

# **Tackling Somaliland Pastoralists Poverty and Environmental Degradation - End of Project Report**

## **Introduction**

This report covers the period of the project from November 2001 to November 2004. The project was based on field research conducted in the second half of 2000 by PENHA and International Cooperation for Development and which was reported in two workshops at the beginning of 2002 – one being held in Somali in Burao and the other in English in Hargeisa. These workshops were held in conjunction with the Somaliland Ministry of Pastoral Development and Environment (MPDE). The research outcomes and the conclusions of the two workshops were further developed in PENHA's proposal for Baring Foundation funding.

The basic aims of the project supported by the Baring Foundation were:

- Establish local pastoralist non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Somaliland;
- Build up the capacities of these organisations at the grass roots level so that pastoralists can have the possibility of controlling their own development;
- Promote debate within the country about the role of the pastoralist economy – with the purpose of encouraging policy makers, development agencies and others to recognise the importance of pastoralists as stakeholders in both the national and the local economies.

The proposed activities included the following:

- Establishment of and providing training and institutional support to pastoralists NGOs and CBOs;
- Support of the government departments and other organisations currently responsible for (or intending in the future to be responsible for) the support of pastoralist organisations;
- Development of networking and communication between all relevant bodies including the development of a pastoralist resource centre, training of trainers and exchange visits, etc.; and
- The subordination of women in pastoralist society was specifically recognised as a major development issue, particularly because they were very rarely able to take part in the various forums which were available to pastoralists. The main mechanism proposed to support women was the provision of micro-finance to women in order to give them a significant level of economic independence.

## **The Context**

Somaliland has a population of about 3.5 million, of which about 55% are pastoralists or agro-pastoralists. In addition, about another quarter of the population depends on live-stock related activities.

Pastoralists in general and this project in particular, faced particular challenges for the following reasons:

- Although Somaliland is in general an arid area, it has faced a number of particularly severe droughts over the last few years;
- Although the livestock ban has been lifted by a number of the gulf states, it has not been by Saudi Arabia, by far the largest importer. This has had and continues to have serious economic and other effects;
- There has been serious deforestation (with attendant environmental effects). There have been other problems resulting from the lack of effective central government control (such as illegal enclosure of communal grazing land, etc.); and
- Many destitute pastoralists have migrated to the outskirts of towns where they remain workless and still destitute.

However PENHA and its work has the support of the Ministries, which recognise the great needs. The support for PENHA is shown by the Ministry of Pastoral Development and Environment designating PENHA as **the** focus point for pastoralist in Somaliland. Although PENHA is an international NGO, in Somaliland PENHA is run only by Somalis and so has a real understanding of the issues and the context. However, it has the support of an organisation outside of Somaliland with people mainly from the region and so is in tune with the needs, the opportunities and the challenges.

### **What PENHA has done**

**Institutional Capacity Building** PENHA and its project partners are active members of a vibrant civil society, and now participate in a number of national collaborative programmes that include the NGO umbrella organisations, NAGAAD and the Consortium of Somaliland NGOs (COSONGO). The organisations participating in the project work collaboratively and proactively with the Somaliland government, including participation in formal associations aimed at building inter-organisational capacity.

The partnership strategy adopted by PENHA has proven to be a commendable strategy and approach. This is new to the Somaliland environment, which has seen a lot of duplication of effort among international agencies operating in the same sectors. The project provided an opportunity for policy and decision-makers at various levels to participate in pastoralist programmes alongside civil society organisations.

The capacity of both PENHA (Somaliland), the MPDE and the Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources, both nationally and locally, was enhanced with appropriate computer and other equipment. A number of pastoralist associations were developed with PENHA's support. From this, a number of effective partnerships were set up. By the end of the project, PENHA was working with eight Somaliland partners at the national level, both governmental and non-governmental. A priority now is for more in-service training for PENHA (and other) staff.

**Advocacy and Policy Making** As a result of the project, pastoralist issues have been placed on the national agenda – resulting in the importance of pastoralism to Somaliland's national and local economy being understood. Lobbying and advocacy skills have been imparted to the pastoralists and their NGOs and CBOs through training workshops so that they can campaign for their rights to be enshrined and

acknowledged in the national constitution and can ask for government funded research on issues of importance to them.

