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Improving Market Access for Pastoralists, Especially for Women Headed Households, in Peri-Urban Areas

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Abstract

Increasing urbanisation and the growing need for land used for crop-production and infrastructure like roads and buildings more and more threatens the livelihoods of pastoralists and peri-urban dwellers. With a growing population, demand for animal-based protein, such as milk products and meat, increases significantly. However, this increased demand cannot easily be met by pastoralists due to weak infrastructure, long distance to markets or poor hygienic standards. This paper proposes that strengthening market access and thus increasing and stabilising incomes, strengthens the resilience of pastoralist communities and especially women-led households, respecting the gendered structures of livestock production.

We review development interventions by VSF Germany in Sudan and Somalia. In Omdurman, Sudan's largest city whose population has doubled in a few years, the dynamics of a growing city, expanding and absorbing its periphery are explicit. The VSF Germany project in cooperation with the German Foreign Office targeted especially women by enhancing the milk production – traditionally a task of women – through donation of small ruminants to female-headed households. Trainings on milk hygiene, community saving schemes and animal health were carried out to guarantee the sustainability of the project. In Somalia, VSF Germany has initiated the establishment of a meat supply chain for slaughtered animals, thus minimising the risk of livestock trade. Too little has been done to build on existing structures, maximising market access and minimising transaction costs. Only meat that is compliant with regional sanitary and food safety standards will be able to serve domestic and regional markets. The same applies for the milk market, which has been targeted by VSF Germany in a similar way. VSF Germany fostered the establishment of milk cooperatives and distribution points, enhancing women's market access and income diversification. This paper proposes that development interventions based on already existing structures, starting from gender based differences in traditional tasks in animal production, have great chances for success. Thus women's economic empowerment can serve as the entry point for their involvement in decision making processes – starting from the family level.

Keywords: Animal health, gender, milk production, pastoralism