



case
study



Strengthening hunger resilience The Kenya Red Cross experience

Background

Tana River district, situated along the Tana River basin, is one of the poorest districts in Kenya. Located in a semi-arid region, the district's mean annual rainfall ranges from 220 millimetres (mm) to approximately 500mm. However, the rainfall is extremely erratic, with rainy seasons in March – May and October – December, and generally disproportionate across the district. As a result, the district is generally hot and dry, with temperatures ranging between 21 and 38° Celsius.

Crop production is scarce, primarily as a result of poor rainfall, under development, poor infrastructure and prolonged conflict and clashes between nomadic pastoralist and farmer communities. Within this context, livestock production has remained the mainstay of the local economy, with products such as milk and blood, being used as main sources of food. Yet pastoralism as a livelihood is facing numerous challenges that include lack of access to markets, susceptibility to shocks related to droughts, diseases, insecurity and fluctuating market prices. With existing high levels of poverty, estimated at 67 per cent (ALRMP, 2008), and a marginal economic base exacerbated by the emerging phenomena of global climate change and variability, communities have become extremely vulnerable to cyclical floods and drought-induced disasters.

Consequently, the district's residents heavily rely on food relief for most parts of the year. The most vulnerable groups to food insecurity include persons with disabilities, children in need of special protection, people living with HIV, and female-headed households that comprise approximately 30 per cent of the population. Cases of malnutrition are common, particularly during deteriorating food security conditions affecting a sizable portion of the population. In 2007 – 2008, approximately 23.5 per cent of children under five suffered from wasting, having low weight for his/her height; 18.5 per cent were found to suffer from

stunting (chronic malnutrition); and 31.9 per cent were grossly underweight. Infant mortality rates at the district-level stand at 80/1000.

An assessment carried out in 2007 by the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture and the Livestock and Arid Lands Resource Management Programme (ALRMP) had shown that most of the population's livelihoods were destroyed during the floods and eroded as a result of the recurrent drought in the past few years. Hence, the KRCS, in collaboration with key stakeholders, identified affected communities in four divisions of Tana River district in order to implement a longer-term livelihood food security intervention.

Meanwhile, the KRCS in collaboration with the Japanese Red Cross Society and the IFRC launched a nine-month drought recovery project in 2009 to support drought-affected communities in Bangale, Bura and Madogo divisions of Tana North district. This case study captures best practices that were achieved by the project through 2010.

Project objectives

To contribute in assisting recovery from the 2007–2009 drought and promoting livelihoods options that can help the communities in Bangale, Bura and Madogo divisions of Tana River district adapt to future drought and other climatic variability.

Specific objectives

- To improve and diversify agricultural production and seasonal income options, reducing dependence on rainfall in a way that is sustainable during the dry season and can be managed by the community.
- To improve access to clean water, sanitation facilities and awareness on hygiene measures.
- To build the capacity of target groups to support and sustain both livelihood, water and sanitation components and thus improve skills in the community of drought-affected areas of Tana River district in order to mitigate the effects of climatic variability.

Achievements

The project was established based on the effective collaboration between the KRCS, the District Agricultural Extension Office, District Administration and the targeted drought-affected communities. This has resulted in positive potential for diversification of livelihoods and food security. The project assisted sedentary pastoralists from the Northeastern Province who had been affected by recurrent droughts and internal conflicts, and engaged in

charcoal burning as their means of livelihoods income. In addition, support was extended through the project to agro-pastoralists and farmers who have been struggling with cyclical drought and flooding in the past year.

Through this project, 33 farmer groups, or approximately 1,750 farmers, have been targeted and supported under small-scale irrigation schemes. Out of the 33 farmer groups, 13 are groups that had previously been supported by the Arid Lands Project a number of years ago. However, this initial group of 13 was very weak due to asset losses as a result of recurrent droughts and floods. The additional twenty groups were comprised of community members interested in engaging in farming but lacked the required resources.

The KRCS, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, thus provided agricultural support including: irrigation pumps; land levelling; fruits and vegetables seeds and seedlings; agricultural tools such as wheelbarrows and carts; assorted pesticides; and 35 knapsack sprayers. Trainings were also conducted in agricultural technical areas such as planting, weeding, chemical spraying, etc. Sixty Langstroth beehives were distributed and two apiary centres were set up in Mulanjo. In support of livelihoods, a total of 110 households were re-stocked with 1,652 shoats. The farmers have been responsible for clearing their fields and also establishing farmer groups.

