

Livestock Banking as Innovative Response to Effects of Recurrent Drought in Pastoralist Communities: the case of Borana, Ethiopia

Dejene Gemechu, Nega Jibat, Gudina Abashula

Dr. Sc. Dejene GEMECHU
PHD C. Nega JIBAT, PHD C. Gudina ABASHULA

Abstract

This article intends to introduce Livestock Banking as an innovative idea that aims at addressing problems pertinent to recurrent drought among the Borana pastoralists in Southern Ethiopia. Borana are pastoralists whose livelihood is dependent on cattle economy. However, pastoralism among the Borana have been under serious pressure from both manmade and natural factors. Some of these factors are recurrent drought and ever degradation of rangeland, the introduction and expansion of farming at the expense of pastoralism, inter-ethnic conflict, neighbours' annexation over Borana rangeland, government induced development interventions with unforeseen negative effects. The idea of Livestock Banking is, thus, designed to build resilience of the communities against the effect of recurrent drought. This innovative idea is initiated based on the Resilient Africa Network (RAN) call for proposals. In the context of this innovative idea, Livestock Banking refers to a community oriented business organization that keeps, exchanges and produces livestock, invests in improving livestock productivity and marketability, loans live animals and gives it back with profit in cash or in kind when the depositor requests. The bank will also serve as local insurance agent against effects of the recurrent drought based on climate forecast. It will participate in preserving best livestock breed and distribute to individual

herders up on requests; participate in livestock feed and fodder production; provide veterinary services and trainings to produce professionals in livestock production; have animal product processing factories, invest in livestock fattening, sell quality animal products to international and national markets. Currently, the piloting project of this innovative idea is ongoing.

Keywords: Borana, Pastoralism, Recurrent Drought, Innovation, Livestock Banking

1. Introduction

1.1. The Borana: An Overview

The Borana are the Oromo inhabiting Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya and are often considered custodians of Oromo culture among whom the two major Oromo institutions--*Gadaa* and *qaalluu* are still living institutions (Ame 2005; Helland 1997; Bassi 1997). *Gadaa* system is a political institution which guides the entire life of the Oromo. Legesse (1973) states that

The gada [also spelled as Gadaa] system is a system of classes (luba) that succeed each other every 8 years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each gada class remains in power during a specific term (gada) which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony. (p. 8).

Bassi (1996) states that *Gadaa* is a comprehensive system entails a varied range of social phenomena such as prescriptive rules, ceremonies, rites, public offices and actual physical villages. At all levels, *Gadaa* shapes social relations within the Borana and between the Borana and their neighbours.

Since recently, the *Gadaa* system of the Oromo has won ever popularity and recognition worldwide as one of the indigenous democratic political system of humanities. It has been inscribed in the prestigious of the UNESCO list as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of the world during the eleventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held November 27-December 2, 2016 in Addis Ababa.

Among the Borana, the Gadaa system is providing the philosophical as well as administrative principles pertinent to their livelihood. The Borana

Gadaa practices indigenous federation in which power is equally divided among the moieties and clans. (Gemechu 2017).

Pastoralism has been serving as economic base of the *Gadaa* system for time immemorial. Specific to the Borana, we argue that the very secret behind strong *Gadaa* system among the Borana is pastoralism. *Gadaa* provides strong administrative structure to livestock and pertinent natural resource use and management. Inversely, the livestock production enables the Borana to maintain relatively strong *gadaa* system. However, currently pastoralism is in tenuous situation because of internal and external factors. One of the most outstanding factors is recurrent drought with devastating effects on livestock which is nearly the only source of livelihood for pastoralist communities. This situation demands for culturally relevant innovative mechanisms to make pastoralism sustainable and/or to support the pastoral community to be food self-sufficient. This paper intends to introduce Livestock Banking as innovation solution that is designed to build resilience of the communities against the shocks and stresses of massive livestock death caused by the recurrent drought coupled with the absence of any sustainable institutional setting to tackle the drought.

At least for the last forty or more years there have been different efforts to tackle problems related to recurrent drought, decreasing livestock productivity, shrinking pasture and pastureland among the Borana. There have been different externally induced and internally designed development projects as well as relief and rehabilitation interventions. Both governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations have taken part in these efforts. One of these interventions was the Southern Rangeland Development Unit (SoRDU) which was established in 1975. SoRDU was government's rural development program, which aimed at cattle species improvement, rangeland development and water sources development. In implementation of the program, three major ranches were established. However, as several research works indicate, for instance, Helland (1997), Tache (2000) and Bariso (2006), the program has failed to meet its main objectives. In addition, the government attempted to diversify the livelihood of the Borana by introducing farming. Yet, because of the erratic nature of rainfall, farming has not been effective in Borana. Several other smaller projects of cattle fattening, value chain, business-oriented livestock herding have been also attempted by governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, the Borana livestock still suffer

from recurrent drought whereby thousands have been lost every occurrence of drought.

For instance, according to government officials, during the recent 20016/17 drought about 34, 000 cattle were lost in Arero district alone. As a result, 262 households became total destitute (without any livestock) and relief dependent.