In particular, the two ministries of Pastoral Development & Environment and of Livestock have begun to consider seriously the general welfare of pastoralists and the problems facing them. Additionally, international bodies, particularly the UN Development Programme (UNDP), have begun to recognise the importance of the pastoralist sector in Somaliland's national reconstruction and development plans. For example, the UNDP has now started to classify pastoralists separately from rural and urban communities. This has important implications for their future programmes.

Other examples of involvement in policy making included the following:

- PENHA joined with VETAID and the Ministry for Pastoral Development and the Environment in a workshop to explore how pastoral communities could be involved in the process of decision-making with regard to rangeland resource management and utilisation. About 70 people attended, three-quarters representing pastoralist communities
- PENHA and VETAID joined forces to harmonise the Agricultural Act administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Range Management Act; which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Pastoral Development and Environment. The two laws were contradictory and confusing, so PENHA and VETAID have proposed a single, rewritten and integrated act. The product is now with Parliament for approval.

The future of pastoralism depends on the new generation understanding pastoralist issues – not only pastoralist children, but also those from urban areas. Along with Candlelight (Candlelight for Health, Education and Environment), PENHA has developed training programmes for young people including school-based clubs and is developing school connections with Hargeisa University.

**Pastoralist Centre** Land has been provided to build a National Pastoralist Centre. This is being done in collaboration with the University of Hargeisa on their campus and with the support of the Government of Somaliland (in particular, the MPDE with the blessing of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning). It is intended to be a Horn of Africa centre of excellence in pastoralism and pastoralist issues. It is hoped that it will become a resource accessible to students, academics, researchers, NGOs, CBOs and the public generally.

**Environmental Regeneration Programmes** In partnership with Oxfam (Somaliland), the Ban Awl grazing reserve (in the Toghdeer region) was closed during the wet season to allow it to recover from overgrazing which had taken place over a period of years. This was in response to requests by local villages and with the agreement of the MPDE. The reserve was guarded to stop stray animals from coming into the reserve. Despite concern about the possibility of overgrazing when the reserve was re-opened, the temporary closure has been successful. The initiative is now being copied and managed by pastoralist associations and is proving sustainable. At another level, the issue of range management and rehabilitation is now a formal part of national planning and is being embodied in government policies and strategies.

**Bunding** PENHA (in partnership with Oxfam) has also begun to demonstrate the value of bunding. In Toghdeer, there is a noticeable difference in a project area where bunding of the land has been undertaken. The land retains more moisture and plant life is returning in small patches, including plants thought to have died out in the region. The bunds are gullies, about 4ft by 2ft and 60ft long. They are about 3ft deep and enclose an area about the size of a football pitch. The overall purpose is to develop more fertile areas of land. There is also a need to protect these areas from grazing until they have recovered. The support of the local pastoralists has therefore been essential. It is interesting that the local people themselves believe that much of the cause of the damage to the environment has been from people rather than the lack of rain and the strong winds.

**The Burao Abattoir** In following up one of the recommendations of the two research workshops in 2001, and to provide an alternative to the banned exports to Saudi Arabia, an abattoir has been built in Burao with advice from PENHA. This will be of real benefit to local pastoralists.

**Mandeeq Farm** This is an alternative approach which has support from PENHA, although it originated as a commercial venture financed by some members of the Somali diaspora living abroad. PENHA brings experience of the pastoral sector in arid conditions. The farm grows vegetables and flowers as well as rearing a herd of 50 camels and some cattle, goats and sheep. PENHA's basic interest is to see how more intense and commercial farming methods will fare in such an arid environment. This project will also monitor the potential conflict between the needs of pastoralists and commercial farms.

**Micro-credit scheme** The micro-credit scheme was originally to be funded in the third year of the project both to help to develop a diversified and sustainable source of additional income as well as offer practical support for women. In view of the continued livestock ban and the consequent serious loss of income as well as the effects of the continued drought, it was brought forward to the second year. The programme was administered by the Committee of Concerned Somalis (CCS) which had experience of running micro-credit schemes in the urban areas. A total of 50 women in groups ("shangles") of five women living in three different settlements around Burao were chosen. They were each given a total of £250 which was to be paid back (after a grace period of one month) at £8 per week over about seven months. The recipients all attended training workshops with the aim of improving their level of basic literacy, micro-credit business skills and their understanding of micro-credit systems and financial management. In particular, they were taught how to separate their business and their family finances. In addition, manuals were developed in both English and Somali both for their use and for general distribution under the auspices of NAGAAD. The latter is one of PENHA's local partners and is an umbrella organisation of 20 women's groups.

