

# Rural Development Intervention and Strategies for Improvement of the Pastoral Livelihood: An Exploratory Study of Karamoja Region in Uganda

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## Abstract

This article tries to analyze the effect of rural development intervention strategies propounded by many governments and improvement of the livelihood of communities in the cattle corridor areas. These communities have lived with a belief that the “COW” is their end survival/livelihood, and any diversion means a resistance. Today this scenario is experienced in these regions. Dynamic governments which advocate prosperity for all her citizens regardless of their backgrounds, religions and belief, have from time to time come up with rural development intervention strategies that better the livelihoods of these communities within the region and their beliefs. The study adopts a dual research design of both cross-sectional and descriptive analysis. The analysis of data involves a correlation’s matrix and descriptive analysis. The option of this research design is that, the two seek to explain and examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables as it enables the research to do an in-depth assessment of the effect of rural development intervention strategies and the improvement of the livelihoods of the pastoral communities in the cattle corridors of Uganda. The study was guided by the following findings that indicate that over 65% of the household’s income had improved, 35% of the population has had a comparable access to essential facilities like clean drinking water and sanitation, lighting and rural electrification generally.

**Keywords:** *Agro-Pastoralism in Uganda, Karamoja Region, Nilotic Ethnic Group, Ecological Problem, and Food Insecurity in Uganda.*

## 1. Introduction

No doubt that the Ugandan socio-economic welfare populace are symbiotic related to domesticated livestock, pastoralism from agro-farming and crop cultivation which are the main livelihood activities of the Karamoja Nilotic ethnic group in Uganda north-eastern region. With the growing populace and challenges of climate change, farmers and herders face food insecurity, climate variability and regular ecological problem. Taking cognizant of these, agro-pastoralism in Uganda in general is besieged by series of multidimensional challenges of cattle herder’s

movement, land access, demographic change, mineral exploration and disruption of pastoralists’ access to pasture and water thereby leading into regular conflicts and land disputes with the farmers at the “cattle corridor”. The conflicts and violence over natural resources and water scarcity has led to growing inequity in livestock ownership and livelihood of the people of Karamoja causing more ethnic divisions, deterioration of livelihood system, socio-political unrest and economic marginalization within the region. Generally, the incomparable livelihood of the pastoralists within the cattle corridors areas has

resulted into these communities having a very fixed mind set of the “COW” as their end survival. “Pastoralism is the finely honed symbiotic relationship between local ecology, domesticated livestock, and people in resource-scarce and highly variable regions, often at the threshold of human survival. It represents a complex form of natural resource management, involving the direct interaction between three systems in which pastoral people operate, i.e. the natural resource system, the resource users system and the larger geo-political system. The specific and different interactions among these three aspects of pastoral life define for these communities their livelihood strategies, vulnerability levels and capacities to adapt to change and respond to shocks”. Survival of the fittest (2008).

This paper uses peculiarity to explore the contemporary nature, clarify and provide new ideas and insight into how pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in Karamojong region could coexist and live a peaceful harmony for human, cattle and food security and provide rightful recommendations that could improve the socio-welfare and economy livelihood of pastoralist's livelihood in Karamoja region.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pastoralism in Uganda generally is plagued and afflicted with unending challenges of people making their livelihood by grazing herds of animals in a free natural pasture of owned land which involved mobility of herders on free and available land resources. Consequently, pastoralists encroached on farmed grasses, herbs, fruits trees, shrubs, riverine areas in harsh search for dry and wet vegetation with their cattle, goats, sheep, camel and donkeys for survival thereby making the area vulnerable to food insecurity, hunger, natural disaster and destruction of vegetation. The unchecked

situation either by Government or Security Forces causes human rights abuses, communal violence, and community disintegration.

