



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Tufts
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FRIEDMAN SCHOOL OF NUTRITION SCIENCE AND POLICY
Feinstein International Center

Karamoja and Northern Uganda

Comparative analysis of livelihood
recovery in the post-conflict periods

November 2019



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FAO and Tufts University. 2019. *Comparative analysis of livelihood recovery in the post-conflict periods – Karamoja and Northern Uganda. November 2019.* Rome.

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ISBN 978-92-5-131747-1 (FAO)

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Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Elizabeth Stites, Frank Muhereza and Claire McGillem of Tufts University Feinstein International Center.

The report is reviewed and edited by Abdal Monium Osman, Emmanuella Olesambu, Camille Balfroid and Darana Souza of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and also by Anne Radday and Liz Vincent, from the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

The authors would also like to thank the team at FAO for their great feedback and insight, as well their organization of our dissemination workshop in Rome in November 2018. Specifically, the authors want to thank Shukri Ahmed, Patrick Jacqueson, Abdal Monium Osman, Emmanuella Olesambu, Camille Balfroid, Philippe Ankers, Julius Jackson, Rebecca Pietrelli and Julia Seevinck.

Executive summary

This paper examines the parallel but separate trajectories of peace-building, recovery and transformation that have occurred over the past 15 years in northern (Acholi and Lango sub-regions) and northeastern (Karamoja sub-region) Uganda. While keeping in mind the key differences in these areas, we highlight the similarities in the nature of recovery, the continuing challenges and the need for external actors to keep in mind the ongoing tensions and vulnerability that could undermine the tenuous peace.

The initial peace processes in both northern Uganda and Karamoja were largely top-down in nature, with little participation from the affected populations. In Karamoja, the Ugandan military started a forced disarmament campaign in 2006. This was the second such effort in five years and was top-down and heavy-handed. Although many observers gave it little chance of success, by 2013 large-scale cattle raids were infrequent, and road ambushes were almost non-existent. Critically, local initiatives eventually emerged in parallel to the top-down disarmament efforts. Prime amongst these were local resolutions adopted in 2013–2014 that created a system of compensation for thefts, enforced by “peace committees.” In northern Uganda, a top-down, politically negotiated peace process between the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda ended two decades of fighting in 2006. The internally displaced person (IDP) camps were disbanded, and thousands of displaced people returned to their rural homes, some because they no other option once assistance in the camps ceased.

One of the most important factors in recovery in Karamoja has been the growth of markets. Traders were reluctant to bring wares to the region during the period of insecurity, and hence goods were few and prices high. Today, most trading centres host markets on a weekly basis, and shops have consistent inventories. In northern Uganda, the biggest driver of recovery has been the return of displaced people to their homes and the resumption of farming. By 2011, crop production had resumed its pre-conflict status as the primary livelihood in the region. In both locations, however, engagement in markets is limited, and many people remain economically marginalized.

Challenges to recovery and long-term stability are similar across the two locations. Both northern Uganda and Karamoja continue to struggle with food insecurity and malnutrition, despite the massive influx of development funds, improved security and expansion of markets. In northern Uganda, the conflict continues to influence household livelihoods. Households that have a member who experienced war crimes are consistently worse off. These continuing problems with food security and nutrition call into question many assumptions about recovery and development. In particular, the idea that peace will bring a natural bounce in economic and household well-being does not appear to hold up in these cases.

Additional structural challenges to recovery in both locations include climate change and environmental degradation, poor governance and corruption, limited opportunities for decent work, livelihood transformation and loss, and conflict over land. These factors reinforce each other and make it extremely difficult for average households to develop sustainable and secure livelihoods.

External interventions often fail to take into account the local priorities and realities in these areas. Many programmes are place based or focus on rural areas, but the population is in flux. This is especially true for young people.

In addition, while many people are doing much better than they were 15 years ago, others are being pushed out of pastoralism and are struggling to achieve diversified and sustainable livelihoods. Overall, while the recent trajectories of recovery in Karamoja and northern Uganda are remarkably similar, the context, livelihoods and challenges in each location are importantly unique. National actors should not seek to derive combined approaches or policies that lump together these two areas. In both cases, the lived reality, history and experiences of the population should be central to designing appropriate, effective and sustainable responses to the ongoing obstacles to a stable peace and full recovery.

Introduction

Overview

Since the mid-1980s, Uganda has often been upheld as a success story in sub-Saharan Africa due to its rapid rates of economic growth, its proactive approach to slow the spread of HIV and AIDS, and its friendly relations with Western governments. During the same time frame, however, political and civil insecurity have plagued specific regions of the country and segments of the population. The most notable of these was the two-decade conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government that took place in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions in the north-central part of the country. By the early 2000s, up to 95 percent of the rural Acholi population was displaced and living in squalid internal displacement camps. More than 60,000 children and adolescents may have been abducted over the course of the conflict (Annan, Blattman, and Horton, 2006), and untold numbers of civilians were killed, maimed or forced to witness egregious crimes. Active hostilities between the parties came to an end in 2006, and the vast majority of the population left the displacement camps in the five years that followed. However, the impacts of the conflict, displacement and violations against civilians continue to be felt across much of the region, with impacts on livelihoods, governance and the relationship between civilians and the state (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014b).