Plate 1: Massive death of cattle due to recurrent drought in 2017 (Borana Zone, Arero District, Alona Kebele) (Photo: By Hunde Doja. May, 2017)



According to Helland (2001), the overall pictures of pastoralism in Borana are characterized by three separate but interwoven headings. The first is the prevalence of recurrent or permanent food insecurity for the last several years Secondly, pastoralism still survives in Borana but only very few of the Borana pastoralists are able to subsist directly from the products of their herds. Finally, ecological crisis is one of the causes for food insecurities over the area. Helland (2001) also shows that as far as pastoralism is concerned, there is commonly accepted pessimistic outlook indicating that pastoralism is an outdated form of livelihood in eastern Africa in which pastoralists are locked in a downward spiral of ecological crises, famine, dependency and permanent destitution.

On the other hand, as Helland (2001: 57) clearly states “pastoral societies have survived in this resource-poor environment for hundreds of years,

which strongly suggests that the ecological adaption of pastoralism is a viable way of using these resources capable of maintaining quite large populations in such marginal areas. On the other hand, the utter failure of most consciously designed, modern development intervention to improve on the ability of the pastoralists to make a living from this land is an indication that there are not too many other options available with regard to sensible use of these resources. Isolated innovations like modern veterinary services and water technology have certainly had a major impact on pastoralism over the past few decades, but the consensus seems to be that these interventions have reduced, or even undermined, the availability and sustainability of the pastoral enterprise and pastoralism as a way of life.

The challenges now facing pastoral societies in eastern Africa (and the nation states that have assumed responsibility for pastoralists as their citizens) is to restore pastoralism, to make it capable once again of using the resources of marginal lands and to cater to the needs of the pastoralists. There do not seem to be many other places for pastoralists to go and there seem to be few alternative ways of using their lands.

Helland (2001) boldly states that practical instances of pastoral development projects indicate that they are contradictory to the intended outcomes. They exacerbate problems than they have solved them. In this regard, the Borana society today is at a critical juncture in its history.

Thus, the situation clearly demands robust innovative, contextual and participatory solution to the problem at hand. In response, this project known as "*Reducing the Effects of Recurrent Drought through Enhancing Productivity (Re-DEEP): Livestock Banking*" is designed as innovate way of responding to the effects of recurrent drought in Borana. This intervention project has been designed to provide alternative solutions to the Borana pastoralism with effective utilization of the indigenous knowledge, institutional setup, and ecological characteristics of the Borana rangeland. Basically, the project aims at introducing Livestock Banking integrated with indigenous institutions in the framework of cultural values and its basic guiding principles.

2. Borana Pastoralism

2.1. Pastoralism as Means of Subsistence

The Borana are cattle pastoralists. Cattle, for the Borana is the most important domestic animal economically, socially, psychologically and ritually. For the Borana, the number of livestock of a household indicates the level of its food security and social status. According to Mengistu (1998), because rainfall is not only irregular but also too low for crop production, the Borana are not confident in farming. Further, compared to any other economic activities around including farming, they consider herding as the most valuable and prestigious one. According to this author, the Borana herd cattle for various reasons. Primarily, it is for subsistence, because milk and milk products are the main diet for the Borana. Cattle are also slaughtered for meat occasionally. Secondly, cattle are used as means of income from their sale. In addition, cattle are indicators of social status and source of honour. The Borana have other domestic animals including camel, goats, sheep, donkey, horse and mule. But cattle are the dominant herd. The Borana commonly say “*horiin kan gosaati*” which means ‘livestock belongs to clan’. This connotes that both protecting and using livestock is the mandate of one’s clan and even the Borana as such. Any particular household is not allowed to use the cattle at its disposal in a wrong way. There are certain accepted ethical standards for using one’s livestock. Similarly, any needy member of the clan can access livestock of its fellow clansmen through *buusaa-gonofa*¹. Likewise, anyone has the responsibility of protecting and fairly managing livestock as such and particularly livestock of his/her clan (Mengistu 1998).

However, data from Oromia Pastoralist Commission indicates that the Borana who are purely pastoralists are getting reduced in number due to various natural and political factors. As the data indicates, only 40% of the inhabitants of the Borana Zone are pure pastoralists. About 45% of them are agro-pastoralists, and the rest are pure farmers or destitute who have no cattle (Gemechu 2012). Despite of clan supports in some cases, pastoralists become destitute and without any livestock or the number of their livestock reduced significantly due to drought and raids. For instance, Mengistu (1998) compared average livestock holding of individual

¹*Buusaa-gonofa* is an indigenous social security system in which the haves contribute to support the needy members of the community

households before the 1991/92 drought, during the drought and post drought situations. He indicates how drought had caused significant reduction of the number of livestock population of the Borana. According to him, during the 1991/92 drought, every Borana household lost 79 percent of their cattle, 46 percent of their sheep, 60 percent of their goat, 95 percent of their camel and 83 percent of their equine on average. In general, this drought alone caused a loss of about 67 percent livestock. On the other hand, practical instances and the works of different scholars like (Tache 2000; Helland 2000, 2001) indicate that even though pastoralism has been facing severe challenges, it is still basic means of livelihood among the Borana.

For the Borana, the pastoral economy is at the centre of their life including their day-to-day interactions and communications. Their blessings, prayers, proverbs, stories and songs are all directed by their pastoral economy. For instance, in judicial processes punishments are imposed to be paid in the form of cattle. The terms *gatii* (lowest fine), *karra-mataa* (medium level fine) and *qakee* (substantial fine) are all practiced in cattle and vary in terms of the number of cattle to be paid. Bride wealth, *galata* (gifts) and *kaattoo* (tax) are paid in cattle. Similarly, parents give *handhuura* (umbilical cord) cattle to their child as seed asset early when its umbilical cord falls down. During naming ritual, called *gubbisa*, gifts are given in the form of cattle. Clan's support comes in the form of cattle. The Borana word *busa-gonofa* and *hirpha* (support) indicate supports collected from clansmen to retribute or reimburse the lost cattle of a particular family.

