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SUCCESS STORY

USAID Uses ICT to Strengthen Livestock Trade in Ethiopia

With USAID support, the NLMIS now disseminates information to pastoralists on market conditions in 45 livestock markets across Ethiopia.

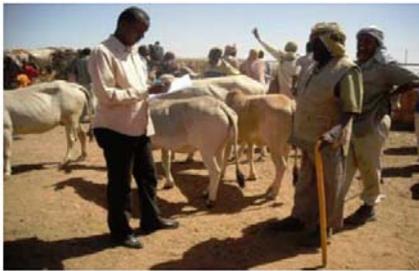


Photo: Government of Ethiopia NLMIS

NLMIS market monitors collect price and sales data at livestock markets.

“The USAID-supported NLMIS is now broadcasting weekly nationwide addresses on 11 radio stations in Amharic and Somali, providing summary weekly livestock market prices and teaching people how to retrieve market information via text message and through the initiative’s website.”

—Tate Munro, RAIN Chief of Party, Mercy Corps

With an estimated 52 million cattle, 36 million sheep, 35 million goats, and 5 million camels in 2009, Ethiopia has Africa’s largest livestock population. Pastoralist communities are highly dependent on income from livestock to pay for food, health services, and school fees. When food prices rise, as seen during the 2011 drought, poor households are forced to choose between selling livestock to maintain current consumption levels or risk malnutrition to protect future income sources.

Since 2005, USAID has supported the Global Livestock Collaborative Research Support Program to create a National Livestock Market Information System (NLMIS) in Ethiopia. The NLMIS helps Ethiopian pastoralists make better decisions on when to sell their livestock and earn increased income during times of economic hardship.

Using the latest information and communication technology (ICT), the NLMIS collects and disseminates reliable and timely livestock market information to producers, traders, processors, and consumers to promote greater participation in local and regional markets. Rural communities can request market information via text message, website, or weekly radio broadcasts.

When the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) assumed control of the NLMIS in November 2011, Mercy Corps—with USAID support—provided technical assistance to GoE authorities through the Revitalizing Agricultural/Pastoral Incomes and New Markets (RAIN) program. Mercy Corps also trained 90 market monitors and facilitated radio, text message, newspaper, and other outreach activities to promote NLMIS usage in pastoral communities. During the first four months of the GoE’s management of NLMIS, the system has expanded coverage from 32 to 45 livestock markets and reported a fourfold increase in the number of text message queries for market information.

Through the USAID-supported NLMIS, pastoralists can monitor livestock prices and demand at distant markets and make better choices on when and where to sell livestock—strengthening not only immediate food security conditions, but also long-term resilience in pastoral communities.