REVOLVING GOAT FUND

The drylands of Ethiopia’s South Omo zone and Uganda’s Karamoja sub-region are home to thousands of pastoralists who migrate with their livestock in search of pasture. In both locations, disease, drought and degraded grasslands have cut the size of herds, so although goat rearing is common it is unproductive. These regions are also characterised by high poverty rates and chronic malnutrition. The project’s baseline report conducted in 2018 reported that 68.4% of women in Karamoja and 36.5% of women pastoralists in South Omo were living below the poverty line of US$1.90/day.

Goats in South Omo and Karamoja are often managed by women. However, pastoralist women have a low social and economic status, meaning that despite managing the goats, they have little voice in financial decision-making. The baseline report showed that pastoralist women in South Omo typically have very limited input in decision making (WEEIAS1 score of 36.9%), while in Karamoja it was better, though still with limitations (WEEIAS score of 54.1%). This, combined with a lack of knowledge on nutrition, contributes to malnutrition in the regions.

The Livestock for Livelihoods programme seeks to ensure that livestock and rangeland systems are productive, sustainable and appropriate for female pastoralists. The programme is building women’s economic assets using a revolving goat fund, as well as improving women’s access to livestock extension services, developing women’s business skills and financial literacy and strengthening women’s understanding of nutrition.

These skills are supporting pastoralist women living in South Omo and Karamoja to set up sustainable, small-scale goat-rearing enterprises that will help them generate an income and improve their families’ nutrition.

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1 Women’s Economic Empowerment in Agriculture survey. The survey is based upon one pioneered by IFPRI, that has been adapted for Farm Africa’s use.

Livestock for Livelihoods

Farm Africa’s Livestock for Livelihoods project is helping Ugandan and Ethiopian pastoralist women establish Women’s Livestock Groups that rear and add value to goats, run savings and loans associations that support the development of small-scale businesses and learn how to improve their families’ nutrition. This booklet is one of a series of three focusing on different project components:

1. Revolving goat fund
2. Improved goat breeding
3. Community animal health workers

Project duration:
The project runs from 2 March 2018 to 31 March 2022. This booklet was written in April 2020. Further results and lessons are expected at the end of the project and will be published then.

Project budget:
£5,060,000, of which £3,765,000 is provided by UK aid from the UK government.
Farm Africa has begun to set up a revolving goat scheme across South Omo and Karamoja. The scheme requires each woman who receives does (female goats) from Farm Africa to give does to another vulnerable woman once her herd has grown, creating a cycle of improved prosperity.

How do we select the beneficiaries?

Women’s Livestock Groups (WLGs) were created with at least 20 members each. Steering or management committees were created to undertake participatory mapping processes to identify vulnerable households and earmark them as primary or secondary beneficiaries for the revolving goat fund, as well as monitor the goat transfer between households. The committees, which are composed of key stakeholders including local village leaders, WLG leaders, community animal health workers (CAHWs) and technical government officers from the veterinary department, used pre-agreed selection criteria, which were shared with participants beforehand.

Example criteria for selection (NB some criteria varied from location to location):
1) prioritising women-headed households
2) households with one or more members with a disability or chronic illness that limits labour capacity
3) women with children under five years old
4) households that have lost a significant percentage of their assets in the last two years due to climatic or environmental shocks
5) land size
6) pasture condition

Once put into groups, Farm Africa trained the women and community leaders on the modalities of the revolving goat scheme.

Distributing does

Initially, the project team procured local does from local markets. The team worked with the government veterinary department and CAHWs to screen, vaccinate and treat the does as necessary before they were distributed to beneficiaries, to reduce the incidence of diseases such as brucellosis, a common cause of abortions amongst pregnant goats. Each doe was ear-tagged so that it could be tracked and any subsequent veterinary interventions or births could be recorded against its ear tag number.

Farm Africa distributed three local female does to each primary beneficiary in South Omo, and two to each woman in Karamoja. The number of does was decided in collaboration with the government. In South Omo it was agreed that three goats was more feasible and likely to improve the livelihood of a vulnerable woman.

