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Overview of Somaliland’s Livestock Value Chain: Gender and Institutional Challenges of Women Livestock Traders

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Abstract

Somaliland, a former British Protectorate is a self-declared independent government in the Horn of Africa that detached itself from Somalia in 1991. Its post-war economic growth is directly linked to livestock trade which is highest valued agricultural commodity in the country. The adverse effect of the prolonged period of war has led to the phenomenal increase of women involved in livestock trade. As a result, they have assumed greater economic responsibilities for the household to cope with the recent social conditions occurring in the country. This challenged specific gender roles in a society influenced by a lineage based system, the customary law and Islam.

To provide an overview on the participation of women in livestock trade, a case study in Hargeisa is undertaken since it is one of the biggest livestock market in the Horn and the seat of the self-proclaimed government. As a framework to structure the empirical research, value chain approach is used to identify the role of women actors and their relationships and interactions among other actors in the local livestock trade. In the value chain, women are dominantly involved in re-selling live animals, meat trade, and the processing and marketing of certain livestock products. Going deeply in the institutions and the rules of the game used in trade, the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework is used to understand the trading strategies of women actors in view of the current rules in the local market and considering the crucial aspect of intra-household relationships, in this sense the role of women that are, at the same time livestock traders and responsible for the household reproductive activities. This study affirms that women’s trading behaviour is influenced by the existing institutions or the rules of the game used in trade as well as their community values. Existing formal and informal rules are insufficient to create horizontal cooperation and vertical coordination including other inefficiencies in the value chain. Thus women actors are not able to maximise the benefits gained from livestock trade including their ascribed attributes.

Keywords: Customary law, gender, Hargeisa, Horn of Africa, Institutional Analysis and Development Framework, institutions, Islam, lineage based society, livestock trade, Somalia, somaliland, value chain, women