



## ETHIOPIA PRIME PROJECT: RECURRENT MONITORING SURVEY 2 KEY FINDINGS AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

The Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME) project was launched in October 2012 in one of the most shock-prone areas of the world, the drylands of Ethiopia. The project aims to enable pastoralist households—and those transitioning out of pastoralism—to withstand and recover from recurrent shocks such as droughts and floods. Halfway through the PRIME project implementation period, in 2015, Ethiopia was affected by what is considered the country's worst drought in more than 50 years. The drought was induced by the El Niño Southern Oscillation and followed by a wider Horn of Africa drought induced by another weather phenomenon, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). The Recurrent Monitoring Survey 2 (RMS-2) was launched in October 2015 to collect real-time data during the drought's progression to provide key information for understanding household resilience dynamics. This fact sheet summarizes the key findings and program implications of the RMS-2 analysis. The full report, prepared by TANGO International, is available [here](#)<sup>1</sup>. This report presents exploratory evidence that:

- PRIME interventions to date have increased households' resilience to drought.
- Humanitarian assistance, particularly that received early on in the drought, also helped households recover.
- Households' own prior resilience capacities played a strong role in their recovery, in some cases reducing the need for humanitarian assistance.

### Key Findings

#### What were the downstream impacts?

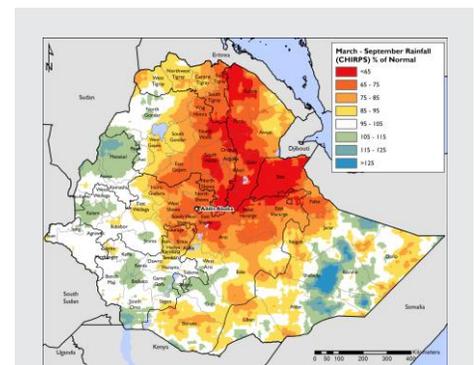
The extreme weather conditions associated with the 2015/16 drought led to three consecutive failed rainy seasons, exposing households to numerous downstream impacts, in addition to the drought.

The drought was a major shock to livestock rearing and agricultural production. The majority of households experienced crop losses or disease; problems of insufficient fodder and water for livestock and consequent livestock disease, emaciation and unplanned deaths were widespread.

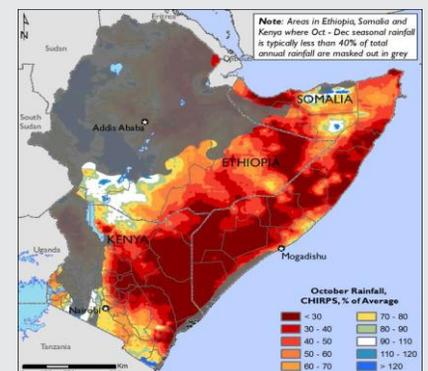
The shocks to agricultural production and livestock rearing both *stemmed from and compounded* economic shocks. Along with asset depletion, nearly all households in the survey population experienced food price inflation at some point over the study period. Drops in the demand for agricultural and livestock products, decreases in their prices, and increases in the prices of inputs were also widespread. There was a distinct uptick in conflict shocks, such as thefts of livestock or crops. Reflecting the negative impacts on households' food security, findings of increased admissions to therapeutic feeding centers of children under five indicate that the drought took a toll on children's nutritional status.

#### How did households cope with these conditions?

Besides reducing their food consumption, the most common coping strategies were disposing of assets (mainly livestock), financial strategies (borrowing from



Spread of the El Niño-induced drought, March-September 2015



Spread of the Indian Ocean Dipole-induced drought, October 2016

<sup>1</sup> [www.fsnnetwork.org/prime-project-impact-evaluation-report-recurrent-monitoring-survey-2-rms-2](http://www.fsnnetwork.org/prime-project-impact-evaluation-report-recurrent-monitoring-survey-2-rms-2)

friends or relatives, purchasing food on credit, and drawing down on savings), and relying on assistance of others (especially money/food from family members). Many coping strategies were found to be declining over the time periods monitored in [RMS-1](#) (Oct 2014-March 2015) and [RMS-2](#), including slaughtering livestock, taking up new wage labor, migration and, notably, relying on friends and relatives for food or money. These trends are a sign of widespread dwindling resources and income-generating opportunities; they are an indication that, following a series of multiple, back-to-back shocks, coping strategies exhaustion was setting in. Two coping strategies were on the rise including drawing down on savings and receiving food aid from the government (the Ethiopian government launched a strong response to the drought).

## What helped households recover?

### PRIME Project Interventions

Analysis of the RMS-2 data provides preliminary evidence that the PRIME project's interventions served to reduce the negative effect of drought exposure and, thus, that **the project has had a positive effect on households' resilience**.

