This brief focuses on a few components of the broader PRIME portfolio, highlights lessons learned, and offers insights for other development programs that want to incorporate climate considerations, in particular programs focused on expansion of markets. A full narrative case study is also available at www.MercyCorps.org/Climate.

PROBLEM

Ethiopian pastoralists currently experience significant economic challenges, nutritional problems, and an increasingly unstable climate that includes more frequent and more intense dry periods. This negatively impacts the rangeland environment they depend on for grazing livestock. They also face rapid population growth—Ethiopia is slated to be the world’s 7th most populous nation by 2050—as well as a decrease in land area available for grazing, and the fragmentation of traditional councils that helped manage rangeland for centuries. As a result,

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA)

strategies are actions specifically aimed at reducing vulnerability to actual or expected changes in climate.

Climate Resilient Development (CRD)

is the ultimate goal of development programming which integrates climate change adaptation and behavior change strategies that allow communities to make adjustments while achieving more stability and improving overall well-being that can be maintained within shifting climate conditions.



being a pastoralist is harder than ever. At present many people lack climate information and adaptation strategies, as well as the ability to effectively manage natural resources.

In the past, most overseas assistance to Ethiopia came in the form of traditional humanitarian aid, in the sense that organizations sought to alleviate immediate problems via the direct transfer of resources such as food, medicine, equipment, or other goods. While this addressed short-term needs it did not support resilience over the long term.

Rather than transferring resources, PRIME is working to change behaviors, build capacity, and increase access to markets to ensure that pastoralists are able to earn better income by ensuring that communities are familiar with a range of strategies. These strategies simultaneously address economic needs and climate adaptation and thus allow for greater resilience. The program has five components: livestock productivity, natural resource management, alternative livelihoods, learning and knowledge management, and nutrition.

OUR APPROACH

PRIME used a systems thinking and adaptive management approach that aimed to assess the actual needs of pastoralists, design activities that directly responded to those needs, and find ways to integrate climate adaptation strategies across components.

The first year of PRIME was spent largely on assessments, which included an EMMA (Emergency Market Mapping Analysis) and a CVCA (Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment). In general an EMMA is used to look at value chains during an emergency. In this case, the EMMA was done because Ethiopia's drylands have chronic issues with intense dry periods and failed rainfall, and was

Productivity and Alternative Livelihoods teams, while the CVCA was led by the Natural Resource Management Team.¹

These tools allowed PRIME staff to evaluate needs and climate challenges identified by users. It also looked at strategies users had already tried, and whether or not they'd been positive for the community. PRIME was then implemented as an evolving set of activities that stimulated strategic parts of the value chain—from local rangeland councils, to targeted groups of producers, to small businesses—to address needs that users had already identified. Following the CVCA and the EMMA, a number of activities were designed. Two specific activities included in this broader portfolio of programs were Rangeland Councils and Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP). These two approaches showcase how climate adaptation activities also contribute to the broader development goals and objectives of PRIME.



Photo: S. Sheridan/Mercy Corps

preparation for slow-onset emergencies such as drought. Meanwhile, the CVCA—a tool specifically developed by PRIME partner CARE—was a participatory evaluation that collected community perspectives on risks and vulnerabilities faced due to climate change. This particular CVCA was significantly adapted and focused on two areas of analysis: landscape and natural resources, and producer groups near the bottom of the value chain. The EMMA was carried out by the Livestock

Rangeland Councils

In 2013, PRIME began to facilitate the mapping of rangeland areas and to identify traditional councils, which were responsible for the management of 4 million hectares in 24 different Rangeland systems located in Afar, Oromia, and Somali regions.

Since that time, PRIME staff have been working alongside elders and other community members to understand how centuries-old council knowledge

1. Diana Picón, interview by Annie Murphy, August 28, 2015, transcript

currently informs management practices. Simultaneously, PRIME has also supported the revitalization of that system; this was necessary because councils had grown fragmented after changes in the national government led to prioritizing politically-defined borders rather than the ecologically-defined ones that rangeland councils had traditionally been organized by.² Revitalization activities have included more regular meetings, organizing community rehabilitation activities such as thinning bush and clearing invasive plant species, establishing community dry season grazing reserves or enclosures known as kallo, and rehabilitating water points such as wells and rainwater collection.

All the above activities are intended to help better manage the rangeland environment, thus enhancing pastoralists' adaptation to climate change. At the same time, the very existence of a strong rangeland council system also supports the success of PRIME's broader development goals; in addition to rangeland



Photo: K. Lynch/Mercy Corps

management, these councils are vital social institutions in general. Via such councils, PRIME was able to gain insight into communities, effectively plan and organize other activities, and communicate with community members much more effectively than if

the program had attempted to directly reach out to individuals one by one or even area by area. Effective rangeland management is also essential for market expansion of the livestock sector and nutrition work.

Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP)

The PSP approach was originally designed by PRIME partner CARE. It is based on a collaborative process of sharing both traditional and meteorological forecasts with community members, facilitating conversation about those forecasts, and discussing possible adaptation strategies—which can include anything from selling some animals prior to a difficult dry season and putting that money in the bank, to planting crops for early harvesting. At PSP meetings, PRIME staff and officials from the regional government help stakeholders contextualize weather forecasts by linking traditional and scientific forecasts, developing disaster preparedness plans, discussing potential adaptation strategies, and finding climate-resilient livelihood decisions that participants could easily apply and implement in their home communities.

