The project (1996-2001 – US$22 million credit) was uniquely designed as a risk management instrument – it conceived the establishment of a viable, government-run system of drought management, through early warning systems, contingency plans, mitigation and quick response. The design also devolved responsibility to the district and community level, encouraging civil servants and other district development actors to empower local communities in the design and implementation of development projects. The project built on the experience of others before it such as the Netherlands-supported Drought Management Project (DMP) and subsequently, the Drought Preparedness, Intervention and Recovery Project (DPIRP). The IDA-financed Emergency Drought Recovery Project (EDRP) also provided useful insights.

The objectives at appraisal were to strengthen and support community-driven initiatives to (a) reduce the widespread poverty and enhance food security in the arid districts of Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River, Isiolo, Samburu and the arid divisions of Baringo district.; and (b) conserve the natural resource base through (i) improving crop and livestock resilience to drought; (ii) increasing economic linkages with the rest of the economy; and (iii) improving basic health services, water supply and other social services. The Mid-Term Review in November 1999 improved the focus of the project objective which was formally amended « to build the capacity of communities in the arid districts of Kenya to better cope with drought.»

Impact on the Ground

- The project strengthened an effective drought monitoring system within an innovative drought cycle concept. Some 822 district and national Early warning System bulletins were disseminated. The drought monitoring system, inherited from the EDRP, and extended to all arid lands districts, has proved reliable for drought situation analysis and has provided the information base for response actions.
- It undertook a number of drought mitigation interventions through a participatory approach. For each of the 11 districts, Strategic Drought Management and Contingency Plans have been elaborated by the District Steering Groups chaired by the District Commissioners, and including the main stakeholders at that level. Communities have, through a Participative Rural Appraisal, set their drought mitigation and developmental priorities.
- Contingency Funds, established in Financial Year 2001/02, have been utilized for facilitating conflict resolution, creation of shelter facilities for Internally Displaced Persons, supporting water tankering to remote communities, provision of fast-moving spares and emergency repairs of boreholes.
The project equipped 24 areas of selected pasture land (free from tribal conflicts) with temporary water supplies to be replenished by tankering as grazing reserves. This option has proved effective.

During the very severe 1999-2001 drought, response time was shortened, effective government-donor coordination was promoted and a community-based targeting system was set up, allowing vulnerable groups improved access to food supplies. This enabled $300 million of food aid to be made available to about 3.3 million people.

The main water investments financed – boreholes, water pans and shallow wells - improved both livestock and human well-being and health. Community water associations have been formed and are supported. The number of livestock marketing infrastructures planned (62) and actually implemented (53) have surpassed the anticipated 48.

Stock routes have been improved through the creation of additional watering points or through rehabilitation. Holding grounds have been created near primary and secondary livestock market centers, improving the contractual power of producers; new markets and sale yards have been promoted at the divisional level, enabling a decongestion of the district markets; slaughterhouse standards were raised with consequent improved hygiene, ante and postmortem health control, increased town council tax collection, meat quality and overall environmental conditions.

Over 1,200 demand-driven micro-projects, originally covering 4 districts and expanded in 1999 to six others, with a 30% community contribution to costs, have been implemented, benefiting some 180,000 people and addressing sector need identified by the communities. These included small ruminants herds restocking, education, income generating activities, agriculture, water, human health, shelter, animal health and appropriate technology. Among the best-performing micro-projects were the IGAs with women’s groups and restocking activities.

Some 1,011 Community-based Animal Health Workers were trained and a further 745 graduated through collaboration with other partner agencies. Standardized training methods, curricula and guideline have been adopted through stakeholder workshops.

Crop production indicators recorded by the Mobile Extension Teams at all the 9,000 «demonstration plots» have shown yield increases on average higher at 5% per annum compared to the 3% anticipated in the Staff Appraisal Report. Average bean and maize yields have reportedly increased by 30% per annum. The cropped area of maize and beans is recorded to have increased by as much as 50-60% per annum.

Improved access to water reached an estimated 40% or 800,000 of the Arid Lands population and an equivalent or higher percentage of livestock population.

The project constructed 17 new dispensaries and rehabilitated another 17 resulting in the walking distance for communities being halved from 30 km to 10-15 km. 64 latrines were built, improving sanitation.

Some 230 schools were assisted through the construction/rehabilitation of village primary schools as well as the purchase of textbooks and equipment.

Lessons learned

- An effective drought management system can help, at an acceptable cost, to manage risks and improve the livelihoods of persons living in drought-prone areas. The key features are a decentralized planning, decision-making, financing and implantation system at the district level, supported by a responsive and well-coordinated national body.

- Strengthened district-level multi-sector institutions can significantly improve the effectiveness of project interventions. This option facilitates the implementation of devolved procedures and prepares the ground for more accountability and the empowerment of benefiting communities, allowing the larger issues like conflict resolution to be addressed.

- Capacity building is critical to the process, but should be done in the context of community consultations so as to increase participation, ownership and accountability.

- While public support should continue to basic social services, income generating investments should gradually have an increasing beneficiary contribution to enhance sustainability.

- Targeting women pays. Investments in women’s IGAs are capable of triggering real income increases of the direct beneficiaries and a cascading livelihood improvement of the related community.

This article has been excerpted from Implementation Completion Report 27560. For more information, e-mail the Team leader, Christine E. Cornelius, ccornelius@worldbank.org