



IMPACT OF INCREASED WOMEN'S INCOMES ON NUTRITION

The drylands of Ethiopia's South Omo zone and Uganda's Karamoja sub-region are home to thousands of pastoralists who migrate with their livestock in search of pasture. Livestock is the main source of livelihood for the communities found in these areas. In both locations, disease, drought and degraded grasslands have cut the size of herds, so although livestock rearing is common it is unproductive.

Communities living in these regions are faced with other challenges such as high poverty rates and food insecurity, leading to high rates of malnutrition and stunting in children. The heavy reliance on natural resources renders this livestock-based livelihood sensitive to climate dynamics such as recurrent droughts seen in the two regions. The regions are faced with constant insecurity, conflicts and subsequent instability, which further increase the challenges faced by the pastoralists communities.

Farm Africa, through the Livestock for Livelihoods project, supported pastoralist women living in these regions to set up sustainable, small-scale goat-rearing enterprises that will help them generate an income and provide their families with a more nutritious diet.



"My nine-month old twin girls have been drinking the goats' milk for three months now. They love the goats' milk. They will be able to get enough milk from me and the goats, which means they will be able to grow up strong and healthy."

Lokii Regina, Karamoja, Uganda

Livestock for Livelihoods

Farm Africa's Livestock for Livelihoods project helped Ugandan and Ethiopian pastoralist women establish Women's Livestock Groups that rear and add value to goats, run savings and loans associations that support the development of small-scale businesses and learn how to improve their families' nutrition.

This booklet is one of a series of various learning products generated from the project.

Project duration:

The project ran from 2 March 2018 to 31 July 2021. This booklet was written in November 2021.

Project budget:

£5,060,000, of which £3,765,000 was provided by UK aid from the UK government.



ACTIONS TAKEN

Rural women in pastoralist communities in Karamoja and South Omo lack financial skills, credit access and a voice in financial decision-making, which result in them having a low economic status. The women are also challenged with a lack of nutritional knowledge, which contributes to malnutrition not only in children under five but also in other household members. Women are particularly affected due to limited dietary diversity and persistent gender inequalities.

To improve women's economic empowerment, access to credit facilities and household income, Farm Africa supported 10,000 women in pastoralist communities in Karamoja and South Omo through improved opportunities for livestock sales, income generation and value addition. This was achieved through the distribution of goats to women through the revolving goat scheme, establishment of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and provision of training and support on value addition and enterprise management. These activities stimulated livelihood diversification and trade, contributing to reduced levels of poverty and malnutrition.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

Women's economic empowerment contributes directly to improvements in children's and household nutritional status as women are often the primary caretakers in a household. However, intra-household dynamics determine the allocation of resources and their impact on individuals' well-being. Women being able to contribute to a household's income gives them

a voice in financial decision-making and resource allocation. The revenue women acquired includes income from the sale of live goats, meat, hides, skins and milk. The average revenue for the women in Karamoja engaged in the project increased from US\$9.07 in 2018 to US\$46.33 in 2021. Similar results were seen in Ethiopia where the income for women beneficiaries increased from US\$38.16 in 2018 at the beginning of the project to US\$52.76 in 2021 as a direct result of the project. This is summarised in Figure 1 showing the income trend in the three years of the project implementation.

The assessment of the dietary diversity score for women and children also showed an improvement in the range of food groups accessed and consumed. The scores are based on the number of different foods eaten from five primary food groups. There was a gradual improvement in the Infant and Young Child Minimum Dietary Diversity (IYC-MDD) and the Minimum Dietary Diversity – Women (MDD-W) scores in Ethiopia from 2018 to 2021. This was achieved despite the drought and food insecurity in the project areas during the project implementation.

The beneficiaries were able to withstand the challenges due to the project training on nutrition and dietary diversity, livelihood support provided through the goats and access to finances through the VSLAs. In Karamoja, Uganda, the harsh drought in 2019 brought about a drop in dietary diversity and accompanying food insecurity. However, the situation improved, with the third year recording a marked advancement in the dietary diversity of the women and children especially in Karamoja where the IYC-MDD increased to 61% from 23% and the MDD-W increased from 13% to 42%. These are shown in Figure 2.