In Karamoja, the situation has caused insecurity according to exploration of Stites et al., (2007) that the region has been on negotiation and highly developed mechanisms of social exchange; “the systems of resource access and community engagement have long been based on violent conflict among ethnic groups, deterioration of livelihood systems, and political, social and economic marginalization, among others, has caused insecurity in Karamoja”. This unrest has resulted in destruction of livelihoods, homelessness, loss of lives, and strained relationships among groups within and adjacent to Karamoja. The vulnerability to cyclical drought in the region has further exposed them to recurring droughts affecting the Women, Children and old age people in the community without Governmental compensation for seasonal and monthly variability, land tenure insecurity, environmental degradation and natural resources depletion. Poor market access, limited access to basic services and infrastructure particularly rural roads which are in poor condition where they exist at all. The poor state of roads during the rainy season results in higher food prices and thereby further increases vulnerabilities. Access to education, health and other community services are also limited for at-risk farming, pastoral and agro-pastoral populations, thus exacerbating vulnerability to food insecurity.

Furthermore, Environmental degradation and natural resource depletion is another major vulnerability factor in Karamoja.

Food security is thus a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe,

and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The primary purpose of food security is to improve the livelihoods of citizens in the Karamoja region, especially the impoverished. Poverty reduction among Karamojong should be an internationally recognized program to bring absolute peace and assistance for impoverished people. With this in focus, Karamoja development will bring about bringing socio-economic standards and better living conditions of the people living in that portion of the area referred to as “rural” especially for the poor and the marginalized. Rural development in conjunction with the NGOs and other government agencies are promoting involvement of the women who have for many times immemorial have been marginalized in many societal affairs in these regions.

### **3. Causes of Pastoral Conflicts in Karamoja**

The causes of conflicts in this region may be attributed to either, colonial or historical, political makings and socio-economic relations such as; mobile pastoralism, land pacification and redrawing of boundaries between Kenya and Sudan that left much of the grazing region outside Uganda, such that when the Karamojong pastoralist follow the pastures, especially during the dry spells end up clashing with those occupying these regions. Secondly, the expulsion of the Karamojong inhabitants from the newly formed game reserves and protected forests has left the Karamojong pastoralist with no option but to encroach those areas and end up clashing with the authorities in addition to various State policies for establishment of forest reserve, hunting zone, butter and military region a national park keeps the violence and conflicts active among the Karamojong and continuous. Severe and

unpredictable droughts have always forced pastoralists in Eastern Africa to travel across borders to find water and grass for their animals and in the region resulting to increasingly dangerous journey which in the long run causing both internal and external tensions. In response to this the government of Uganda lounged a campaign of disarmament by the Ugandan military inflicting both. armed air and civilian ground attacks, regular reporting of human rights violations, and the adoption of "protected kraals under military command. “The containment of livestock in these kraals disrupted access to pasture and water and led to a typical outbreak of diseases; the net outcome was a marked decline in livestock productivity and survival, and corresponding negative impacts on livelihoods and human nutrition. Before this disarmament campaign, Karamoja already had the worse human development indicators in Uganda.” Catley, A., Stites, E., Ayele, M. et al (2021). During the Amin’s regime in 1972-1979, Karamojong’s land was further affected by the establishment of the Moroto Army Barracks which occupied the vast and green fertile parts of the foothills and valley of Mt Moroto, again the Karamojong were denied access to these areas and hence clashing with the authorities as they try to graze their animals around these areas. The social crisis indeed also drives the Karamojong out of Karamoja and they end up encroaching other regions where the user rights are circumscribed by one’s membership of specific Karamojong group. This always end up in conflicts or war. Acquisition of modern illegal automatic and semi-automatic rifles have been turned against the unarmed population whenever they go to graze in the dry season; crimes like rapping of women, cattle rustling or open theft of food and other properties, including senseless killing are often committed by these armed cattle herders,

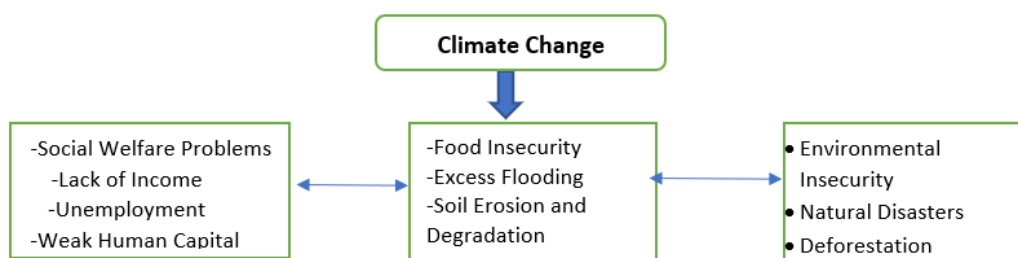
Mubiru, D.N. (2010), and Office of the Prime Minister (2011).