Households residing in communities receiving a comprehensive set of PRIME resilience interventions were able to maintain their food security in the face of the drought shock (see Figure 1). One pathway for achieving this was through reducing unplanned livestock deaths.

The analysis also suggests that **PRIME reduced households' reliance on borrowing from money lenders and on receiving help from non-family members with food and money**. Instead, it increased borrowing from friends and relatives, an option likely to have less negative consequences for future indebtedness.

Additionally, the analysis finds that PRIME interventions reduced the need for households to turn to new wage labor and food-for-work or cash-for-work in order to cope with the drought.

### Humanitarian Assistance

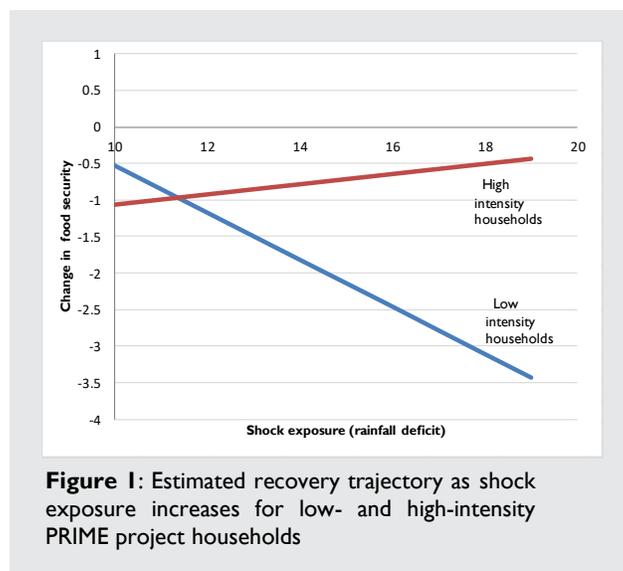
For households that still were in need of assistance, the RMS-2 data provides evidence that **food aid and food/cash-for-work, had a positive effect on the ability to recover from the drought**. In addition to saving lives, early receipt of food aid further boosted households' recovery.

The humanitarian assistance received by households reduced their reliance on a number of coping strategies, including selling or slaughtering livestock, consuming seed stock, relying on help from friends and family members, drawing down on savings, and buying food on credit. The results confirm the role of food aid in bolstering households' food consumption: **food aid is associated with less use of the coping strategy "reduce food consumption."** Qualitative data collected in conjunction with quantitative data confirm that, although direct food assistance provided by the government or NGOs may have been insufficient compared to the overall need, for those who received it, it was critical for surviving during the drought, representing the only means of daily subsistence for some.

### Households' Resilience Capacities

Households' own prior resilience capacities played a strong role in their recovery from the drought. The following, in particular, were found to have boosted households' resilience:

- Bonding and bridging social capital
- Human capital and exposure to information
- Access to safety nets (both formal and informal)
- Asset ownership, access to financial resources, and cash savings
- Access to markets
- Availability of hazard insurance
- Disaster preparedness and mitigation activities
- Presence of a civic group in households' communities



**Figure 1:** Estimated recovery trajectory as shock exposure increases for low- and high-intensity PRIME project households

These capacities also reduced households' reliance on seeking out new wage labor, receiving food or money from family members, selling or slaughtering livestock, drawing down on savings, and using children as a source of labor. Further, many were found to be associated with lower receipts of humanitarian assistance, suggesting that **investment in boosting certain resilience capacities can act as a preventative measure that reduces the substantial costs associated with emergency response.**

## Implications for Programming

The importance of these factors in enabling households to manage shocks and reduce reliance on outside assistance will be further investigated using advanced techniques as part of the PRIME endline survey analysis. Meanwhile, the following are the program implications stemming from the RMS-2:

- **Comprehensive, multi-sectoral programming** has helped strengthen household and community resilience capacities to manage drought. Households that are exposed to layering, sequencing and integrating of multiple interventions are more likely to manage and recover from droughts and their downstream effects than those that are not, and are less likely to turn to negative coping strategies.
- **Protecting livestock assets** from unplanned deaths through fodder and water provision, market off-take and veterinary services can be critical to helping households manage shocks.
- **Access to financial services and markets** are also critical for diversifying livelihoods into activities not as susceptible to climatic risks.
- More focus must be given to promoting successful livelihood opportunities for people moving out of pastoralism. As youth move to urban areas, investment in their human capital (such as soft skills training related to job readiness) and improvements in their **access to information** will help prepare them for other employment options.
- **Social capital**, which is critical to resilience, can be strengthened through group formations such as formation of savings groups, natural resource management committees, pasture management groups, livestock marketing groups, etc. Projects need to do a better job tracking improvements in collective action as trust between group members increases.
- Using good trigger indicators to determine the timing, scale and duration of **formal cash and food transfers** can be critical to enabling households to manage drought without turning to negative coping strategies. Early receipt of such transfers can lead to early recovery, reducing the need for extensive humanitarian assistance.
- **Hazard insurance and disaster risk reduction interventions** also show promise as protective measures that lessen the impact of droughts.



