



Building resilience in natural disaster prone areas in South Sudan Jongolei State

Introduction

Baidit is a community in Bor County in Jongolei State where people live in scattered groups of homesteads. Herders moved freely through the surrounding area, taking livestock herds of around 25 cattle, sheep and goats per family to pasture and available water sources. Livestock is the primary source of livelihood, but the community also practices subsistence farming, fishing and petty trade.

Over the past years, climate change has made drought and flood a recurrent event. Baidit pastures become limited due to drought, or movement due to flood, war and more recently due to cattle raiding. The combination of limited grazing pastures, an acute water shortage and intermittent flooding caused violent conflict over natural resources with women and children being affected the most.

Conversely, heavy rains can cause powerful flash floods, which wipe out crops, kill livestock, destroy property, displace, and even kill people. Floods can also damage water supply systems, which can lead to outbreaks of water-borne diseases. In the aftermath, families struggle to rebuild livelihoods and asset bases.

With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) partnered with Baidit community members to implement a three-year Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) project as part of the Jonglei Food Security Program (JFSP). This has helped them to save, invest and protect their livelihood.



INTERVENTION AREA

Disaster risk management, preparedness and effective response



LOCATION

Baidit community in Bor County, Jongolei State, South Sudan



STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Implemented by the State Ministry of Agriculture and forestry, Baidit community; funded by the USAID



BENEFICIARIES

Men, women, youth and the elderly, local leaders

Methodological approach

A community-based livelihood analysis was used by Baidit community members to manage flood and implement a three-year Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) project. Through the JFSP, Baidit community members formed a DRR committee comprised of men, women, youth and the elderly. This committee worked with local leaders to:

- Train community animal health workers to improve access to livestock health services;
- Mobilise the community to understand the context of the disaster;
- Undertake community-wide assessment to prioritise food security related hazards and risks;
- Promote ownership among the community members;
- Strengthen social cohesion within the community in which all members face environmental threats as well as growing competition over limited natural resources.

Results

- Community members created and repaired a 20-mile dyke, which has protected farms, enabling farmers to increase their production.
- They also constructed a water storage pond, which reduces flooding by channeling excess water through canals into the pond. The newly constructed livestock watering pond and training of community animal health workers enable pastoralists to take better care of their animals. The pond also reduces conflict over water resources.
- The DRR committee coordinated the restoration of eight miles of the rural feeder road that connects to the main Bor road. The road improved market access for their livestock and enabled families to access social services more easily.
- The community developed an evacuation plan to direct residents in case of a flood to a narrow land corridor not affected by rising waters.
- Through training and awareness raising, the project team fostered a new commitment by community members to participate in early warning and response activities. A highly successful savings-based microfinance model was established.
- Approximately eight SILC groups were formed in Bor County, with a total of 136 members, helping to increase the resilience and income-generating opportunities of group members through access to micro loans and a social safety net fund.
- The community meets regularly to monitor seasonal early warning indicators, such as water levels and the movement of livestock to pasture. The DRR committee also updates the DRR action plan quarterly and mobilises community members to undertake new initiatives as needed.

Sustainability

Project staff continues to work with local government officials to build the capacity of the DRR committee. Additional trainings will include guidance on conflict mitigation,

rangeland management, reforestation and mitigation of livestock disease. Baidit communities are now better prepared for flooding and other hazards. Other JFSP activities are also helping residents to increase crop production, grow livestock herds and increase income through agro-enterprise.

Replicability and Upscaling

- It is important for community members to be very aware of project objectives, scope, timeframe and expected community involvement to appropriately manage expectations and ensure residents rely on themselves instead of outside partners to achieve success.
- Because South Sudan is a new nation, considerable attention must be directed toward increasing agency, partner and government staff capacity for project success.
- To maintain new structures, such as the watering pond, dykes and feeder road, a support system needs to be in place to ensure the community has access to needed tools, technical support and refresher training. Relationships must also be built with local government officials for ongoing guidance and support.
- DRR committees need to be encouraged to monitor and evaluate changes quarterly in order to update DRR action plans accordingly.
- Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) work well in post-conflict situations, but more intensive training and mentoring is required as residents are still rebuilding lives after many years of conflict.

Conclusions

The pond stores water for two to three months during the dry season, enabling pastoralists to water their livestock close to the homesteads more easily. These road improvements now allow residents to bring their livestock and crops to market and access social services more easily-critical for improved community health and livelihoods.

In addition, the DRR committee took measures to strengthen an existing climate early warning system. Residents now inform committee members when river water levels rise. The committee then mobilizes youth from each family to construct diversion canals and restore dykes wherever needed. Community members also keep an eye out for livestock disease, which can break out and spread quickly in the wake of floods.

Residents now immediately isolate any sick animals and coordinate with the DRR committee to receive treatment assistance from the government. To further strengthen the resiliency of communities, the JFSP has also helped SILC members save small amounts each month and provide microloans for micro-businesses to group members from the pooled savings.

CONTACTS

CRS main website: www.crs.org
CRS Technical Resources website: www.crsprogramquality.org
The Road to Resilience: Case Studies on Building Resilience
In the Horn of Africa. CRS publishing.

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