At the same time that the LRA conflict was occurring in the north-central part of Uganda, widespread and endemic insecurity was impacting households and communities in the adjacent northeastern sub-region of Karamoja. Armed cattle raiding had long been a part of the culture of this predominately pastoral and agro-pastoral area, but the extent, impacts and intensity of violence increased in the 1980s and 1990s. Attacks between and amongst groups became common, as did ambushes of vehicles of all types traveling on the region's roads. Large swathes of the territory became "no-go" areas, cutting herders off from critical sources of water and pasture. In 2006, the Ugandan government and national military, the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), began a campaign of forced disarmament in the Karamoja region. Unlike the previous succession of short-term and largely unsuccessful disarmament efforts, this campaign has pacified the region for the past 12 years. Herders can now access natural resource areas for the first time in decades, markets have proliferated, and roads are safe for travel. Local people, however, describe the situation as living in "relative peace" (Howe *et al.*, 2015). The UPDF soldiers are still present, incursions from raiders from South Sudan and Kenya still occur, and it is unclear the extent to which the region is truly free of weapons. Many livelihoods have shifted away from animals into agriculture and ad hoc wage labour and via migration to other regions. Such shifts have not always been entirely by choice and have been driven, amongst other factors, by a government push towards sedentarization and by a lack of alternative options for people who find they are pushed out of pastoralism (Catley and Aklilu, 2013; Catley and Ayele, 2018).

This paper seeks to examine the parallel but separate trajectories of peace-building, recovery and transformation that have taken place over a similar period in these two adjacent areas of Uganda. Parallels exist between these areas in regard to a history of marginalization from the central state, underdevelopment and endemic poverty, and vulnerability to climate change and cross-border incursions. In addition, the two areas are connected via a history of social and economic interaction. While the Ugandan government and bilateral donors have combined the two areas in various aid appeals and strategic development policies, few studies have sought to compare the processes, experiences or prospects in these two regions. We investigate the processes behind peace, the interventions and assumptions that have promoted and prioritized certain forms of recovery, and the lived reality and experience of civilians in these locations today. We argue that the initial peace processes in both locations have been largely top-down in nature, with little or no buy-in from the affected populations. While keeping in mind the key differences in these areas, we point to how some livelihoods have transformed, why this transformation has taken place and for whom such changes have – or have not – occurred. In addition, we seek to examine the underlying assumptions or agendas that may steer or influence international and national interventions in these two regions. Lastly, we call attention to what may be a tenuous peace in these locations and call upon stakeholders to keep this fragility in account when thinking about the nature and implications of programming.

Methods

This study was based on a review of primary and secondary data. Much of the primary data were from fieldwork conducted by teams from the Feinstein International Center (FIC) at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University over the past 12 years. Some of these data were in raw form, while other data were incorporated into existing reports written by FIC teams and cited throughout this study. In addition, we reviewed secondary and grey literature, including academic articles, donor reports, meeting minutes and magistrate court proceedings. Lastly, given the relative dearth of information on Karamoja in comparison to north-central Uganda, one of the co-authors, Dr Frank Muhereza, conducted approximately 15 key informant interviews with local officials in the Karamoja region from August to October 2018, as well as five focus group discussions with local communities in the districts of Abim, Kaabong and Kotido. These key informant interviews and focus group discussions sought to provide additional information on issues of governance and access to justice that are largely under-researched in these areas.

An evolving peace

Karamoja

The Karamoja sub-region experienced decades of insecurity due to cattle raiding and associated violence. This situation was exacerbated by the absence of rule of law, which allowed commercial involvement in cattle raiding to intensify, particularly from the 1980s to early 2000s (Stites and Howe, 2019). Colonial and postcolonial regimes paid relatively little attention to the regime other than occasional and largely ineffectual efforts at collective punishment. These included confiscations of cattle and forced disarmament campaigns. Violence often worsened in the aftermath of such efforts, and the civil-state relationship suffered further damage (Bevan, 2008). At the district level, many government positions went unfilled for many years or were filled by outsiders with little interest in improving the situation in the region. Limited facilitation by the central state for district positions, coffers or programmes bred corruption and apathy.

International actors were largely absent from the region in the 1990s and early 2000s due to the insecurity, which grew to include ambushes on vehicles (including public buses and aid convoys) travelling on the region's roads. An exception was the provision of food aid, which began in earnest following a devastating famine in 1980 that killed an estimated 50 percent of children under the age of 5 and decimated livestock herds (Alnwick, 1985; Biellik and Henderson, 1981).

The security situation in Karamoja shifted starting in 2006 with the implementation of the second forced disarmament campaign in five years. UPDF soldiers were available in large numbers due to the cessation of hostilities with the LRA in the north-central region, and unknown numbers were deployed to Karamoja. Disarmament tactics included "cordon and search" maneuvers in which communities were surrounded and each person and structure searched for weapons. These tactics led to numerous allegations of brutality and human rights violations, primarily against the male youth (*karacuna*) who were uniformly assumed to be "warriors" responsible for violence. Alleged abuses included arbitrary detention, torture, imprisonment of children, forced disappearance, execution, destruction of property (including livestock) and sexual violence. A number of Karamojan¹ communities resisted the disarmament and experienced intensified military responses, including the use of helicopter gunships against cattle camps and herders (e.g. in Panyangara sub-county in Kotido; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Bevan, 2008; Stites and Akabwai, 2010).