#### 4. Climate Changes and Insecurity in Karamoja Region

The insecurity in the Karamoja region may be attributed to the effects of climatic changes apart from cattle rustling. However, climatic

conditions interrupt the pastoralist's lifestyle, as higher temperatures negatively affect agricultural production, cause famine and drought, soil erosion, and land degradation are all factors leading to insecurity and poor harvest. The additional causes of conflicts are insufficient food supply, lack of food utilization and food security in the region.

**Table 1. shows the implication of Climate Change in Karamoja.**



Climate change particularly affects the drivers of the food system and farm performance as it affects food chain, quantities, and types of food produced and the adequacy of food supply within the region. Extreme weather is another factor that damage and destroys food production system adversely. However, the impacts of climate change trigger adaptive responses that influence the environmental and socio-economic drivers of food system negatively.

The Karamoja populations are known for pastoralism as their major means of livelihood are livestock and other natural resources which are predominantly exposed to these hazards, particularly in the case of covariate shocks such as drought and dry land and limited access to services and are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Presently in Karamoja, pastoralists are currently practicing temporary relocation, selling their possessions, and relying on alternate sources of income, many of which include charcoal burning, timber sales, and begging for survival.

Thereafter resulting into conflict which is one of the threats that interacts with climate risk and regional unrest, as well as animal disease outbreaks hindering the production of cattle and milk. “Karamoja’s low levels of human development and high incidence of food insecurity also led to large scale poverty. Karamoja is acutely underdeveloped, and the region lacks physical infrastructure, education and health facilities and employment opportunities” (Bekele et al., 2014)