In the post livestock raid and/or drought situation, the Borana have a culture of restocking through mutual help called *busa-gonofa*. The restocking can be arranged in two ways: either it is temporary milking or permanent restocking. In both cases, it is done in the framework of clan solidarity and social security in which cattle are redistributed from the well-off to the poor through the long-standing Borana social security system called *buusa-gonofa* (Mengistu 1998).

In addition to transfer of cattle in kind for several economic and ritual purposes, the Borana use cattle products in several ways – ritually and in their day to-day life. The evidence comes from their cultural materials and foods and drinks. Cultural cloths, artefacts, containers, ritual bracelets (*medhicha*) wore by ritually senior individuals, beds, cream for their body and hair, mattresses and the like are all made up of cattle skin. The

following are some of the examples of traditional artefacts made up of animal products.

Plate 2: Cultural food prepared from animal products on the 40th *Gumii Gaayoo* (Photo: by Dejene Gemechu, August 2009)



The types of food prepared for ritual purposes and even for daily consumption are mainly from meat, milk and milk products. For instance, roasted coffee mixed with butter (*buna - qalaa*), literally slaughtered coffee, yogurt *itittuu*, fresh milk, roasted or cooked meat, dry meat, blood mixed with milk and the like. These items of food are often used on special occasions like *Gumii Gaayoo* (Borana general assembly) for visitors and guests (see plate 2).

2.2. Pastoralism and *Gadaa*



The Borana have several assemblies which are territorial, pastoral, clan and political. The agenda of the gatherings may vary across the participating social groups, the context and the level of the gatherings. Yet, all are directly or indirectly entailing pastoral economy in different forms. These may include pastoral resource management, collection of cattle or money for collective investments like digging wells or renovating water wells, or assisting the needy fellow clan members who lost their cattle due to raid or death of cattle, collecting tax for the *Gadaa* government and judicial proceedings.

As mentioned earlier, cattle economy is the basis for the *Gadaa* political system. *Gadaa* in turn enacts grand laws in regulating rangeland use and management and plays central role in its day-to-day administrative activities. This is evidenced by the decisions of Borana *Gadaa* assembly--*Gumii Gaayoo*. Above all, *Gumii Gaayoo*, the great pan-Borana assembly, is the highest law-making body which is conducted every eight years. *Gumii* is the term for assembly while *Gaayoo* is where it is held. Legesse (1973) calls it the assembly of the multitude. Bassi (2005) shows that decisions by the general assembly are binding on the entire Borana. This is so because the *Gumii Gaayoo* entails high level of representations of the Borana. He states that the assembly is a federal assembly particularly adapted to the solution of inter-clan problems and to the formulation of laws. The assembly enacts and amends grand laws and provides rules and regulations of the land.

The assembly is organized by the *Gadaa* party in power. Central to the assembly is its close relations with the Borana's pastoral economy. Basically, the economic base of organizing the Borana general assembly is

also pastoralism. All necessary provisions– food and drink as well as pertinent expenses are drawn from pastoral economy. The Borana have a system of pulling resources together for such social and political events. Primarily, the Borana conduct election campaign at clan level and pertinent expenses are covered by the campaigning clan. Each and every clan contributes to the assembly. The *Gadaa* council also collects tax called *kaattoo*, which is used to run administrative activities at all stages including organizing assemblies like *Gumii Gaayoo*.

In Borana context, organizing such a huge gathering in the absence of cattle economy is hardly possible. Reports from practical observation of the various general assemblies indicated that large number of cattle is slaughtered every day at *Gumii Gaayoo*. For instance, the following pictures indicate some examples of young bulls and goats collected by different clans and slaughtered on the occasion of the 40th *Gmuuii Gaayoo*.

Plate 4: Animals slaughtered on the occasion of *Gumii Gaayoo*
Photo: by Dejene Gemechu, August 2012



In line with this fact, the *Gadaa* system provides administrative structures and guiding principles of pastoralism. Pastoralism is not only the economic base of the *Gumii Gaayoo*, but also it shows why this assembly is required. This is evidenced from the decisions the assembly passes and the time it devotes to the discussion of pastoralism and pertinent issues throughout the long stay of the *Gumii Gaayoo*. Mismanagement of water wells and inappropriate use of rangeland are considered serious.

Historically, the assembly of the multitude has amended and enacted different laws which are directly or indirectly entail pastoralism. For instance, during the *Gadaa* period of (1968-1976) under the leadership of Gobba Bulee, the Borana amended the former law which prohibited farming with the intension of diversifying their livelihood in response to the ever worsening of pastoral environment and recurrent drought. Formerly, farming was discouraged for it was taken as a livelihood that competes with the very existence of pastoralism (Shongolo 1994; Huqa 1995; Ame 2005; Gemechu 2012).