Unlike earlier disarmament efforts, the 2006 disarmament included a de facto policy to provide protection to livestock. Animals were rounded up and secured in so-called protected *kraals*, or cattle enclosures, that were adjacent to or near military barracks. Although not officially documented, this policy appears to have emerged in response to numerous complaints about uneven removal of weapons and the subsequent losses of cattle as part of the 2001–2002 disarmament.

¹ The inhabitants of this region are often referred to by the moniker *Karamojong*. This implies a unified ethnic identity or affiliation which does not exist. In this paper we use the term *Karamojan* to simply mean those who reside in the Karamoja subregion.

This policy did help diminish armed attacks upon livestock, but large numbers of animals were lost due to the crowded conditions in the protected *kraals* and lack of regular rotating access to pasture and water. Local communities and, in particular, the male youth who were primarily responsible for animal husbandry were denied regular access to their herds. This had negative impacts on a range of household and community indicators, including nutrition of adults and children, social exchanges (such as marriages and initiations), and economic subsistence activities and coping responses (Stites and Akabwai, 2010).

The disarmament campaign that started in 2006 was a top-down and heavy-handed effort to pacify a region that had long been plagued with insecurity and conflict. Coming as it did as part of a hundred years of similar efforts, many observers gave it little chance of success (Bevan, 2008). This campaign, however, proved to be different. The UPDF did not withdraw from the region after several months as had occurred several years earlier. Barracks were numerous and situated throughout the region, cordon and search activities were repeated regularly, and roads were heavily patrolled by the military. Large-scale cattle raids became less and less frequent as weapons were removed from communities. Insecurity continued but was more often in the form of small-scale thefts of household items and smaller livestock and was normally perpetrated by individuals or small groups of men (Stites and Howe, 2019). With the improvement in the security situation came the influx of international and national humanitarian and development actors and interventions.

In order to consolidate the peace and security achieved through forceful disarmament, local communities, political authorities and security forces created a system of local “peace committees” tasked with following up on reported cattle thefts. These committees allow for the implementation of punitive measures to deter cattle thefts as well as mechanisms to encourage communities to both monitor and report cattle thieves from within their communities. The peace committees also play an important role in seeking to recover stolen animals.² The Nabilatuk Resolution of April 2013 and Moruitit Resolution of January 2014 created this system and process (Stites and Howe, 2019). Under these guidelines, anyone found with a stolen animal pays back double the number stolen plus one additional animal to be eaten by the recovery team or elders (the “ $\times 2 + 1$ ” formula). If the animals stolen plus the compensation cannot be recovered from the thief, recovery is extended to the thief’s relatives first, and then vicarious liability is extended to the whole village for failure to rid their communities of cattle thieves. Recovery of raided animals has improved significantly throughout the region under these new terms. In addition, local respondents in Kotido District reported that the peace committees performed “community policing” services, which were felt to be needed in the absence of a regular and effective police presence.³

It is undisputable that the general security situation in Karamoja has improved following the top-down disarmament campaign and the bottom-up system of peace committees. There are no longer road ambushes and large-scale cattle raids.

² This fact was confirmed in a key informant interview with Col Wilberforce Serunkuma, Commander, 405 Brigade Nakapelimoru, Kotido, 1 October 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

³ Focus group discussion (FGD) with members of Rengen sub-county Peace Committee, Kotido District, 2 October 2018 (facilitated by Frank Muhereza).

However, cattle thefts do continue to occur, peaking during the dry season when Turkana herders migrate into the region. In addition, the movement of Karamojaan herds into Teso, Lango and Acholi is associated with increased theft of cattle from these areas. Peace committees have proved relatively effective in stemming cattle thefts and returning stolen cattle in Napak, Moroto, Kaabong and Kotido. Abim District officials refused to accept to the Moruitit Resolution because it contained a provision allowing freedom of grazing anywhere in the district.⁴ Failure to assent to the Resolution gave Karamojaan raiders from neighbouring districts the leverage to continue stealing livestock from Abim.⁵

By the end of 2017, crime in Karamoja continued to be an issue, including theft of household items, violent threat and alcohol and substance abuse (Iyer, Sekajja and Stites, 2018). Sexual and gender-based violence, including pervasive domestic violence, undermine individual and household livelihoods (Stites and Howe, 2019). Other crimes committed included trafficking of firearms and ammunition, poaching, bush burning, corruption and embezzlement of public resources (Mercy Corps Uganda, 2017).