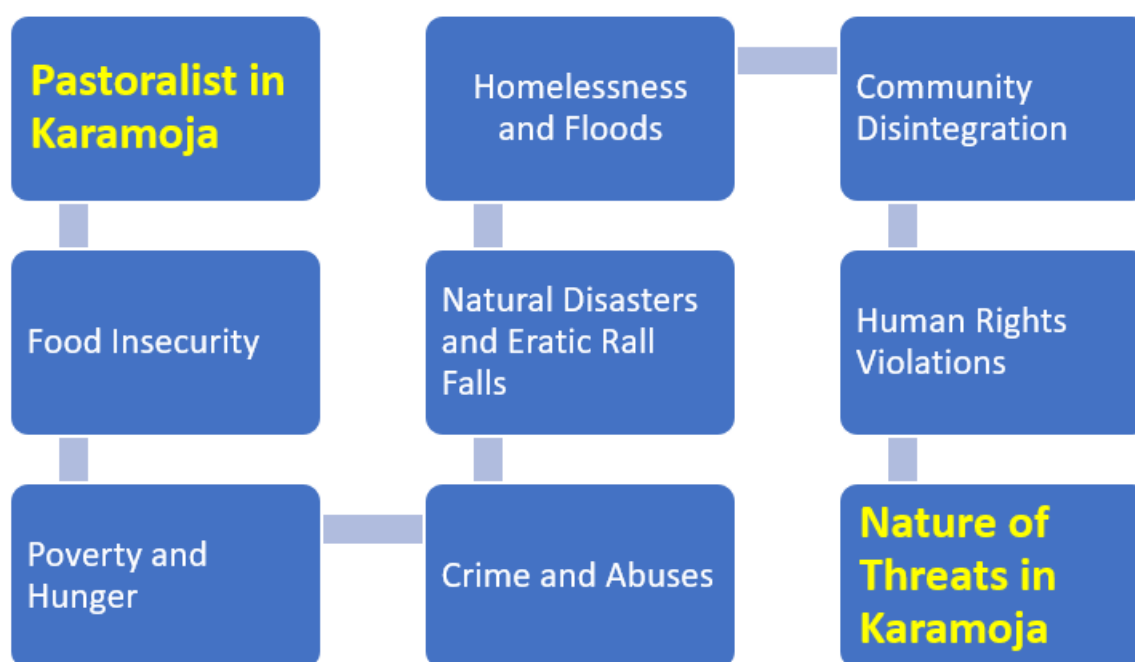
#### 5. Pastoralism under Threat

Various literatures revealed that Karamoja region is vulnerable to floods, droughts, storms and climatic and non-climatic risk. No doubt that climate change has caused environmental uncertainties cumulative to severity and intensity of livestock diseases, floods, droughts, and locust causing threats and risks to pastoralist livelihoods in the drylands. Going by the global warming and climate change, increasing environmental instability, the pastoralist are the most affected group of people who are disposed in their ancestral land

without compensations in terms of infrastructural development, economic transformation. This causes mobile pastoralism to an increasing fragmentation due to lack of access to good resources needed to manage their existence and reduced their resilience to extreme drought. The droughts devastated thousands of livestock leading to problems of limited resources credited to severe conflicts, poverty, communal land fragmentation, droughts and dispossession eroding the fertile land. As discovered, Karamojong pastoralists are archaic, resistance to change and

uncivilized in their approaches causing decades of unending violence and conflicts. The continuous threats in this region is causing unproductive domestic income, ecological degradation, damaging livelihood and rendering many homelessness. As such, the unrest continues no matter the strategic approaches and mechanism put in place thereby triggering death to pastoral livelihood systems which have proved unproductive and unsustainable because of the harsh and risk prone environments Karamoja is.

**Table 2. The impacts of Pastoralism on Karamoja Region**



## 6. Karamoja Region: The Exploratory Study

An exploratory study of the Karamoja region was conducted to get an insightful study of the unending conflicts and violence at the region with the following aims;

1. To share a scholastic nuanced understanding of the current stage of threats to the peace and security of lives and properties,

2. To get documented through secondary means of research the factors ensuring conflicts and violence in Karamoja,

3. To understand the facts hindering peaceful coexistence and generate an idea for peaceful settlement of conflicts and comprehensive peace at the region.

## 7. Rural Development Intervention

Analyzing conflicts in Karamoja region has been critical given the diversified nature of the roots causes of the conflicts and violence by various players and interests groups such as local and national bodies, religious organizations, NGOs at the international level, national and Civil Society Organizations proven lack of consensus to end the conflicts and insecurity in Karamoja. This is causing frustration as no intervention has manifested into the real decision to end, prevent, or unravel the root end to the conflicts. This is pertinent to the cross-border dimension of the conflicts need a new management mechanism and effective intervention strategy. the Control cattle rustling by consolidating the security in the region and the option to do this is military where several battalions of UPDF were placed in Karamoja. Mubiru, D.N. (2010)

1. Government-led interventions; government may put up bodies and institutions to support livelihood in Karamoja, and to development peace and poverty reduction. In Uganda such Peace and Development Plans include Northern Uganda recovery and development program (PRDP) and the National Development Plan (NDP). Office of the Prime Minister (2011)

2. People-led interventions, successful people led interventions become eminent when people themselves maintain their own livelihoods in a fragile and conflict area and also be able to enhance within their reach large scale programmes which addresses specifically on aspect of livelihood recovery. The progress today which is visible in Karamoja region is as a result of NGOs efforts which focuses on improving human, animal health service delivery; education sector, water sector, and food delivery.

