

Annual Digest

RLP IN 2024

BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS THROUGH A ROBUST LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

THE PROGRAM IN BRIEF

The Regional Livestock Program (RLP) is a 12 year initiative with the first phase running between 2023–2027. The program is led by Mercy Corps, in partnership with IGAD, HELVETAS, and Welthungerhilfe. Funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), RLP aims to build climate-resilient, inclusive, and sustainable livelihoods for **540,000** pastoralists and market actors across **five key livestock trade corridors**: Moyale, Tog Wajaale, Galkaayo, Afmadow, and the Wajir Camel Milk corridor. By tackling systemic barriers in livestock production, markets, governance, and policy, RLP leverages public-private partnerships, gender inclusion, and climate-smart strategies to strengthen the region’s livestock economy.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2024

Long-Term Outcome 1

Livestock producers have improved sustainable production, productivity, and competitiveness, especially women and youth.

Participatory Rangeland Management

23 Rangeland Management Committees and 26 Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) plans advanced grazing governance. 713 ha rehabilitated with participation of 680 people (41% women).

Water Access Enhanced

Solar-powered infrastructure benefited 755 households. Commercial water systems reached over 88,900 livestock.

Animal Health Expanded

18,498 livestock producers reached via a strengthened Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWS) - Private Veterinary Pharmacy (PVP) network, with 70 CAHWS and 5 PVPs deployed. Vaccination campaigns covered over 11,800 households in Ethiopia and Somaliland.

Improved Fodder and Feed Systems

Over 1,000 fodder bales sold through Business to Business (B2B) linkages. Women trained in animal care reported improved milk yields.

Women and Youth Empowerment

117 women traders and 33 fodder retailers organized into 31 groups. Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) and the Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Business Index (WELBI) tools applied across interventions.

Improved Disaster Risk Management

Participatory Scenario Planning sessions and training of Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction and Peace committees across key corridors conducted, helping communities to improve use of climate forecasts, early warning systems, and conflict resolution.

RLP IN NUMBERS

HOUSEHOLDS AND PEOPLE REACHED IN 2024





Long-Term Outcome 2

Livestock market actors have efficient and profitable engagement with domestic and international markets, especially women and youth.

Trader Organization and Voice Strengthened

Somali Region Livestock Traders Association (40 members) and 135 informal traders were mobilized and trained.

Finance and Service Access

A finance forum in Jigjiga engaged banks, Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Sharia scholars, and livestock actors. Early-stage livestock loan models were also explored.

Cross-Border Business Linkages

Forums with Kenya Meat Commission and camel exporters fostered B2B trade across Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya.

Long-Term Outcome 3

Regional, national, and subnational policy frameworks and enabling environment is inclusive and supportive to livestock market actors

Policy Co-Creation and Harmonization

Participatory development of rangeland bylaws with customary and formal leaders. Cross-border veterinary coordination piloted between Ethiopia, Somaliland, and Kenya.

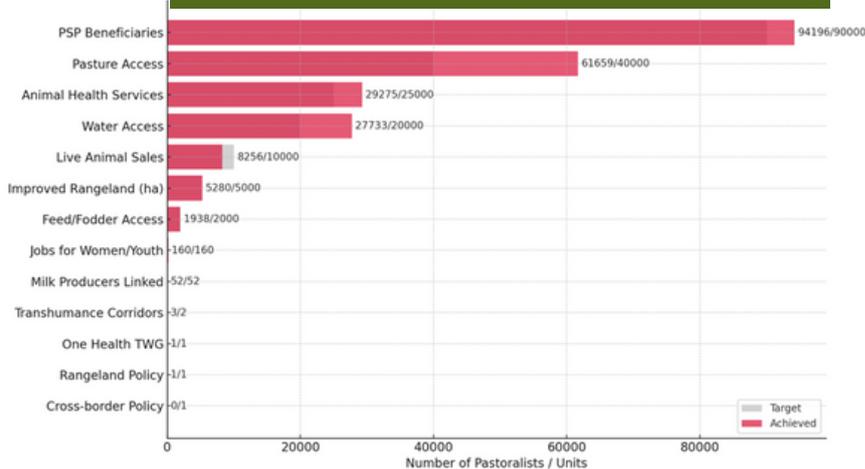
Strategic Policy Engagement

RLP contributed to The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)'s livestock strategy and supported inspection protocol alignment.