Northern Uganda

An internationally brokered peace deal ended the northern Uganda conflict in 2006. Negotiations took place in southern Sudan, where the LRA rebels were based at the time. While many people in the north were aware of these processes, they were also very much removed from them. In the end, the rebel leader Joseph Kony failed to sign the final peace agreement, further preventing those most affected by the conflict from having any closure. The LRA has continued to sporadically wreak havoc on communities in other central African states in the intervening years, and Kony remains on the run, despite a 2005 arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Improvements in security in northern Uganda after 2006 made it possible for most of the thousands of IDPs to leave the camps and return to their pre-displacement homes. Many households gradually resumed agricultural livelihoods, and by 2011, crop production was once again the primary livelihood in the region (Lehrer, 2013). However, economic growth was not as rapid as might have been hoped, and limited access to basic (such as health care and safe water) and financial services, low education and skill levels, and minimal receipt of livelihood assistance all constrained livelihood strategies at the household level, particularly in the first few years following return (Martin, Petty and Acidri, 2009; International Alert, 2013; Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium [SLRC], 2014; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014a). Investment in the north did increase over time through various

⁴ See Min. 03/ADC/3/5/2016 – Reading, reactions and confirmation of previous minutes, in Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Fifth Session of the Second Council of Abim District Council held on 3rd May 2016 at the RDC's Hall, p. 5. To note, Abim has a higher percentage of the population that engages in purely agricultural livelihoods as compared to other districts in Karamoja, and many households do not keep herds.

⁵ FGD with the commanding officer, administration officer and intelligence officer Oscar UPDF/Local Defense Unit (LDU) Battalion at Abuk, Abim District, 29 September 2018 (facilitated by Frank Muhereza).

government and bilateral projects, guided by the Government of Uganda's 2007 Peace, Recovery and Development Plan.⁶ An area of marked improvement in recent years has been the upgraded road network in the Lango and Acholi regions, much of it with funding from the World Bank.

These developments have improved market linkages between rural and urban areas, facilitated trade amongst the districts and to other regions (including South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and reduced travel time and costs.

Northern Uganda has also seen economic diversification, particularly through the growth and expansion of the urban sector. Many people who were displaced during the war returned to their rural land, but others, particularly youth, either remained in the trading centres that had hosted IDP camps or moved to larger urban areas (Mallet and Atim, 2014; Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019; Ekvik, 2016). This urbanization, combined with increased national and international investment and the boom in cross-border commerce into South Sudan, went a long way towards supporting the economy of northern Uganda after the war.

Importantly, and as discussed in more depth later in this report, although the situation in northern Uganda has drastically improved since the period of extended conflict and widespread displacement, the aftermath of the conflict continues to influence and shape people's lives and livelihoods. This is particularly true for those who experienced the greatest abuses and suffering during the conflict. The lingering and pervasive impacts of the conflict are important for international actors to recognize, even though – to the casual observer – people appear to have recovered and the society has returned to "normal."

In the post-conflict period, significant investment took place to re-establish law enforcement and justice administration. However, while overall security in northern Uganda improved greatly with the cessation of the conflict (Lehrer, 2013), significant challenges remained even after people returned home. Insecurity was perpetuated by armed bandits as well as criminal elements who possessed illegal firearms, and cattle raids from Karamoja and South Sudan continued. Violent conflicts over land also affected (and continued to be a threat to) the relative security in many areas.

In addition, the loss of confidence in formal and traditional institutions in the post-conflict period (including but not only around land issues and dispute resolution mechanisms) led to widespread reports of tensions and conflicts at the community, clan and tribal levels (Mayega *et al.*, 2015; Martin, Petty and Acidri, 2009).

⁶ Some of the larger bilateral projects included the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Program and Agriculture Livelihoods Recovery Programme, both funded by the European Union, and the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative, funded by the United States of America.

Comparative processes

Karamoja and northern Uganda have experienced parallel journeys towards improved peace and security over the past 13 years. Some important similarities exist, including the initial top-down nature of the peace processes (forced disarmament and negotiated political settlements) and the gradual shifts in livelihoods as security improved and the populations were able to access new areas. The state was an active player in each location, and the nature of state involvement in the conflict, its resolution and the aftermath has had lasting effects. In northern Uganda, the UPDF forced many civilians into the IDP camps for “their own protection” during the conflict, while at the same time cutting the rebels off from willing or unwilling supplies of food and conscripts. This movement to the camps severed people’s ties to their land, caused the death of most remaining livestock, uprooted livelihoods and separated extended families.

Prolonged stays in the camps eroded human, physical and social capital, including the cultural and traditional institutions that had dictated decision-making, conflict and dispute resolution, and the transmission of customary intergenerational knowledge. The state was also the main actor in the peace process, determining the terms of the amnesty for fighters and recruits and setting the conditions for the signing (or lack of signing) of the peace agreement. As the conflict subsided, it was also the state, in partnership with bilateral donors and UN agencies, that determined when and how the camps should be dismantled. Many people did return home of their own volition, but there were few other options to choose from as aid to the camps dried up.

The peace process in Karamoja also has been heavily top-down. (A marked contrast to northern Uganda is the state’s relatively minimal involvement in the conflict itself, other than in the form of its marked absence in providing rule of law or in any way facilitating development.) The forced disarmament campaign that began in 2006 was, in fact, so top-down that it was met with fierce resistance from many within the local communities. Young male herders, in particular, saw the efforts at disarmament as an intentional attack on their way of life and responded in kind (Stites and Akabwai, 2010). Unlike in northern Uganda, however, the key to cementing peace in Karamoja may have been the parallel grassroots processes that began in 2013 and 2014 with the Nabilatuk and Moruitit Resolutions and the formation of the local peace committees. These local peace committees allowed elders to reassert their authority while at the same time filling the law-and-order vacuum that continued in the absence of adequate and robust police protection.