3. Private sector-led interventions, here the Government need also to welcome the commercial investors into Karamoja, who will open up large scale farms in the green belt, do mining activities and invest in hotel for tourism purposes. However, in the region new forms of livelihood insecurities manifest, because of loss of land for crops and livestock. although in some cases this has led to more land conflicts in parts in Karamoja. The National Planning Authority (2014)

4. Agricultural Interventions, this is the likely intervention to bring about the end of pastoral conflicts in Karamoja, for reasons that, an alternative initiative in the region conforms those cattle keeping is still a major livelihood activity. The intervention will also recognise the presence of agricultural communities in the region, which include the Pian in Namalu, the Kadam in Nakapiripirit district, the Bokora in Iriiri, the Ethur in Abim district and those in the mountainous areas of Moroto. Uganda Bureau Of Statistics (2017)

5. Enhancing Pastoralist societies, this will bring about successful transformation, since it is clear that, the dependence on nomadic pastoralism is being threatened in the long run and as such any persistent inclusion of herding cattle for a living is no longer tenable in the region and therefore pastoralists have to turn to farming, wage labour and increase on market integration to complement their dependence on livestock farming. Generally, Agriculture would be a potential engine of national economic growth and also a critical means of ensuring household subsistence since strengthening food security reduces the demand for food aid.

6. Providing reliable water sources for both human and livestock such as; boreholes access, wind mills, ponds, valley dams, river beds and

river canals. This in turn become adequate to support agro-pastoralism in Karamoja.

7. Scaling down the valley dams will also provide water accesses like; at Arecek-Nakicumet valley dam in Napak district, Kobebe valley dam in Moroto and Lomogol in Kotido district. Muhereza, Frank E. and Ossiya Sarah A. (2003)

## 8. METHODOLOGY

This article adopted an explorative study of secondary sources of research method to gain insights and ideas and deeper insights into the major causes and foundation of the fundamental challenges of the region, the researcher adopted a causal approach to seeking more understanding of the impact and extent nature of cause-and-effect of conflicts and violence in Karamoja region. Data used in this study comprises of oral narration and historical background of the ongoing conflicts in Karamoja based on online resources, case studies, reports, magazines, and literature reviews that are available on the phenomenon understudies such as drought, famine, diseases, raids, and locust invasions at the region.

### 8.1 Population of the Study Area

The northeastern region of Karamoja is among the most impoverished region in Uganda, with income poverty at 66% (up from 61% in 2017) and food poverty at 75% (up from 70% in 2017). The majority of the population lives in rural areas and relies on farming, raising livestock, and other varied livelihood activities including selling the byproducts of natural resource extraction. Due to issues with limited dietary diversity, structural poverty, low-value livelihood options, poor hygienic conditions, and illness, the region still has the worst rates of food insecurity and malnutrition in Uganda. The area consists of four zones for generating

income: Maize-Livestock Zone, Mixed Crop, and Sorghum-Livestock Zone. The area consists of four zones for generating income: Maize-Livestock Zone, Mixed Crop Zone, Sorghum-Livestock Zone, and Apiary-Potato Zone. IPC-Analysis (2022).

### 8.2 Map of Karamoja Region



Seven administrative districts make up the Karamoja Region in northeastern Uganda: Kaabong, Abim, Kotido, Moroto, Amudat, Napak, and Nakapiripirit. The Region is bordered to the east by Kenya, the north by South Sudan, the west by the districts of Kitgum, Pader, Lira/Agago, Amuria, and Katakwi, and the south by the districts of Kumi, Sironko, and Kapchorwa. About 1.2 million people are thought to live in Karamoja overall, with about 70% of them living in rural areas. Karamoja Investment Profile (2016)

## 9. Limitation of the study

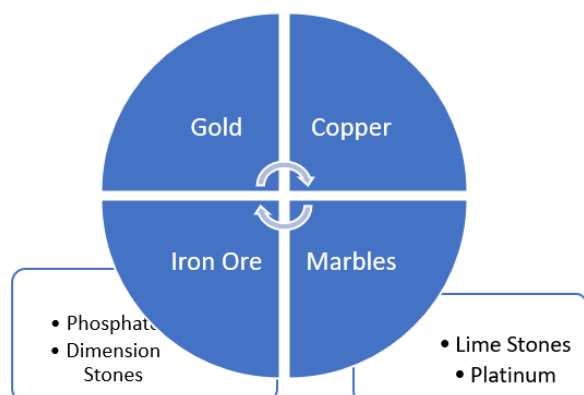
Most consulted secondary data revealed that the full mineral wealth and potential of



Karamoja region are unknown because airborne geophysical surveys and geological mapping have not been accurately taken. However, there claims that Karamoja region is seated on gold, copper, marble, limestone, iron ore, platinum, and several industrialized minerals. However, the region is estimated to contain over 50 percent pertinent minerals of economic importance to The Uganda Government large scale mineral extraction is needed to verify the huge potential resources available.