In general, traditionally the Borana were dependent on their livestock for subsistence. However, the current situation indicates that livestock productivity has gradually decreased to the extent this made dependency on livestock unreliable. Pastoralism among the Borana is on a cross-road due to long standing cumulative effect of various factors such as frequent raids, recurrent drought, shortage of rain, bush encroachment which reduced the quality and quantity of grass, environmental degradation because of overgrazing, lack of bush and insect control, expansion of farming and settlements, ranch expansion, and territorial annexation of the neighbouring Somali groups (Mengistu 1998). However, pastoralism among the Borana is enduring in a very challenging situation.

2.3. Pastoralism and Rangeland Management

Citing UNDP/RRC, Mengistu (1998) shows that the Borana rangeland is one of the drier areas but it is commonly known as the best resource-rich cattle rangeland in the region. It covers about 65, 000km² and lies between Ganale River in the east and Segen River in the west. In terms of altitude, the Borana rangeland ranges between 1000-1500m. The area is characterized by irregular rainfall across years and within single year. The Borana use natural grasses for their livestock. They also browse. Helland (1996) also reports that Borana rangeland is exceptionally resource rich.

The Borana have indigenous system of rangeland management. Grazing pressure is regulated by applying shifting grazing between wet and dry grazing areas. The shifting grazing system is dictated by the ecological variations in terms of the availability of water and pasture. The *Gadaa* system manages resource use. Grazing areas are protected from overgrazing by the *Gadaa* administration. Pastoralists are forced to move to areas where pasture is available to protect overgrazing (see Bassi 2005, Mengistu 1998, Tache 200).

Pertinent to rangeland management, the Borana have some territorial and family categories for livestock management. Several descent or territorial based organizations manage the use of common grazing areas as well as common clusters of water wells. They focus on pastoral resource use and management which include supervision of use and management of water wells, any mismanagement of cattle, family disagreements, abuse of use rights of pastoral resources, collections of funds and redistribution of the funds for different purposes such as excavation of wells and contribution to *Gadaa* officials working in the *Gadaa* councils (see Bassi 2005).

Mengistu (1998) also reveals that the Borana have indigenous ways of managing grazing land which include conservation of grazing land through enclosure (*kalo*), moving animal during dry season, demarcation of grazing and settlement areas, division of herd into *warra* (livestock at home) and *fora* (livestock not at home), migration of villagers, bush control (burning) and shifting cultivation. The Borana also use feed conservation in the form of *kalo*, which is standing hay, hay making, crop residues and any combinations of these. However, the indigenous rangeland management system has been gradually eroded by some external factors and internal changes.

2.4. The Shrinking Pasture and Rangeland

Studies on the Borana pastoralism anonymously indicate the shrinking of Borana pasture and pastoral land. According to Tache (2000), the Borana pastoral land has been put under tenacious pressure from different factors. These factors include expansion of neighbouring groups, development interventions by the government and NGOs and encroachment by agricultural and pastoralist neighbours. The following section touches up on each of these factors.

2.4.1 The Introduction and Expansion of Farming

Borana was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire during the last quarter of 19th century by force of Minilik II. Since the Borana land is not farm-suited, it remained communal land and continued to be used for pastoralism except some highland settlers engaged in small farming in the pocket areas. The small farming over the area was, of course, insignificant either to change the tenure system or to reduce the vast rangelands of the Borana (Tache 2000:107).

However, the 1977/78 war between the Borana and the Somali groups was accompanied by large scale cattle raiding which turned significant number of the Borana to destitute. The same effect also led to the intervention of government in promoting farming by providing the destitute farm plots, oxen and farm implements. The situation encouraged the Borana to engage in farming.

Farming was politically motivated and introduced from outside. The Borana were totally herders for their land bolsters pastoralism more than farming. Any expansion of farming is not only a momentous factor shrinking the pastoral land but also at the expense of the very Borana land tenure system. As far as farm plots are held individually, the introduction contradicted the former communal ownership and management of resources. The expansion of farming is accompanied by personal forage reserve adjacent to the farming. A considerable size of farming land and bordering pastoral land turned private. Thus, these new phenomena adversely affect the traditional approach to environmental management (Tache 2000).

Further, the expansion of farming hampered free movements of cattle to and from water points. Farming also expropriated wet land which is also the best pastureland, which is often used for calves and lactating cows. Thus, the introductions of farming created sever competition with pastoralism. Meanwhile, as the rain over the area is too erratic, the farming is not dependable. Thus, the Borana are not only reluctant to farm as an alternative way of livelihood, but also the risk of failure of the crop is very high (Tache 2000:108; Bariso 2006).

Farming, which does not esteem from the ecology of the area, is highly expanding at the expense of pastoralism. Pertinent to the emerging new form of land tenure system a new form of conflict between cattle rising and crop production has emerged. The conflict is not only in its economic sense but also cultural. For the Borana, the most valued property is cattle and

cattle in its true sense belong to the clan. By the same token, the Borana owned cattle graze the communally held pasture whose management is the responsibility of the Borana as such. Consequently, the expansion of farming land and private enclosures leads to all rounded conflict which involves cultural, psychological and interpersonal, and negatively affected pastoralism. Tache (2000) indicates that the expansion of farming led to rangeland privatization, which takes three major forms: farm plots, private grazing and private pasture related to private pond.