One critical element of the PSP model is how forecasting is not just a process of sharing information; it also means helping participants come up with strategies to adapt to a variety of potential scenarios. This can include: making hay for fodder, practicing more efficient management of water resources, saving money from selling a few animals before the dry season, and improving nutrition by keeping more milk for home consumption—as well as trying out some new additions to diets, such as eggs and fresh fruit. All these actions integrate with strategies from the other components. The PSP itself also signals an increased use of scientific data for making decisions, something that had not been common before. Such strategies help participants incorporate critical behavior change into their daily lives and routines.

OUTCOME

Most people in the area first learned about PRIME and the strategies it offers via their local rangeland council—and for rangeland leaders deeply involved in planning and management, the council remained the primary way of interfacing with PRIME. At the same time, after being introduced to the project via their council, people started to branch out and interact with strategies offered by other components. They said the rangeland councils were a critical first point of contact that anchored PRIME; not only in terms of managing natural resources,

2. Talew Dheressa, interview by Annie Murphy, August 20, 2015, transcript

but as a way for PRIME to build trust and mutual respect with the community, and to set the stage for relationships across a range of activities. Most people who participated in PSPs, for example, had learned about the workshops via their rangeland council.

As a direct result of rangeland councils, participants reported a marked improvement in terms of community organization and natural resource management. They especially liked that rangeland councils provided a base and a structure other activities could build on. With regard to PSPs, participants reported positive changes in terms of coordination and forecasts; they especially liked that forecasting was not just sharing information, but also helping them come up with strategies to adapt to a variety of potential scenarios.

Participants said that as a result of the Rangeland Councils and PSPs behavior changes they'd adopted included: coordinating grazing land and making hay for fodder, practicing more efficient

management of water resources, saving money from selling a few animals before the dry season, and improving nutrition by keeping more milk for home consumption—as well as trying out some new additions to their diets, such as eggs and fresh fruit like papaya. All these actions integrated with strategies from the other components: grazing and fodder (livestock productivity), savings (alternative livelihoods), and diet (nutrition). As a point of improvement, participants also said that if PRIME wanted to have even more impact, it needed to improve the accuracy and frequency of forecasting—which is currently being done twice a year—and get that information to more people by further strengthening rangeland councils.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are some lessons learned through the implementation of PRIME by Mercy Corps and its partners; the selected lessons apply specifically to Rangeland Councils and PSP workshops. While these lessons are taken from a program that is specifically market-focused, they are relevant in the context of climate resilient development programming in general.

1. Climate Resilient Development calls for longer-term, systemic approach aimed at behavior change.

Integration of climate adaptation strategies means larger scale and longer term programs that bring together various organizations and partners, and work across social, ecological, and economic systems of which communities are a crucial part. While there is already clear evidence in PRIME of critical behavior change—from people making hay for fodder and conserving water resources, to accessing financial services and varying diets—PRIME has also shown that such shifts take time. A long-term, systemic approach is not only a more effective way of stimulating the kind of dramatic shifts that behavior change implies but a more efficient way to run climate programming, because it enables communities to continue to enhance their resilience and well-being over the long term.

2. Climate programming benefits from adaptive projects.

Given both the breadth and depth of activities to help users become more climate resilient—as well as the constantly changing nature of climate and climate events—CRD projects require an adaptive approach that highlights agency and decision-making for all users. For PRIME, this includes anyone from managers in Addis, to team members in field offices, to pastoralists. An adaptive approach also requires continuous monitoring to adapt strategies during the course of a project. This means flexibility, communication, and decentralization whenever possible. Staff must be knowledgeable about how climate change interacts with their component, as well as the project as a whole.

3. Information about climate and weather must be translated, time appropriate, accessible, and tailored to end users.

Successful integration of climate strategies means decision makers across scales must be able access and interpret relevant climate information in a way that is straightforward and easy. This includes government and market actors, community members, as well as project teams. Participants in various settings and workshops reported that there was growing interest in having access to climate data, as more and more of their fellow community members became aware of its existence, and how to use it. At the same time, many participants said that other community members were still unsure about how to go about accessing and using that information.

4. Women are often early adopters of CCA strategies and thus key stakeholders.

Women witness firsthand the effects climate change has on their families; they are also least attached to the idea of maintaining the status quo. PRIME has observed that women should be cultivated as early adopters. Not only did women prove more open to trying new strategies³ but once community members observed tangible benefits reaped by using CCA strategies, other users followed suit⁴—regardless of whether it was a woman or man that was the

trailblazer. As such, PRIME's Natural Resource Management component has worked closely with rangeland councils to encourage them to include women in decision making, while other components—including Livestock Productivity, Alternative Livelihoods, Nutrition—also recognized women as key drivers for adopting CCA strategies.

5. A culture of appropriate saving supports climate resilience.

Saving resources, in the very broadest sense—food, fodder, land, water, money, knowledge, organizational capacity, social capital, or any other tangible or intangible asset—is the most surefire way to enhance the ability to absorb climate shocks. Resilience in the face of climate impacts is in part dependent on adaptive capacity, which expands via a culture of saving. Development organizations working on climate also benefit from a saving mentality, in terms of this helping them frame and rationalize time investments that will ultimately lead to behavior change, and for internal operations: streamlining processes; making best use of climate information, expertise, and resources by enthusiastically integrating programs, and also striving not to duplicate efforts—be it two people writing a similar report, or components working on similar activities.

3. Hajite Gobana, interview by Annie Murphy, August 20, 2015, transcript

4. Sara Orana, interview by Annie Murphy, August 18, 2015, transcript



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