In both Karamoja and northern Uganda, the impacts of the conflict and the means of conflict resolution continue to be felt today. Upheaval continues over land rights and access in northern Uganda, including disputes over state acquisition and investments. Land is also a contentious issue in Karamoja, with the state again playing a significant role by gazetting land for reserves and parks, which limits pastoral herd mobility and constrains livelihoods. In addition, the expansion of agrarian settlements, particularly in the western “green belt” areas of the sub-region, and encouragement by national actors to open these lands for crop production have further limited grazing routes and access. Confusion between the widespread system of customary tenure and the acquisition of land by private investors (often facilitated by state officials or systems) is also a problem in Karamoja (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

The relationship between civilians and authorities, including security forces, remains tenuous in both areas. For instance, in northern Uganda, as discussed by Tapscott (2017) in her analysis of local security initiatives in Gulu, the involvement of federal and local authorities in the lives of local civilians fluctuates widely, undermining the relationship between communities and authorities. In addition, the national inequities and prejudices that underpinned the decades of civil conflict have not been addressed, despite efforts at securing reparations and national reconciliation. In Karamoja, relations with the military have improved since the height of the disarmament operation, but soldiers – as opposed to police – continue to perform law-and-order functions in much of the region, including protecting animals, patrolling roads and serving as buffers between groups. This ongoing military presence contributes to the sense that while there is relative peace, it could easily unravel if the military's role were to change.

In addition, while civilian relations with the military have improved, the brutal and non-consensual nature of the disarmament undoubtedly marred trust and cooperation that might otherwise have existed between the two groups.

The nature of recovery

Improved market access

Karamoja

One of the most visible changes in Karamoja is the growth of market activities in the sub-region. These findings are supported by a number of evaluations and indicators (Karamoja Resilience Support Unit [KRSU], 2018; Mercy Corps, 2016; Rockeman *et al.*, 2016; Stites, Howe and Akabwai, 2017). Markets in Karamoja are either relatively well-stocked, high-volume markets in large towns or smaller secondary markets. These secondary markets normally have lower trading volumes and may operate for only a few hours at a time or only at strategic times of the year, such as when local producers are selling crops or during the lean season when traders bring foodstuffs to sell in isolated areas (Famine Early Warning Systems Network [FEWS NET], 2016). The FEWS NET 2016 report finds that

Despite the presence of structural food gaps at both the micro and macro levels in Karamoja, the FEWS NET assessment found that, by many measures, markets perform well. An analysis of trade flow patterns and price co-movement suggests that markets within Karamoja are relatively well integrated with neighboring surplus-producing areas. Traders report being able to respond quickly to increased demand. Relatively low effective demand in Karamoja limits the extent to which the private sector can fill the local food gap (p. 1).

At the household level, however, most people engage with the market only on an ad hoc basis and at the micro level, selling small amounts of surplus crops or livestock to cover cash needs or food purchases. This is in part due to efforts by herders, and poor herders in particular, to minimize livestock sales in order to maximize herd growth (Catley and Ayele, 2018). In terms of cash income, most labour in the region is casual and short term, meaning few households are making large investments, and hence these households are only marginally integrated into markets (ICF International, 2014). However, the number of animals as well as other items sold on market days has increased, as has the number of people participating in the livestock markets from both within and outside Karamoja. Some herders are earning more for the sale of cattle, goats and sheep than five to seven years ago because of increased availability of buyers from outside Karamoja as well as improved livestock market information (Rockeman *et al.*, 2016; Advanced Marketing Systems, 2017).

Livestock holdings and associated market interactions have long been used as an insurance policy against periods of hardship, food insecurity and household emergencies in Karamoja (Stites *et al.*, 2016). Traditionally, a number of milking cattle and small ruminants would remain with the women at the settlement while the men travelled to the dry season cattle camps or *kraals*. The women would sell one or more goats in order to purchase food if needed, though they normally communicate with their male relative as to which goat should be sold and where.

Livestock markets in Karamoja experience seasonal trends, with a slow period between January and June and greater vibrancy from July to December.

Prices respond accordingly, with lower prices for most types of animals during the slower period (KRSU, 2018).

Improvements in security have brought an expansion of markets throughout Karamoja in recent years (Rockeman *et al.*, 2016; Stites *et al.*, 2016), with an estimated 20 significant livestock markets as of 2018 (KRSU, 2018). This includes the growth of a number of markets in central locations, such as Moroto, Kotido and Kaabong, as well as the emergence of a network of local livestock markets, particularly in Kotido (Stites, Howe and Akabwai, 2017). Actors at these markets trade in livestock as well as numerous other goods, including household items, clothing, veterinary medicines, prepared foods, natural resources and alcohol. The expansion of the market system makes it easier for households to sell animals as necessary as part of an investment strategy, or to purchase food or other commodities. Although often thought of as an isolated region, Karamoja has become a regional economic hub for the trade of livestock (KRSU, 2018). Livestock from Karamoja supply markets elsewhere in Uganda as well as moving (informally) across borders into Kenya and South Sudan. Lorries from a wide range of locations arrive early in the morning on market days in the larger markets, such as Moroto and Kanawat in Kotido (Stites *et al.*, 2016). Smaller-scale local traders are also taking advantage of the market when and where possible. For instance, we met a woman in 2017 who had decided that her family should invest more actively in livestock. She travelled to the weekly livestock market in Kaabong to buy calves, which she then fattened before selling at the Kanawat market in Kotido, where they fetched a higher price. She used these proceeds to buy heifers to build up her family's herds. In addition, some farmers sell crops to buy small ruminants, which are then reared until they can be sold for cattle. Through the market, some households are slowly rebuilding their herds (Advanced Marketing Systems, 2017).