2.4.2 Inter-ethnic Conflict

Bassi (1997) indicates that the Borana had ritual supremacy over the area for long. However, this was challenged with coming of the British colonial rulers from south in Kenya and the expansion of the Ethiopian empire from the north by Menelik II. Since 1941, the Somali encroached over Borana land on different occasions. The first was the 1960s guerrilla fighting which was commonly known as *shifita* war (war by outlaws) led by the Garre Somali in Ethiopia. The second was the 1976 movements of Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) as a Somali force under the leadership of Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). This organization was set in Mogadishu and claimed to struggle to liberate the Somali in Ethiopia and make them part of the State of Somalia (Bassi 1997: 33). To the contrary, the Borana cooperated with the Ethiopian forces and fought against the WSLF and SALF.

Bassi (1997) argues that the Borana had sufficient reason to side the Ethiopian government not because of religious or political reasons, but because of they came to know that the Somali were threat to their resources and security as it has been already proved during their subsequent movements into their territories. Historically, the Garre progressively achieved access to the Borana controlled resources through different mechanisms: initially through diplomacy, through direct military action, and lastly through both military action and international aid in the context of the post 1991 ethnic territoriality.

Until 1991 the successive Ethiopian regimes have defended the Borana territory. However, this trend has been changed since the downfall of the socialist regime for the Borana was identified either with the old regime or the new opposition party OLF by the new Ethiopian regime. The rival groups of the Borana have used the post 1991 Ethiopian political landscape to encroach over the Borana territory. These rival groups, particularly the

Somali clans persistently intrude into Borana territories and significantly caused the shrinking of their pastureland (see Schlee 1994; Schlee and Shongolo 1995; Shongolo 1996; Bassi 1997). Bassi (1997: 37) concludes that the boundary dispute between Oromia National Regional State and Somali National Regional State in the context of the post 1991 Ethiopia politics is the last and ongoing conflicts between the Borana and the Somali forces. Through the last action, the Borana lost their two complex wells of Eel Goof and Eel Lei to the Somali - Garre (Helland 2001).

2.4.3 Development Interventions

Mengistu (1998, 7), Bariso (2006), Tache (2000) discuss the impact of external interventions on Borana rangeland use and management. There have been development interventions in Borana by the government and non-government organizations over the last forty year. These interventions include infrastructure building, construction of rural roads, stock ponds, clinics for human and animals, resettlement and ranches. However, these writers indicate that the result is not satisfactory in addressing the basic problems of the rangeland and alleviating poverty among the pastoralist community; mainly for they were government-oriented benefits rather than community life improvement. They were also top down approaches disregarding indigenous knowledge and even have caused erosion of the indigenous systems of pastoral economy.

Bariso (2006) traced the first government-initiated rangeland development to 1965 which was owned by Ministry of Agriculture funded by USA. It was a pilot project aimed at demarcating grazing areas into paddocks and the provision of water point in each of the paddocks. It aimed at improving livestock productivity through controlled rotational grazing. However, the practice disregarded the indigenous knowledge of grazing system and became impossible to control trespassing of large number of animals in the paddocks which soon resulted in overgrazing of the pilot area.

Bariso indicates that the second, third and fourth livestock development projects were launched in 1973 with various objectives that vary across project sites and projects. The main objectives of those projects were promotion of the stratification of livestock production and closer integration of pastoral economy into the national economy.

As part of this project, Southern Rangeland Development Unit (SoRDU) was introduced among the Borana. SoRDU was a range development

project owned by the Ethiopian government. It was one of the sub-projects of the Ethiopian Livestock Development projects. It aimed at developing infrastructure and natural resources and to support livestock production as well as marketing. The project also developed three ranches: Walensu Ranch in Liban, Sarite Ranch in Teltelle and Danbalawacho Ranch in Dirre (Bariso 2006; Helland 2001).

Bariso (2006) states that development of infrastructures and introduction of veterinary services were among some commendable results. For obvious reasons, development interventions in social services by government and non-government organizations have positive impacts but they still encourage permanent settlement which is incompatible to pastoralists' way of life. However, positive results of these interventions were dwarfed by lack of maintenance and poor quality of the infrastructures and unforeseen challenges. In general, the interventions were not successful and there had been no remarkable positive changes in this economic sector.

Apart from government efforts, there are various local and international NGOs working among the Borana. CARE-Barana, Catholic Church, Mekaneyesus Church, Goal Ethiopia, SOS-Sahel, OXFAM Canada, CFoD, SCAF and Action for Development (AFD) are some among others. Bariso (2006) states that there were also some attempts of private investments particularly in ranch developments. Still, since these ranches appropriate the best rangeland of the area, they have not been in the interest of the pastoralists.

In spite of all these attempts, the Borana is still under serious challenges caused by recurrent drought, death of huge number of livestock every year, decrease in serious productivity of livestock, shortage of pastoral resources, absence of fair market and food insecurity in general. Helland (2001) shows that the multifaceted factors have impeded the dependability of pastoralism in Borana and turned them to be helpless and relief dependent.

In response, scholars have recommended ways to handle these problems. Helland (2001) suggests genuine use of indigenous local institutions which guides the administrative and economic control in Borana. He complained that so far government institutions simply provide lip service and was not genuine in working with the *Gadaa*. Bariso (2006) recommends that further intensive research focusing on Borana mode of life as an input for policy makers to avert the potential risks ahead of Borana pastoralism, capacity building of some indigenous institutions of the Borana, further development and provisions of social services,

monitoring of resources, particularly rangeland management and rehabilitation, diversifications of livelihood, enhancing community awareness and provision of inputs.