During beneficiary selection the women were paired with a community member to whom they committed to give two female goat kids once their does had reproduced. In South Omo, kids continued to be passed on until all members of the kebele/village received them. In Karamoja, some Women’s Livestock Groups identify secondary beneficiaries within the group to receive goats from the primary beneficiaries.
Some groups identify tertiary beneficiaries, who receive goat kids from secondary beneficiaries. The kids are passed on at an average age of five months. If a buck (male goat) is produced, it is passed on, castrated and fattened then sold. With the proceeds a doe, or does are bought in its place and immediately passed on if they exceed the number usually transferred.

Goat distribution was carried out in a central location, in the presence of the WLG, local leaders and government officials. Subsequent transfer of goats from beneficiary to beneficiary is done in the same way to ensure transparency, and to reiterate to beneficiaries their obligation to pass on kids.

**Breeding centres**

To ensure the women had access to healthy and improved breeds of bucks for breeding, one member from each WLG was selected to become a buck keeper. They were selected based on their ability to construct a shelter for the buck, keep records, manage the bucks and be centrally located to other members of the group. The buck keepers have been given two bucks each (Boer in South Omo, Toggenburg in Karamoja) to manage in the buck stations where they can be crossbred with local does. To control inbreeding these bucks are only kept in a village for 18 months, after which they will be rotated and new ones brought in. To ensure sustainability, group members pay a small fee for breeding services (about £0.20) as agreed by the WLG members. Community members who are not group members can also access the bucks for about £0.40. These proceeds are used to pay for the bucks’ feed and medical costs.

**RESULTS AND LESSONS**

Farm Africa has been designing and delivering revolving goat models in eastern Africa since 1988. The revolving goat model has proven to be highly sustainable in building assets beyond the project lifetime, particularly when supported with natural resource management, which builds environmental sustainability through soil and water preservation, and training to ensure healthy goat rearing and breeding.

Beneficiary feedback sessions confirmed that the community were satisfied with the beneficiary selection process as it was open and there were high levels of community participation. To ensure continued community satisfaction, and where appropriate, it is recommended that groups update wealth ranking in subsequent years. Within the project lifetime, Farm Africa staff will monitor data collected and verify that the revolving scheme is functioning according to the priorities established collectively during the wealth ranking exercise.

The model was originally designed to distribute goats at group level, but during training sessions feedback from the beneficiaries suggested that they preferred to be given goats individually. This ensured a sense of individual responsibility in taking care of the goats and in paying for any health services required. As a result, Farm Africa changed the modality and distributed goats to individual primary beneficiaries.

Procurement of high quality does to start the fund was challenging, particularly in Ethiopia. Pastoralists rarely sell healthy young female goats. Consequently it was necessary to take a more localised approach going village-to-village and procuring goats from larger herders.

Goats shouldn’t be distributed without training in their management and health care. It is essential there is the potential to feed goats well, either through the collection and conservation of locally-available feeds including crop by-products, and/or through the growing of forage crops. Keeping goats also requires sufficient labour to look after them, particularly to cut and carry feed to them.

Revolving goat funds are highly sustainable in building women’s household assets. However, high levels of engagement, training and support need to be provided at the household level to ensure women retain control over the income earned from the sale of goats and are able to input into decision making. Consideration of gender dynamics is critical, particularly as these pastoral areas are highly patriarchal societies.
Key success factors

- Provision of healthy does (normal gait with no gross abnormalities, sizeable udder with two functional teats, good temperament, body condition score of 3-5, bright and alert eyes)
- Of breeding age (12 to 16 months old)
- Access to improved bucks in good condition (i.e., vaccinated against livestock communicable diseases, well managed, fed and sheltered)
- Breeding stations equipped with all the basic structures such as areas for feeding, kidding, resting and exercising
- Access to water, feed and fodder of leguminous plants and grasses for dry season feeding
- Low prevalence of disease due to routine/regular spraying and deworming of the goats
- Availability of well-trained CAHWs
- Supporting by-laws that help to guide and regulate the activities of the WLGs
- Community buy-in - sensitisation of the communities and the women's husbands has garnered support for the project
- Mobilising women into WLGs for close monitoring and peer-to-peer learning
- Pairing of the primary beneficiaries with the secondary beneficiaries creates a sense of responsibility and accountability to the recipients
- Address gender dynamics in good time
- Working with local community structures and leaders ensures all emerging challenges are addressed and makes the beneficiaries accountable to the community

“The goats have meant food for us, they have meant money and resources as well.”

Pita Garday, South Omo, Ethiopia

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