The overall trend in Karamoja is towards continued market expansion, especially with the creation of new districts and sub-counties and the desire of government officials in these locations to raise revenue through taxes on livestock sales (KRSU, 2018). Although roads have improved from a decade ago, poor road conditions continue to hamper trade. As Karamoja grows in regional significance as a source of livestock, improved policies are needed on controlling livestock disease and the transportation of animals. In addition, more nuanced policies and programmes are needed to take into account the inequality of livestock holdings and the number of households who have few or no animals (Catley and Ayele, 2018).

Northern Uganda

Northern Uganda has vast fertile and unopened agricultural land and high potential for supporting agriculture-based economic development. Such advances, however, have been constrained by what some view as an exclusive focus on improving production while ignoring the market component. In particular, there is a lack of market development strategies.

Farmers are not well organized to take advantage of collective marketing techniques, bulking and value addition to their primary products. Such interventions might assist farmers to tap into emerging markets both within and outside the country, especially in South Sudan. In addition, there is limited access to market information, which affects not only agricultural productivity but also potential for value addition and improvement of farmers' incomes (Mugonola and Baliddawa, 2014). A major advance in northern Uganda has been the improvement of the primary road network in recent years, which has decreased travel time along major routes and facilitated trade.

While agriculture remains the primary occupation for people who returned to their land following displacement, male and female participation in the labour market in northern Uganda has grown (Lehrer, 2013). This engagement may be the result of rural–urban migration (Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019), or may take place in smaller towns and trading centres on an ad hoc basis or by those who continue to live in rural areas but commute to towns on a daily basis. Mallet, Atim and Opio (2016) found that social capital played a strong role in how people found jobs and that the type of work they were able to acquire in turn impacted their social reputation. For example, women who found work in the catering or hospitality sector were seen as “deviant.” Exploitation was also high within this industry (Mallet and Atim, 2014; Atim, 2018; Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019).

Agricultural and livestock recovery

Both Karamoja and northern Uganda have seen important steps towards recovery of their agrarian sector in the post-conflict periods. In both cases, these improvements are due more to improvements in security than to external development interventions. In Karamoja, sustainable livelihood improvements have largely come from (a) securing improved access to natural resources for livestock production (water and pasture) and arable lands for cultivation that were off limits previously due to security and (b) the expansion of the market system in the region. In northern Uganda, the biggest boon to livelihoods has been people's return home and resumption of farming activities, coupled with improved access to markets for the movement of inputs and produce. (Road improvements by the Government of Uganda have been a factor in this.) In addition, the economy of northern Uganda benefitted greatly (but briefly) from the cessation of hostilities in southern Sudan and the establishment of an independent South Sudan. Prior to the resumption of conflict in 2013 and a further worsening in 2016, trade across the border increased dramatically and saw the growth of towns on the route to Nimule, including Gulu, Pabbo and Atiak.

Karamoja

In Karamoja, most households traditionally balanced livestock production with opportunistic or cash crop cultivation, depending on location, annual rainfall, labour and security. Arid and semi-arid conditions and climate variability make pastoral and agro-pastoral production the most appropriate livelihood systems for the larger Karamoja Cluster region, which includes parts of Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia as well as Karamoja (Ellis and Swift, 1988). However, an increased push towards agriculture in Karamoja over the past decade, in part due to government policy, has shifted the livestock–cultivation balance to a degree (Levine, 2010).

In recent years, some households have shifted into cultivation voluntarily after seeing the success of others. This shift may entail moving to the green belt areas or splitting households to take advantage of multiple livelihood opportunities. Profits from crop sales have allowed some households to rebuild livestock herds. However, the unpredictability of rainfall in Karamoja makes agriculture a tenuous livelihood in many parts of the sub-region.

Overall, the growing inequality of livestock ownership, limited mobility, animal disease, drought and impacts of the forced disarmament programme mean that fewer households own and trade in livestock than did a decade or more ago (Burns, Bekele and Akabwai, 2013; Catley and Ayele, 2018). However, compared to the rest of the country, households in Karamoja still participate the most in livestock production (26 percent compared to a national average of 16 percent) and the least in agriculture (61 percent compared to a national average of 78 percent; United States Agency for International Development–Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism [USAID-BEST], 2011).⁷

For those households with herds, the availability of community animal health workers, veterinary drug agents and input suppliers has improved access to veterinary services such as vaccines, drugs and sprays, which have reduced livestock mortalities. Animal health has thus improved for those owners who can access and afford these services, which are increasingly based on a cost-recovery model to promote sustainable supply chains. Local demand for livestock and livestock products such as beef, mutton, goat meat and milk has also increased, stimulating initiatives aimed at increasing livestock production and productivity (Stites *et al.*, 2016). A few individuals are venturing into the keeping of cross-breed cattle, which may find success in the markets.