The current situation pleads for comprehensive as well as Borana cultural values and indigenous knowledge oriented innovative ideas of intervention. As already mentioned above, the project entitled “*Reducing the Effects of Drought through Enhancing Productivity (RE-DEEP)/Livestock Banking*” is designed as an innovative strategy to respond to the current Borana situation. The project is initiated based on the Resilient Africa Network (RAN) call for proposals on such innovative idea. The following section focuses on the winning innovative idea in the framework of Resilient Africa Network (RAN) Development Intervention. RAN is sourcing innovative ideas that will contribute to resilience building in Borana Zone of Southern Ethiopia in the face of the recurrent drought and its effects.

3. Resilient Africa Network (RAN) Development Intervention

3.1. RAN: An Overview

Resilient Africa Network (RAN) is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored university-based Development Labs. RAN has partner universities from all over the world. Within Africa, RAN has 20 partnership universities in 16 countries. RAN (2015-17) recognizes that there are multifaceted shocks which pastoralist communities including the Borana have experienced in Africa. Some of the basic problems are related to water scarcity, conflict, low productivity, non-diversified livelihoods and poor livestock rearing practices. In response, RAN through its Resilience Innovation Labs (RILabs) coordinated by Makerere University of Uganda encourages resilience innovation challenges and committed to support the best innovative ideas towards widespread adoption. It attempts to come up with transformative innovations that support the resilience of communities and tackling natural as well as human-made challenges.

One of the RAN RILabs for Horn of Africa, RILab (HoARILab) is situated in Ethiopia and hosted by Jimma University. Under the HoARILab, there are five partner universities, namely Jimma University, Addis Ababa University and Bule Hora University from Ethiopia, Benadir University in Somalia and University of Nairobi in Kenya. RAN has identified two districts – Arero and Dhas of Borana Zone in Oromia

National Regional State from Ethiopia and three districts, Hamarweyne, Hodan, and Wadajirin the Benadir Region of Somalia for intervention.

The HoA RILab identifies two main data driven resilience themes: (1) Resilience to the effects of recurrent droughts and (2) Mitigating the effects of chronic conflicts and displacements. The rationale for RAN intervention is partly caused by failure stories of the long-lasting efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations to mitigate the effects of recurrent droughts and ever increasing inter-ethnic conflicts. RAN (CRID4RED 2015-17) shows that development interventions have little or no success story in this regard. Humanitarian aids which have been historically project-based have been able to save lives of many. Yet, they have not sufficiently built resilience of target communities to recurrent shocks and stresses. In response, RAN aims at tackling the challenges of the pastoralist communities

...by tapping into the adaptive capacities of target communities to strengthen their resilience to challenges affecting them. Therefore, RAN's primary reason for existence is the identification, development and piloting of resilience building innovations, and bringing these to scale so as to significantly impact communities in sub-Saharan Africa (p, 6).

Within this framework, the HoA RILab through its sub-project *Collaborative Resilience Innovation Design for Recurrent Effects of Drought* (CRID4RED) aims at strengthening resilience of the Borana community residing in Arero and Dhas districts. In this regard, it intends building their agency to improve water supply and quality, improve livestock production, take more control of the agricultural value chain, and to diversify for profitable enterprises, in ways that are environmentally sustainable" (RAN 2015-17). The project has three specific objectives. Primarily, it aims at transformation of livestock keeping practices of the Borana community by way of developing and harvesting the potential of reliable water sources. Secondly, it targets transformation of livestock keeping practices of the Borana community by indigenizing the modern livestock rearing practices. The final purpose is the transformation of livelihoods of women and youth among the pastoralist communities as well as introducing alternative livelihoods.

One of the innovative ideas responding to the call and won the competition has been entitled '*Reducing the Effects of Drought through Enhancing Productivity (RE-DEEP)/ Livestock Banking*' in line with the intervention pathway of diversified and market-oriented livestock

production, and the innovation challenge of community-owned value addition. Overall, the project proposes establishment of Livestock Banking in Borana in order to enhance human and livestock productivity which in turn aims at reducing effects of the recurrent drought on livestock and the community at large.

3.2. Establishment of Livestock Banking among the Borana: the proposed innovative solution

Pastoralism as an economic livelihood has been the primary lifestyle of the Borana that requires an extended geographical area and frequent movement from place to place. The Borana are known for their time-tested social, cultural, political and economic organizations all of which are interlinked around pastoralism, particularly cattle economy. The Borana keep as many as possible heads of cattle for several reasons-- economic, psychological and social security. Among the Borana, letting the number of cattle reduced for any 'unjustifiable reasons' be it economic, cultural, psychological or natural is unacceptable. Fear of future loss of the cattle to death due to drought demands them keeping as many as possible cattle as a coping strategy. Thus, larger number of the cattle amounts to insurance in case of economic crises. The cultural economic principle shouts, "*The more cattle you keep, the more resistance you have against effects of drought*".

Based on the aforementioned evidences by many scholars, the team of the proposed innovative project (Re-DEEP/Livestock Banking) concludes that even if pastoralism has sustained the people for centuries, effects of the recurrent drought have become pervasive and ever challenging as time has passed. The trend and pattern of drought and its effects have become and will be a central issue in the Borana's lives than it was ever due to climate change. As a result, pastoralism in Borana, in a sense it had been in history, has become severely challenged to remain as a viable economic livelihood. Extreme vulnerability of the people to the effects of the recurrent droughts is clearly understood by the Borana people, the government and global partners. The primary effects of recurrent drought in Borana are significant reduction of water and consequently pasture whereas no one can think of the Borana without their cattle and no cattle sustain without water and grass. That is why it is not debatable that the Borana communities are at a critical point in time and space with regard to their pastoral livelihood. The current Borana's conditions beg for innovative interventions towards building resilience against effects of the recurrent drought. This innovative

idea attempts to establish Livestock Banking to ensure building resilience of the communities.