Income trend from the sale of goat products

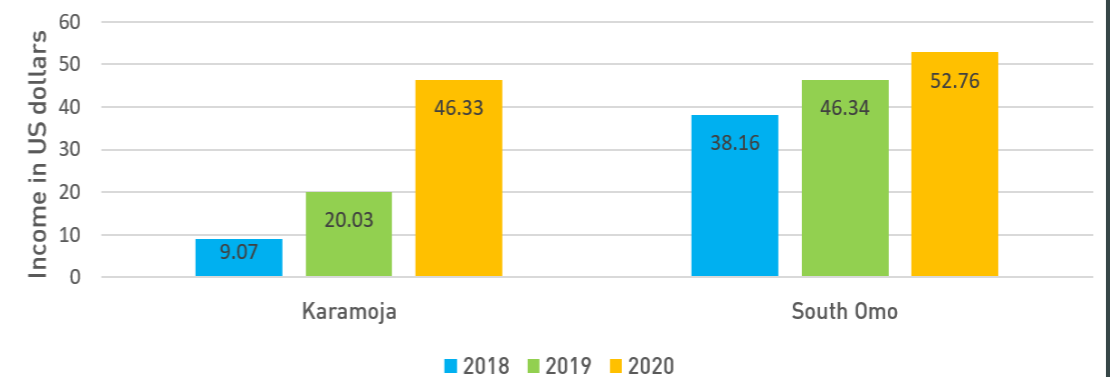


Figure 1: Income trend from the sale of goat products

Dietary Diversity score trends in the project areas

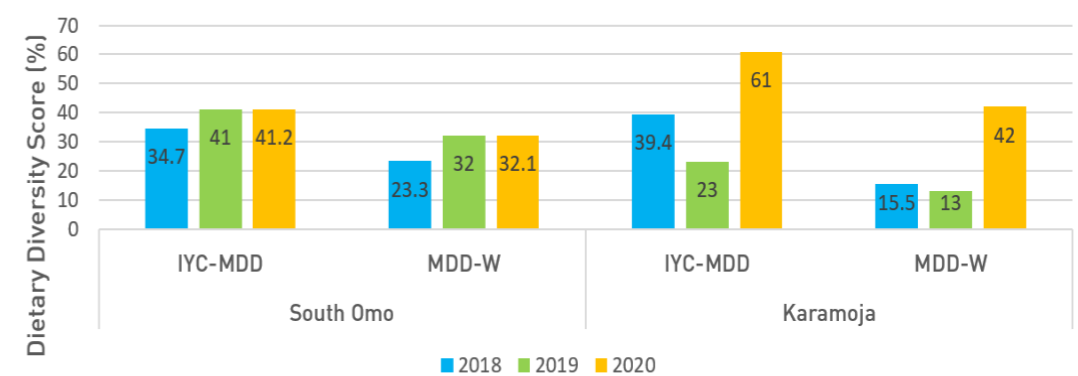


Figure 2: Changes in the dietary diversity scores for children and women in the project areas

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INCOME AND NUTRITION

The improvements in women's incomes from goats and goat products were directly related to improvement in both children's and women's nutrition. However, the improvement in nutrition outcomes was greater in children compared to women across the two communities. Generally, in the two project areas, women-headed households with a high income threshold were more likely to have better dietary profiles consistent with nutritional recommendations and nutrition outcomes of their children than other households. Hence the higher the improvement in women's household income, the better the nutrition outcomes for both women and children across the two communities. Other factors that strongly contributed to this included ownership of kitchen gardens and food crop production. The activities implemented by women generated higher household incomes thus positively contributing to the better nutritional status of the households.



BOX 1: FIVE DOMAINS (5-Ds) OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE TOOL (WEIA) AND THE GENDER PARITY INDEX

The 5-Ds and gender parity index reflect the percentage of women and men who are empowered and, among those who are not, the percentage of domains in which they enjoy adequate achievements. These domains are:

- Decisions about agricultural production
- Access to and decision-making power about productive resources
- Control of use of income
- Leadership in the community
- Time allocation

LESSONS LEARNT

Although improvement in women's economic empowerment and household socio-economic status have shown to significantly result in positive nutrition outcomes among women and children, this cannot be solely relied on for nutritional interventions in pastoralist communities. Projects working on achieving this goal need to integrate other activities such as food crop production, livestock rearing and capacity building, as the combination of these evidently contribute to dietary diversity.

Improvement in women's income generated from goat production positively resulted in improvement in nutrition outcomes for both women and children. However, intrahousehold dynamics and gender relations - such as female and male household heads' preferences - determine household resource allocation. This needs to be further evaluated across pastoralist communities. Gender transformative approaches and the Gender Action and Learning System (GALS) can be used to actively engage men in the project activities, ensuring women are given more control and say over the household resources. This can further be evaluated by applying the five domains of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture tool (WEIA) and the gender parity index to show the empowerment gap between the two genders (Box 1).

It is proven and widely accepted that inadequate income is an indicator of a lower socioeconomic status of the household and contributes to the poor nutritional status of women and children. However,

an increase in household resources does not automatically translate into healthier diets for households and a decrease in food prices does not necessarily translate to improved dietary diversity. Multiple factors affect a household's ability to transform foods available for purchase into foods that can be consumed, such as knowledge of food preparation as well as the social and cultural preferences of individuals and households. Environmental factors such as the climatic conditions and the geographic nature of an area also affect the types of foods available for purchase and the means of transportation that can be used to acquire the foods. Other household expenditures such as school fees also determine the resources used for diverse foods. This is why the nutritional knowledge, attitudes and practices of the women need to be assessed and supported further to achieve better nutrition outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nutrition interventions need to have a multi-pronged approach with focus on both income and socio-economic status of the household in combination with knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) and contextual factors including male and cultural institution involvement, and access to control of land.

The selection of nutrition intervention beneficiaries should be preceded by an analysis of the socio-economic status of households; households with the lowest socio-economic profile should be targeted more than wealthier households, and appropriate gender analysis is required to evidently state if the impact has been made and is sustainable.

Farm Africa promotes sustainable agricultural practices, strengthens markets and protects the environment in rural Africa.

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