However, in the absence of subsidies on livestock inputs, livestock production still faces a number of challenges. Many parts of Karamoja are deficient in water and pastures. Restrictions on herd mobility and lack of uniform pastoral and grazing policies worsen this situation. Loss of land to private owners, investors and disputes also limits resource use.

Technologies for pasture improvement – such as the preparation of silage and hay (dry matter) for improvement of supplementary feeding for livestock during the dry season, aimed at reducing mobility – have not been widely adopted because of the costs entailed (although hay-making projects may be gaining traction).⁸ In addition, there remains a high incidence of livestock diseases in Karamoja.

⁷ The 2016/2017 Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) survey reported lower numbers for Karamoja, with only 10 percent of households reporting animal husbandry as their major economic activity (UBOS, 2017, p. 170).

⁸ This observation is based on comments made by an FAO reviewer.

Northern Uganda

Much of the land in northern Uganda is fertile and ideal for agricultural production. However, Mugonola and Baliddawa (2014) found a number of challenges hampering the growth and recovery of the agricultural sector. The agricultural value chain in the region remains characterized by low productivity, lack of competition and information asymmetry. Banks are reluctant to lend to small farmers, and required inputs are often unavailable or of inferior quality.

Commercial seeds are sold primarily in urban areas, and many people cannot access these traders. Farmers' groups may have savings, but these are normally too low to provide adequate investments. Illiteracy is high, with negative impacts on record-keeping and agri-business. In addition, Mugonola and Baliddawa (2014) found that the impacts of the conflict in northern Uganda continue to affect people and their livelihoods on a daily basis through lack of social services, psychosocial problems and erosion of the family unit.

As discussed further in the section on food security, research under SLRC Uganda (2017) confirmed that conflict in northern Uganda continued to have profound impacts on people's abilities to recover their livelihoods, even more than a decade after the end of hostilities. Fifty-five percent of the households in the Acholi sub-region contained at least one member who had experienced one or more war crimes or crimes against humanity during the war.⁹ In the Lango sub-region, 28 percent of households contained at least one member who had experienced such crimes. In addition, 10 percent of the population of the combined regions was war-wounded, defined as have experienced physical, emotional or psychological injury that impairs functionality. The more serious crimes a household had experienced, the more likely they were to contain an individual who was war-wounded. These households had overall worse outcomes, as discussed later in more depth (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014b). Given the correlations of these experiences to food security, poverty and income, we can assume that these characteristics negatively affected people's ability to engage in agricultural livelihoods.

Although livelihood recovery has occurred in both these locations, the recovery is inconsistent and uneven, and it is largely difficult to ensure it is self-sustaining in the long term. Some of these difficulties are due to the legacy of conflict and insecurity and to unequal distribution of wealth and assets. As will be shown, however, ongoing and structural challenges pose major obstacles to recovery in both of these regions.

⁹ The following were categorized as war crimes or crimes against humanity when committed by parties to the conflict: experiencing destruction and/or looting of property; undergoing abduction; forced recruitment; forced disappearance; suffering severe beating or torture; being deliberately set on fire or put in a building on fire; being a victim of and surviving a massacre; being attacked with a hoe, panga or axe; sexual abuse; returning with a child born due to rape; being forced to kill or seriously injure another person; being seriously wounded by a deliberate or indiscriminate attack; and suffering emotional distress that inhibits functionality due to experiencing or witnessing the above. Parties to the conflict included government forces, LRA rebels, militias and raiders from Karamoja.

Nutrition and food security

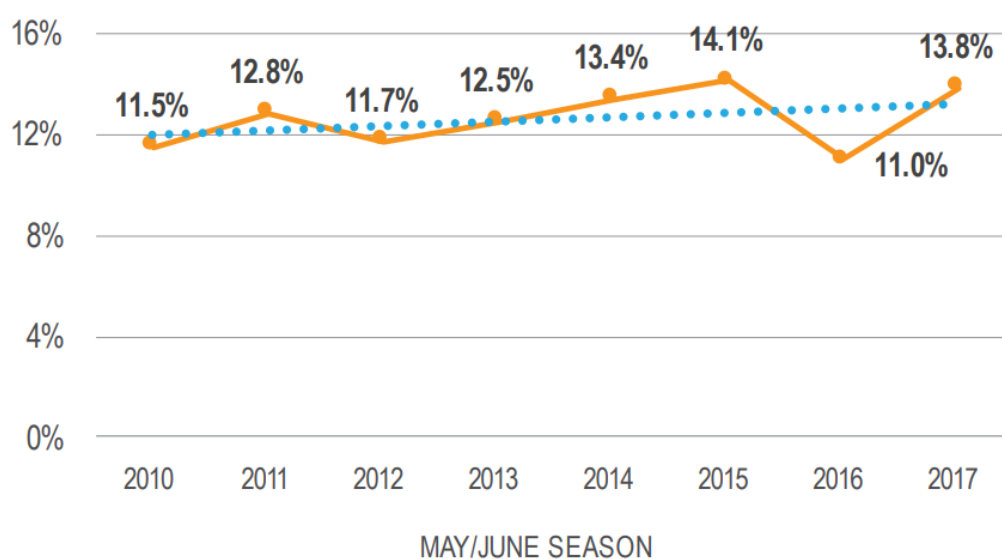
Past and current policies, experiences of insecurity, shocks and assistance programmes have impacted and continue to impact nutrition and food security levels. In both Karamoja and northern Uganda, we would expect to see general improvements over the past 12 years in nutrition and food security, given security improvements, better access to resources (including land) and more dynamic trade networks. However, improvement in these two variables has not been the trend, especially in Karamoja. This section examines the available data as well as views of key informants on these issues and investigates some of the possible reasons for this inelasticity.