From the very outset, the team of innovators believes that the balance between competing cultural values of keeping large livestock and substantial lack of water and pasture due to the recurrent drought should be maintained. Efforts to convince the Borana reduce the number of cattle for whatever economic reason is not an easy task. Fast and radically changing their livelihoods to non-pastoralism is more difficult and even might be destructive. Instead, demonstrating alternatives in production, saving and marketing is a proposed solution.

Thus, the team of this project has proposed an alternative production, saving and marketing approaches in an innovative manner. These new approaches are compatible with cultural values of the Borana yet potentially transformative both socially/culturally and economically. To this end, the team suggested establishment of Livestock Banking which is modelled and led by a team of model pastoralists acting as bankers.

In the context of this project, Livestock Banking refers to a community-oriented business organization that keeps, exchanges and produces livestock in the community or elsewhere as well as invests in improving livestock productivity and marketability by employing profit sharing approach among participating parties. In the anticipated Livestock Banking, people will not only sell and deposit live animals but also borrow. The bank will loan live animals under certain agreements of giving it back with profit in cash or in kind when the depositor requests. The bank will also serve as local insurance agent against effects of the re-current drought based on climate forecast. It will participate in preserving best livestock breed (Borana breed) and distribute to individual herders up on requests; participate in livestock feed and fodder production; provide veterinary services and trainings to produce professionals in livestock production; have animal product processing factories, invest in livestock fattening, sell quality animal products to international and national markets.

For the purpose of piloting the Livestock Banking the project team intends to establish, three teams. First, the Livestock Banking team which is composed of adult members of the pastoralist community. These are Livestock Banking service providers who are recruited from model pastoralists, who can easily adapt to new ideas, practices and changes and highly trusted by the community. Individual pastoralists deposit livestock with the banking team. Principally, they provide livestock banking services

to their members as well as pastoralists who will deposit their live animals with the Livestock Bank.

Secondly, unemployed young people from the community will be organized in teams primarily for modern animal production (specifically fattening) for commercial purposes. As sources of livestock for fattening, the teams will have multiple alternatives.

The primary and much intended source of livestock for fattening by the youth team is the pastoral community. Pastoralists will deposit their livestock with the banking team. Secondly, the youth team will be provided with initial capital or revolving fund to establish the project centre as a source of livestock for fattening and for purchase of oxen and goats for fattening. Thirdly, the youth team will form partnership with the local saving and credit associations to get access to loan in order to buy more livestock. Alongside, the youth also engage in vegetables and fodder production nearby the livestock centre mainly by using by-products of the livestock as organic fertilizers. So, the approach is expected to create job for the youth, empowers them, diversifies livelihoods and gradually transforms the communities. By doing these, the youth will serve as agents of transformation in their communities. The youth will be provided with trainings on animal fattening and fodder preparation, entrepreneurship and managerial skills, business keeping and saving.

The third team constitutes women who borrow initial capital from the bank for production of goat in line with cultural role division in the society. This sub-project aims at economically empowering women and diversifying their sources of income.

As per to sources of inputs required for animal fattening such as animal feed, water and health care, the following are proposed. This project will start in areas with better communal water resources in the district, Arero. A combination of natural grazing, homemade fodder and factory products will be used for the livestock feeding. Livestock healthcare will be provided by local sectoral offices on partnership basis.

Once the teams are established, the Livestock Banking team closely works with the other two teams on common facilities to be arranged as demonstration site. The banking team intermediates the community (the depositor) and the youth (the producer). The bank receives livestock from community members or associations with estimated initial monetary price of livestock at the time of exchange. Then, it transfers the livestock to the youth team for fattening on profit sharing bases and/or deposits the

money in the nearby formal bank. Or, as the last resort, the bank may sell the livestock and directly deposit the money in formal bank in the nearest town. Even if this is not the desired means by the project, giving such chances are considerable as secondary alternative till the people gradually develop trust in the innovation.

The contributing pastoralists will get alternative packages of benefits from the saving. First, the member may receive back the initial livestock's monetary value plus the interest and/or profit value upon prior arranged request. Second, upon his/her interest, the member may receive back a livestock purchased with the monetary value kept in the bank at any prearranged time or during emergency. This particularly serves as insurance at times of drought disaster whereby the bank will release the money deposited in the bank, purchases and distributes livestock for the needy community members.

To realize the above-mentioned operations by the teams, the project will establish a common centre for all teams for joint utilization. The centre consists of kraals, fodder production and feeding house, livestock health care place, and farming plot of land. The production centre serves as training and modelling site where knowledge and experiences are exchanged between the traditional and modern production practices and practitioners. To encourage market-oriented animal production, the centre will be accessible for visit by any interested pastoralist.