Ten new shallow wells were constructed and five shallow wells rehabilitated to benefit communities in the three divisions of Bangale, Bura and Madogo. A total of 1,500 water filters were distributed to households to ensure use of safe drinking water. A training for volunteers was conducted by Life Straw on the how to use the water filters. A water pan was also constructed in Banagle. Twenty volunteers were trained as trainer of trainers (ToT) in Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST). Three hundred sanitation plats were distributed to beneficiaries trained in PHAST.

Outcomes

Increased food production, increased income levels at the household-level and enhanced self-reliance amongst the communities.

- A number of promising changes and continued commitment on the part of farmers has been observed. Some farmers have been extending their fields. Additionally, there has been an increase in production as well as income per household for those who have been fully engaged with the project. It should be noted that 20 farming groups are reported to be highly active.
- The production of fruits and vegetables has been reported as a source of increased income, and individuals engaged in these activities have managed to meet their food and non-food needs. The nutritional status of children is reported to have improved as a result of the increase in production and sales of fruits and vegetables.
- On-farm jobs have been created for the youth. A number of new group irrigation schemes are being opened.
- Most of the produce is being sold in Garissa town. The Agricultural Office is in the process of discussing the establishment of a marketplace for the farmers at Madogo Town.



Irrigation pump supported by KRCS



Part of onion production for the household led by Hassan Ibrahim. 24 people



A banana plantation

- The project improved the farms' road network. This road access has helped the District Agriculture Extension Office and District Health Offices to perform their normal extension and outreach services without any problems.

Improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities.

- Beneficiaries have improved access to clean and safe water. The ten new and the five rehabilitated shallow wells are benefitting communities. The water points have reduced the distance required for community members to access water.
- Volunteers trained in ToT have conducted PHAST at the household-level twice every week per month. At the end of the project period, a total of 3,530 households were reached through awareness-raising messages on hygiene and a total 312 households constructed new latrines.

Increased knowledge amongst the community on agriculture and management of community groups.

- Thirty members of the groups that were trained as pump attendants. They are providing their services, either free of charge or for a token amount up to Kenyan Shilling 1,500 (15 Swiss francs/12 Euros) per month.
- Enhanced awareness on natural resource conservation (maintaining forest coverage). Using charcoal burning as means of livelihood has been reduced. The carts that were transporting charcoal to the towns are now used to transport bananas, mangoes, pawpaw and other vegetables.
- Farmer-exchange visits have helped to ensure peer-to-peer knowledge and skill-sharing. Organized field days enabled farmers to demonstrate their experience. This is highly appreciated by farmers.
- The District Agriculture Office is developing sensitization and awareness creation on farmers' agribusiness plans.

Lessons learned

Technical aspects (intervention suitability/implementation)

- The project, though having a short implementation period (nine months), has had an overall positive impact, especially amongst partners from the government. As a result of this success, most of the agro-pastoralists and farmers engaged in farming and supported under the project have not been included in the 2011 emergency relief assistance. This is evidence that indicates if properly planned and implemented, short-term humanitarian projects could also help in building community resilience.
- Transformation from pastoralism along the Tana River to irrigation farming is possible with necessary and continued support.
- Destruction of natural resources and land degradation could be prevented and/or reduced through behavioural changes and provision of livelihoods support.
- The importance of livelihoods diversification is clearly reflected in the impact it has had on some of the beneficiaries. Those who were engaged in multi-cropping (planting different varieties of fruits and vegetables) were able to overcome some difficulties they faced due to problems associated with variety of seeds and seedlings. Irrigation farming has been an added value to households and has generated additional sources of income.

Management (planning, monitoring and evaluation, coordination)

- Changes could be obtained through empowering and motivating pastoralists and small-holder farmers with the right collaboration of stakeholders.
- The project's design enabled it to fit within the government's strategy and hence ensure their full support and involvement and the project's consequent success. According to a district livestock officer and his agricultural counterpart, the project enabled them to surpass their objectives and achieve their targets.



Isak Omar near his tomato field

Partnering modalities/profile

- The drought recovery project was a good approach that brought together and ensured collective efforts of key stakeholders. The project's activities were planned jointly in consultation with the District Agriculture Office, other line departments and the communities. This has resulted in motivating all parties to work hard for positive results.

Capacity-building

- The importance of considering local capacity-building was observed. There is a need the District Agriculture Office to be supported with adequate and appropriate transport facilities to provide sustainable services after the termination of the project.
- The KRCS's Garissa branch office has acquired good integrated food security project planning, implementation monitoring and evaluation skills.



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