Photo credit: Sean Sheridan for Mercy Corps

## Background Information

The PRIME project's activities are designed to enhance households' resilience capacities, including *absorptive capacity* (minimizing exposure to shocks and recovering quickly), *adaptive capacity* (making proactive and informed choices about alternative livelihood strategies), and *transformative capacity* (enabling system-level changes, such as governance mechanisms and infrastructure, for more lasting resilience).

The Recurrent Monitoring Survey-2 (RMS-2) was administered to a panel of 400 households once every two months for a total of six rounds (over the course of one year). Three key sets of questions guided data collection and analysis:

1. Did PRIME's interventions assist households in their recovery from the drought?
2. What was the role of humanitarian assistance? Did the timing of food aid matter?
3. Did households' prior resilience capacities help protect them from the drought's negative impacts? Is greater resilience capacity associated with lower reliance on humanitarian assistance?

It is important to note that, marking a longer period of increased climatic instability, households in the PRIME area had already experienced a significant drought episode earlier on in the project, in 2014/2015. This former drought was monitored as part of PRIME RMS-1. The RMS-1 survey was administered to 400 households in 17 kebeles (communities) once a month over a period of six months, through March 2015, for a total of six rounds.

### ABOUT THE PRIME PROJECT

**Stated Goal:** Increasing Household Incomes and Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change through Market Linkages

**Intervention Areas:** Afar, Oromia, and Ethiopia's Somali regions. The RMSs were conducted in Borena, located in the southern lowlands of the Oromia region and Jijiga, also known as "Fafan," in the northern part of the Somali region.

**Reach:** The project is expected to benefit 250,000 individuals.

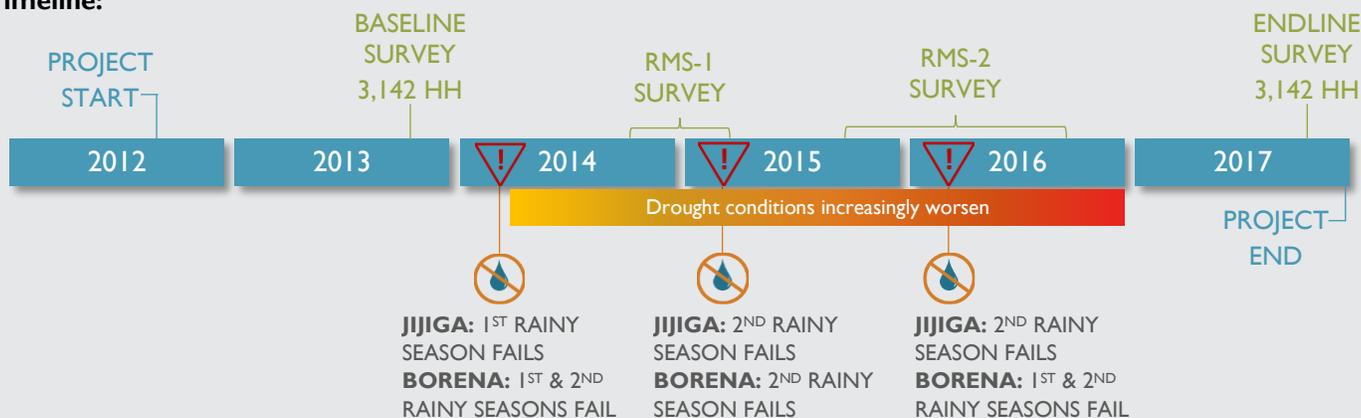
**Primary Focus Areas:** 1) Livestock productivity; 2) Natural resource management and climate change adaptation; 3) Alternative livelihoods; 4) Learning and knowledge management; and 5) Nutrition. PRIME's activities across these areas include the Innovation and Investment Fund (IIF), and a focus on gender and disability.

**Recurrent Monitoring Surveys (RMS):** The two RMSs are an innovative feature of the PRIME impact evaluation. Implemented in the interim between the baseline and endline surveys, they captured real-time household and community responses to actual shocks.

**Funding Sources:** PRIME is a five-year USAID project, financed through Feed the Future and Global Climate Change facilities.

**Implementing Organizations:** Mercy Corps (lead), CARE International, Kimetrica, Haramaya University, Action for Integrated Sustainable Development, Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development, Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee, Aged and Children Pastoralists Association, and SOS Sahel Ethiopia

#### Timeline:



[www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov) | [www.prime-ethiopia.org](http://www.prime-ethiopia.org) | [www.fsnnetwork.org/real](http://www.fsnnetwork.org/real)



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