Another strategy to attract pastoralists to sell or deposit their livestock is profit sharing approach with the original sellers. That is, small proportion of the net profit will be given back to the original seller upon selling the livestock for profit. Doing this has some benefits. One, it is showing the original seller that value could be added by increasing the quality of animal production using new approaches in a relatively shorter period than keeping an animal for long period. Access to the information motivates community members either by increasing their tendency of selling livestock and joining the Livestock Banking institution. Second, keeping reduced number of livestock in a small place is more manageable, productive and profitable. Third, it also keeps many pastoralists in touch with and exposed them to practices in the centre with a greater potential of duplication.

This proposed solution has several implications in addressing the effects of recurrent drought and cultivating positive livelihood transformation.

1. It reduces number of cattle vulnerable to drought in case it happens because it is in favor of keeping small size but more productive animals per household or in a community.
2. People's attitude and practice of livestock selling changes and market availability increases due to increasing partnership between producers and users.
3. In so doing, it reduces pressure of cattle over grazing land and water hence better environmental protection could be envisaged.
4. It also reduces frequency and intensity of mobility and promotes longer stay in one place which in turn creates more opportunities of socioeconomic development processes and infrastructure constructions such as more stable schooling.
5. These also contribute towards reduction of conflicts over resources. By improving quality of livestock production, market linkages and value adding, it increases price of the livestock.
6. The solution enables knowledge and skills transfer and job creation/entrepreneurial skills, role modelling (change agents), scientific application and partnership.
7. It also entails to resource distribution among generations as the youth will participate.
8. Getting organized enables the pastoralists to negotiate for fair price and minimizes the dominant roles played by middlemen in the livestock marketing at the cost of the producers.
9. It increases quality and productivity of cattle production for both users and producers.
10. Productivity of individuals taking part in the project will be enhanced because of inputs and diversified engagements.
11. This innovative idea addresses the job need of youth in the Borana.
12. Managerial skills, understanding and working in plan-based team environment, attitudes, values and experiences are additional inputs for human capacity development.

The proposed innovation also takes the advantage of a few existing adaptive capacity or strategies of the Borana culture. In this regard,

1. The Borana has time-tested experience of livestock production; so, this idea is compatible with their existing knowledge, values and skills. It only needs introducing some modifications to increase productivity and enhance market-oriented livelihoods.

2. The Borana has rich culture of saving that can simply be understood from their tradition of keeping more and more cattle. Extravagant life is not culturally appreciated, and their drought experience also taught them to be conscious about the danger of losing all or most livestock to drought. Hence, maintaining the same cultural value and practice, this proposed idea will transform the modes of saving in a culturally compatible manner.
3. Borana tradition of age-set socio-political organization within the *Gadaa* System is an important input for the establishment and success of the youth, women and adult teams with different but interrelated roles.
4. Borana's extraordinary built tradition of community discussion on their common matters brings the proposed innovation to the heart of their culture.
5. The recurrent food shortage has already alerted the people to seek diversified livelihoods.

Summary of the new features of the proposed solution compared to the existing state of knowledge and experience include:

1. It fairly balances potential advantages that could be obtained from traditional and modern approaches of animal production. That is, it maintains traditional values without compromising locally initiated and easily acceptable potential for transformations.
2. The approach is comprehensive but less complex to implement with the local capacity of members of the livestock banking institution. Skills gap-filling trainings are given for the bank operators recruited from the community so that the withdrawal effect of the project staff will be minimal.
3. Better and stronger sense of community-ownership is expected given the project deals with their key issues and the leading role is played by themselves.
4. The new approach of modelling and alternatives of doing things will replace the "DO or DIE" tradition of many projects that provide single ways of doing things. Change resistant people who are slow learners learn from model innovators' show cases and witnessed advantages should be given alternatives and let them to compare.
5. It ensures active participation of the pastoralist communities in livestock marketing.

6. The team believes that failure of many projects in pastoralist communities is mainly because of their largely strange nature of ideas and implementation strategies that do not consider the pastoral context in its real sense.

Conclusion

African problems beg for innovative solutions that are practically contextualized into African realities. This proposed innovative solution is designed in line of this perspective. Community's values, experiences and roles are given central attention to implement the project. Productive and essential sections of the community adults and youth, men and women are considered for their crucial participation in the proposed piloting project. Socio-culturally compatible innovations are important departures from many other similar projects. Even though an innovation implies "newness" that is quite necessary, it is not a sufficient condition to end in fruitful outcomes and impact. An innovative idea, practice or approach must be socio-culturally compatible and context-specific to be efficient and effective.

The proposed solution is viable and smoothly applicable to the Borana context. Because, it upholds their existing pastoralist livelihoods with new additional features essential for a desired transformation by the community through context-responsive interventions. The community will easily sustain the innovative practices once social acceptance will be established. The innovation fits to the Borana context of animal production, social organization and saving traditions. As a result, experiences obtained through the project intervention in Borana will be applicable to other similar pastoralist communities in the country and other African countries. However, minor adaptations to the specific scenarios might be necessary.

The *Gadaa* System's traditional structure, local state governance, financial institutions such as banks, credit and saving associations, Bule Hora University around the area, district public communication and relation offices constitute the major stakeholders for the solution.

The team suggests that contributions of the academics in Africa should not be confined to teaching and studying problems rather they must turn to designing innovative solutions for community problems as well. This in turn will uplift relevance of academics in Africa. Otherwise, the link between academic exercises and the hosting community will become looser than it has been so far.

Currently, the piloting project of establishing Livestock Banking is in progress. The innovation team will share outputs of the piloting intervention to the scientific community, policy makers, potential users and implementers upon completion of the project.

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