Several mineral extractions are carried out informally and unregulated market supply chains hindering government revenues. Therefore, The Uganda Government required global partnership to reap potentials commercial production and marketing of minerals for industrial uses. This will generate greater employment opportunities and wealth creation within Karamoja, but only to the extent that the right institutional framework is in place to guide the industry. The Karamoja region boasts of enormous mineral potential such as see table below;

**Table 3. Mineral resources deposits in Karamoja.**



## 10. Results and Discussions

Pastoralist management retains conservation-compatible rangeland and makes the most of

livestock production opportunities within those variable and unpredictable rangeland ecosystems without otherwise much affecting conservation outcomes<sup>194</sup>. The pastoral strategies of herd diversity, flexibility, mobility are rational and crucial for survival in erratic environments. These strategies are based on the need to respond as rapidly as possible to changing climatic and vegetative conditions, through enhanced mobility and such means of information gathering as may be available. Indigenous pastoral resource management systems are commonly based on distinctive customary rules governing access to resources and rules concerning control of resource use, they are not mere traditions but adaptive responses that have evolved over time, often based on kinship, social classes, or other ties frequently determined rights of access.

## 11. Recommendation and Conclusion

The study has made it clear that the challenges in the Karamoja region go beyond pastoralism but huge mineral deposits that are seated on Karamoja land. To put a complete end to the conflicts disturbance and conflicts required protracted action by both Governments, International Actors, and Local NGOs themselves to find everlasting solutions. As the insecurity is intricate and involves in-depth understanding with sufficient knowledge of the region's multi-faceted problem that could be said to have a political undertone, socio-economic imbalance, cultural disparity, and factors leading to unresolved tribal conflicts over land, grazing, and livestock thefts.

These findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between rural development intervention strategies and improved livelihood of the pastoral communities within the cattle corridor regions of the country. Indicative results are showing



the role of International Organizations playing multifaceted roles in conflict resolutions through mediation, reconciliation, and empowerment projects of every kind. Despite all these, the studies hereby make the following recommendations;

1. Going by the comprehensive analysis of Karamoja agro-Pastoral community, the adoption of Local Skills Development' initiatives will help in the non-formal educational and skills training system which is complemented with means of a mass effective, low cost and efficient skills development which will provide an opportunity for the youth, young adults and interested adults to use the existing natural resources for enterprise creation and self-employment.

2. Use of Grazing Reserves and Ranching: There is strong need to set aside areas for grazing and ranching to be used during the dry land season, and droughts for ensuring spontaneous regeneration of the land in the region. With reserve areas that are explicitly set aside will ensure pastoralists' form of settlement on land under communal land tenure uses.

3. Management of Conservation Resources

Conservation ethics requires the protection of habitats from degradation through growing human and animal populations as such there is a strong need for the reduction of biofuel from cutting down of trees for charcoal, furniture or woodchips and constructions purposes. If no measures are taken regarding this, conflicts over natural resources and improved access to resources will continue propelling unending violence and conflicts.

Conservation in pastoralism is mainly concerned with the "harmony" that pastoralists

will enjoy within their outreach environment but when there are hostilities and volatile environments causing more physical damages, conflicts and continuous marginalization of the area due to unending conflicts.

#### 4. Resettlements Plan

Resettlement plan as an alternative for pastoralists whether by forced or spontaneous means. Considering this, there will be a need to decrease the mobility of humans and animals. This will provide vegetation diversity, fertile soil growth and arid resources for gross domestic growth and urbanization of the area as government reserved industrial and mineral site.

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