Institutional Innovations

The Camel Centre of Excellence launched as a regional hub. Investment plans developed with government and IGAD partners. RLP's role was making the case for the importance of this milestone through strategic discussions.

RLP Year 2 (2024) Output performance Summary



Women Empowerment in Focus

Study Results : WELI and WELBI Breaking Norms and Empowering Women in Livestock: Barriers and Pathways to Resilience in the Horn of Africa

Women in pastoralist communities face layered challenges in the livestock sector, with unpaid domestic labor and mobility restrictions limiting their economic participation.

The Regional Livestock Programme (RLP) conducted a baseline study using the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) and the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Business Index (WELBI) to assess empowerment across Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, covering four key corridors: Tog Wajaale, Moyale, Afmadow, and Wajir.

WELI measured household-level empowerment among 572 women, while WELBI assessed 298 traders and service providers. Both tools evaluate empowerment through intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency domains.

Findings reveal significant disparities:

Moyale had the highest empowerment (58.5% WELI, 50% WELBI), while Wajir ranked lowest (24.4% WELI, 12% WELBI).

Key barriers include limited financial access, workload burdens, and social norms restricting mobility and decision-making.

For example, over 60% of women in Wajir view household service as their primary role, and many comply with norms limiting their movement and business activities.

In response, RLP is adapting its approach to promote gender-transformative solutions—expanding financial access, strengthening group participation, and increasing women's decision-making power. The study offers a critical evidence base for inclusive programming and policy across the Horn of Africa's livestock sector.



SIGNS OF SYSTEM CHANGE

RLP’s work in 2024 led to several durable changes in systems, institutions, and policy landscapes.

- **Integrated governance frameworks:** PRM plans and bylaws were co-developed with customary leaders and local governments across 23 Rangeland Management Committees (RMC)s.
- **Market-led service delivery:** Private Veterinary Pharmacies - Community Animal Health Workers models scaled, and Public Private Partnerships piloted for vaccination, showing viability of co-financed, private-driven service models.
- **Water commercialization:** Private sector co-investment enabled reliable livestock water supply, with sales topping 615,000 barrels in Somali Region.
- **Trade policy progress:** Cross-border health protocols were harmonized; RLP contributed to AfCFTA’s regional livestock strategy.
- **Gender mainstreaming:** Inclusive governance ensured women’s representation in planning, training, and business leadership.
- **Institutionalization :** The Camel Centre of Excellence was launched in Kenya, positioning the region as a leader in camel productivity and research. RLP’s role was making the case for the importance of such an initiative through strategic discussions.

SIGNS OF SHIFTS IN BEHAVIOUR

Behavioral changes were evident across all corridors:

- **Community led governance:** From passive recipients to active RMC members managing PRM plans, bylaws, and conservation efforts.
- **From dependency to co-investment:** Communities contributed 50% to rangeland rehabilitation costs; private actors began self-expanding services.
- **Women as market leaders:** There is a good level of momentum of preparation among women to engage in commercial feed, milk collection cooperatives, and participation in financial platforms.
- **Policy ownership by traders:** Traders formed associations and actively engaged in forums to influence taxation and mobility policies.
- **Climate action embedded locally:** Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) and Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) systems trained hundreds, institutionalizing preparedness and replacing harmful coping mechanisms like charcoal burning.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The 2024 implementation period offered critical insights that are shaping how RLP refines its strategies and scales impact across the region. These lessons reflect the program’s experience navigating complex ecosystems while pursuing systemic change.

