In its capacity as a leading continental organisation for livestock development, the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), assists Member States of IGAD to improve LITS and Disease Surveillance Systems through its regional project, STSD.

**Why Livestock Identification and Traceability System (LITS)?**

History shows that major outbreaks of animal diseases, such as Rift Valley Fever (RVF), have severely stricken the IGAD Region. As diseases move with animals, their occurrence in one country affects the whole Region in terms of human health, animal health and livelihoods. The problem specifically hampers the Member States from accessing regional and global markets. This happens because of a number of factors; the main of which can be cited as lack of LITS. None of these countries have constituted adequate systems that assist them identify and record the events of animals, such as their birth date, movements and slaughtering. This hinders Member States from monitoring and controlling the spread of diseases, and consequently from accessing regional and international trades.

In addressing these challenges, LITS, as part of the overall livestock resource management, has become a widely recognised tools to manage and administer livestock resources in the IGAD Region.

**Beneficiaries of the Project**

The primary beneficiaries of the project are pastoralists, smallholder livestock keepers and livestock processors and traders, who will benefit through improved protection of livestock from major trade-sensitive diseases. The benefits accrued will include enhanced access to livestock markets, improved food security and livelihoods as well as strengthened ability to withstand and recover from shocks. Women, given their significant role in small stock production, will constitute a big percentage of the project beneficiaries and will enjoy increased status, confidence, awareness and financial viability. Consumers of livestock products will also benefit from improved availability and enhanced safety of livestock commodities.

**Project Implementation**

The STSD project is being implemented by AU-IBAR and IGAD Secretariat, with a financial support from the European Union (EU).
INTRODUCTION
In an effort to reduce the impacts of animal diseases which affect livestock trade in the IGAD region, AU-IBAR in collaboration with IGAD Secretariat, is implementing a project entitled, ‘Improving Animal Disease Surveillance in Support of Trade in IGAD Member States”, or in short “Surveillance of Trade Sensitive Diseases” (STSD).

THE STSD PROJECT
The project contributes to the overall strategic objective of AU-IBAR, which is, “to improve contribution of livestock to food security and safety, economic growth and wealth creation in Africa”. Its specific objective is to reduce the impact of TADs and zoonoses in livestock trade. In achieving this objective, the focus of the project rests on:

- Improving livestock identification, traceability and health certification systems; and
- Strengthening disease surveillance systems and controlling strategies through the adoption of new approaches such as risk-based and syndromic surveillance techniques.

Each of these result areas have sub-results and activities to ensure the objective of the project is achieved.

WHY IGAD?
The IGAD Region is endowed with huge livestock resources. Studies indicate that the Region is home of about 336 million ruminants. Despite these huge resources, livestock dependent small holders, however, could not fully benefit from the livestock sector and, consequently, improve their livelihood incomes. National governments could not also adequately tap these resources to earn substantial foreign currency from regional and international markets.

On the other hand, there is a growing demand for livestock and livestock products in Africa and the Middle East.

WHY TADs?
One of the underlying reasons for the poor trade performances in the livestock sector is the prevalence and wide-spread occurrences of trans-boundary animal diseases (TADs) and zoonoses.

TADs are adversely affecting livestock development in the Region and are causing significant socioeconomic and public health threats, which are of major importance in the regional and international trade. Monitoring and controlling animal diseases are then among the key priority tasks in the Region.

WHY A DISEASE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM?
In order to address the challenges mentioned above, a meticulously planned and managed disease surveillance system is crucial. Studies indicate that the existing animal disease surveillance systems in many of the IGAD Member States are unsatisfactory.

The systems often suffer from low geographical coverage (low representation of the national livestock population), inadequate integration of laboratory diagnostic units into the passive surveillance system, lack of employing modern reporting tools, inordinate delays and distortion of information, etc.