The sorts of businesses which are supported are small shops, wayside cafes, a milk producing business (from goats), etc. Loans are not given for charcoal production or the sale of qat – for environmental and health reasons.

The present scheme has been discussed and it has been suggested that it does not deal with the long term needs of pastoralists. A number of people (both women and men)

have suggested that the real need is to rebuild the herds of animals rather than diversify.

The women are now developing their own self-help and support programmes, with specific plans to strengthen their families and community organisations using what they have learnt about creating income-generating activities and improving existing ones. The Pastoralist women say they have acquired increased knowledge, skills and self-confidence in the management of alternative income generating activities. It is envisaged that, in the medium to long term, the knowledge and skills gained will thus enhance their creditworthiness and ability to approach lending institutions when they become available in Somaliland.

The micro-credit loan allocations have given Pastoralist women's access to money for the establishment of alternative income activities, as well as empowering them and improving their roles as income generators. Pastoralist households, as a whole, are benefiting from the extra income for things like family consumption, childcare and the cost of family health care needs.

The micro-credit recipients have not only increased their incomes, but have also increased their self-confidence and bargaining power within the household. In a situation of diminished access to water, the diminution of grazing land and the ban on Somaliland livestock exports, the micro-business activities are helping to reduce the pressure on the cutting of trees, and the selling of charcoal and firewood and in meeting family consumption and income generation needs. Micro-credit loans have not only enabled Pastoralist women to be engaged in economic activities, but are also helping to reduce environmental degradation and improve tree conservation, thus acting as a practical means of environmental stress relief. Ultimately, the promotion of diversified sources of income can only reduce pressure on the land, and have a beneficial effect on the environment. These benefits may become long term if the programme is able to be sustained and is more widely adopted.

**Exchange visit to Ethiopia** This visit, involving eight pastoralists from Somaliland, went via Addis Ababa to the Liban zone of the Somali Region of Ethiopia. The Pastoral Concern Association Ethiopia (PCAE), a close partner of PENHA in Ethiopia, hosted the visit .

The visitors were struck by a number of differences – in particular, by the absence of charcoal production, which means that trees and shrubs still cover the land. They visited a dam which was being built by the pastoralists themselves – a total of 400 acted as labourers in its excavation. They were told how environmental facts were thoroughly assessed before a dam or berked was built.

They also visited a community of pastoralists who had settled. A major reason they had done so was to be able to provide education for their children. Some difficult discussions took place before doing so. They still manage to rear sheep, goats, cattle and camels. They have been assisted by the PCAE in building a berked as well as a three class room school for basic education.

The other programme of particular interest to the visitors was the PCAE micro-credit scheme for 311 pastoralist women. A 1% service charge is paid on loans in place of

interest (which is not allowed under Islam). Some of the service charge is being used by the PCAE for education of women in literacy.

The visit was an eye opener for the majority of the group, and has undoubtedly contributed to networking between Somaliland and Ethiopian (Somali) pastoralists, as well as raising awareness on issues pertinent to the pastoralist's livelihood including the environment, livestock trade, awareness raising on health (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and on micro-credit and self-help schemes.

### **External Evaluation**

An external evaluation made by Desmond Frederick, External Project Consultant, with terms of reference agreed between the funders, the Baring Foundation, and PENHA, was conducted at the end of 2004. The evaluator spent two months on the study, including a visit to Somaliland and the project in the Toghdeer region.

The evaluator came to the conclusion that the Baring Foundations money had been well spent. He commented, following discussion with both PENHA partners and pastoralists (men and women) that:

“(t)here is a general feeling that PENHA is meeting the needs of the Pastoralist communities, and this mutual trust and acknowledgement is an important and necessary precursor for the development of collaborative and sustainable programmes.”

### **The Future**

In general, the issue of building capacity remains an urgent priority for Somaliland as a whole, and particularly for the pastoralist sector. This includes PENHA's part. For the work of this particular project to be successful in the long run, it will need to develop and grow. The ever-present demand for more to be achieved is fed by the project's success. Each gain has brought new demands; successful networking has not only created useful contacts, it has also stimulated ideas which have, inevitably, led to demands for further action. This conundrum can only be solved by building capacity within the organisations and by obtaining greater resources for long term programmes overall.