



# Camels for Vulnerable Widows

For Northern Kenya, the drought of 2005-2006 was the most severe in several decades. Livestock perished in large numbers, destroying the food supply of pastoral (nomadic) peoples, who have traditionally survived on a diet of milk, some blood, and occasionally meat. In the lowlands of Marsabit District, almost all the donkeys, >80% of the cows, and about 60% of the sheep and goats died. In contrast, almost all the camels survived the drought, though too few families were fortunate enough to have them for food and carrying loads. This recent demonstration of the drought hardiness of camels, and their dependability has reinforced the Rendille expression that, “a camel is one half of God”, which reflects the important role of camels in the survival of families and communities.

## **Sauti Moja provides camels to widows and single mothers to help them recover from a recent drought, regain dignity & hope, and reduce future vulnerability.**

We, in the West, are relatively untouched by the effect of our consumption on climate change and weather extremes, but drought has created despair for many Rendille and Samburu families, especially those headed by widowed or abandoned women. Since the drought, families have mostly survived on short-term food aid, but as this ends, hunger increases. Families left with few livestock have no expectation of a bright future without help that contributes to long-term survival.



Nolaso is a “white widow” – the literal translation for a woman abandoned by her husband. She has three children. The middle child goes to nursery school, while the oldest - a seven year old son – cares for their five goats and sheep, which are the only livestock left after the drought decimated their previous herd of more than 40 goats and 5 cows! Like other women Sauti Moja helps, Nolaso told us that every day she waits to see who might have extra milk, which she then begs for her children. When asked about the benefit of a camel, she said that she never dreamed of having a camel to help her with her work, as such an asset has been far beyond her grasp. She told us that the camel will benefit her for years to come, as it will become the property of her oldest son, who will care for it and for her.

**“I will no longer have to beg from neighbours to feed my son.  
I will be a full, respected person again.”**

Mare is a young Rendille widow. She was the second wife to an elderly man, who promised her 100 goats upon his death. Unfortunately, after her husband passed, the first wife and her relatives prevented Mare from receiving any inheritance. Now, she and her son survive on relief food and the milk they can obtain from neighbours. In contrast to Western societies, she can not escape poverty and singleness by remarrying due to strict cultural customs. She is excited about the camel she received from Sauti Moja. When asked how it will affect her life, she said it will allow her to be self-sufficient, care for her son, and regain dignity within her community.