- › **Community ownership ensures sustainability**
Rangeland rehabilitation efforts were more successful where communities co-financed and led planning, like in Dire Dheda, where they covered up to 50% of costs.
- › **Blending customary and formal systems works**
Joint governance through RMCs brought traditional leaders and local governments together, making bylaws more legitimate and enforceable.
- › **Public-private partnerships expand reach**
Co-investments with animal health care providers and water businesses proved that private actors can serve remote areas effectively when supported.

- › **Integrated approaches yield stronger outcomes**
Combining infrastructure, training, and governance, as in Moyale’s feed, water, and PRM activities created more resilient systems.
- › **Inclusion needs deliberate strategy**
Using tools like WELL and WELBI helped identify barriers and provided solid ground to further programmatic actions for increased women’s participation in leadership and livestock markets.
- › **Regional coordination is key**
Cross-border collaboration on disease control and trade policy (e.g. AfCFTA , vaccination calendars) is essential for systemic impact.



Voices from the field

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TAKEN

While implementation advanced strongly, key challenges emerged:

- **Political instability** in Somalia delayed operations in some corridors. RLP temporarily paused activities and paid more emphasis in activities to safer regions and maintained coordination through local and regional platforms.
- **Private sector hesitation** was met with milestone-based funding and B2B facilitation, resulting in 14 co-investment partnerships.
- **Trade restrictions and taxation** affected profits in Tog Wajaale. Stakeholder forums triggered government review and engagement.
- **Limited vet service** reach led to the scaling of CAHW-PVP networks in remote areas.
- **Customary-formal governance gaps** were bridged through inclusive planning and shared rangeland bylaws.
- **Climate risk unpreparedness** was addressed via PSP sessions and disaster risk training, reaching hundreds of community members.

RLP’s adaptive design and strong local partnerships ensured that interventions remained relevant and impactful despite contextual shifts.

WAY FORWARD 2025 AND BEYOND

Building on 2024’s momentum, RLP will:

- Scale up rangeland rehabilitation and expand PRM implementation
- Deepen public-private partnerships for animal health services, inputs, feed, and water services
- Strengthen cross-border trade harmonization and policy engagement
- Amplify women and youth economic inclusion via tailored BDS and financial access
- Institutionalize climate-smart planning and community resilience frameworks
- Launch new market ventures in value chains like camel milk, meat, and feedlots

With systems now shifting and behavior evolving, RLP is well positioned to drive a livestock sector transformation that is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient across the Horn of Africa.

Expanding Access to Animal Health in Tog Wajaale: Khadar’s Story



In the bustling trade hub of Tog Wajaale, Khadar Muhumed, owner of Alhuda Private Veterinary Pharmacy, is redefining last-mile animal health services. With support from the Regional Livestock Program (RLP) through a co-investment grant, Khadar transformed his small business into a growing veterinary enterprise.

RLP facilitated improvements to his pharmacy’s infrastructure, storage, and outreach capabilities. He trained 10 new Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), extended services to 8 communities across 3 districts, and built new supplier linkages, including with a veterinary drug retailer in Jigjiga. He also received coaching on financial record-keeping, which has improved business operations.

The results are clear:

- Customer reach grew from 900 to 1,350 livestock producers
- Sales revenue increased from \$1,300 to \$2,200 in three months
- Employment created for two youth, including one woman
- 29,000 vaccine doses procured and used in cross-border private vaccination services



“Partnering with RLP was a turning point. It has motivated me to think big and expand my business beyond Tog Wajaale town. In two years, I plan to double my profits and open another branch. I am also crossing the border into Somaliland, providing animal treatment and vaccination services, and mentoring new private veterinary service providers.” Khadar Muhumed



Key Insight: Targeted support to private veterinary service providers—combining co-investment, business coaching, and supply chain linkages—can catalyze systemic improvements in animal health service delivery across pastoral corridors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Dr. Diba Dida Wako,
Director – RLP
dwako@mercycorps.org

Senbeto Funte,
Deputy Director and
Technical Lead – RLP
sfunte@mercycorps.org

Annual Digest curated by **Yosef Tiruneh**
Knowledge Management and Communications Manager (RLP)
ytiruneh@mercycorps.org