Child nutrition in Karamoja

Karamoja has long had the poorest human development indicators in the country, including those related to child nutrition. The sub-region continues to suffer from one of the highest levels of global acute malnutrition (GAM) in Uganda. Unlike the rest of the country, Karamoja has seen a general increase in the prevalence of wasting, despite the cessation of conflict a decade ago. More so, while the prevalence of GAM has also slightly increased in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions, on the whole the prevalence of GAM remains double in Karamoja compared to its neighbours in the north. In this section we briefly review the prevalence and trends of child wasting in Karamoja.

As of 2017, the prevalence of GAM in Karamoja was 13.8 percent (World Food Programme [WFP] and United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2017). There is a large disparity between the different districts in Karamoja, with the highest prevalence, above the emergency threshold, in Moroto and Kotido Districts (18.5 percent each) and the lowest in Abim (11.1 percent; (WFP and UNICEF, 2017). A significant distinction exists between boys and girls, with boys significantly more likely to be wasted compared to girls. This gender distinction is most prominent for infants (WFP and UNICEF, 2017) and generally observed across Africa (Wasting–Stunting Technical Interest Group [WaST TIG], 2018).

Figure 1. Trend in prevalence of global acute malnutrition in Karamoja



Source: WFP and UNICEF, 2017.

The prevalence of wasting in Karamoja is the highest amongst all regions in Uganda (only comparable to West Nile). When comparing Karamoja to Lango and Acholi sub-regions in northern Uganda, the discrepancy remains: 10 percent wasting in Karamoja compared to 5 percent in Lango and 3.9 percent in Acholi (Buzigi, 2018).

Over time, GAM prevalence has remained relatively steady in Karamoja at around 10-15 percent, with some evidence of a general upward (i.e. worsening) trajectory over the past decade (Figure 1, Table 1). This is particularly concerning considering the improvements in nutrition seen across Uganda. Using the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 1995 to 2016, Buzigi (2018) showed that at the national level, the prevalence of GAM decreased from 5.3 to 4.0 percent.

When looking at the regional disaggregation from just 2011 to 2016, we see that the prevalence of GAM went down from 5 to 4 percent in Uganda as a whole but increased slightly in the north, from 3.4 percent (for all of the north excluding Karamoja) to 3.9 percent and 5 percent in Acholi and Lango respectively, and from 7.1 to 10 percent in Karamoja (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2007; UBOS, 2012).

Table 1. GAM prevalence from Uganda DHS data

DHS year	Karamoja	Acholi	Lango	Northern region	IDP camps in the north	Uganda
2016	10%	3.9%	5%			4%
2011	7.1%			3.4%		5%
2006	10.5%			6.5%	6.3%	6.1%
1995				7.6%		5.3%

Hence, we see that while GAM has increased in Karamoja as well as the Acholi and Lango subregions over the past decade, the increase has been greater and the original levels much higher in Karamoja. While this is alarming, the uptick in GAM in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions is also significant and cause for concern, especially considering the improvements in security, the dismantling of the IDP camps and the massive number of people who have been able to return to their homesteads and agricultural land. For example, the 2016 prevalence of GAM in Lango (5 percent) is not much better than the prevalence of GAM in the northern region for both the IDP and non-IDP population in 2006 (6.5 and 6.3 percent, respectively; Table 1).

In Karamoja, factors behind these high and continuing rates of GAM likely include the loss of livestock amongst the poor, declining access to milk and shifts towards high-vulnerability agriculture in areas better suited for pastoral production (Sadler *et al.*, 2010; Stites and Mitchard, 2011). Importantly, the highest prevalence of GAM appears to be found in the most pastoral regions of Karamoja. An Action Against Hunger (ACF) Link NCA (nutrition causal analysis) from 2016 identified the deterioration of pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods in Moroto District in Karamoja as occurring in parallel to the deterioration of nutritional status.

According to the report, other factors that are believed to contribute to high GAM rates in Moroto include inadequate infant feeding practices, overworked and malnourished mothers, poor breastfeeding practices, poor hygiene and sanitation, poor health of infants and children under age 5 and unstable access to food (Boucher-Castel, 2017).

A recent study in Karamoja highlights the links between livelihoods that are livestock based and milk production that is based on access to pasture and water and the seasonality of child malnutrition. Child malnutrition peaks in January and February, at the end of the dry season, and in pastoralist areas falls rapidly to lower levels by May but declines more slowly in agro-pastoralist areas (Catley, Lotira and Hopkins, 2018).

Key informants in the government, health and development sectors interviewed in Karamoja between August and October 2018 expressed their views on why nutritional outcomes were slow to improve in the region. One view was that while the nutritional status of children often improved during programme implementations, these gains reversed following the end of the programme. In addition, interventions to provide rations for severely malnourished children do not necessarily translate into improved nutritional status of the targeted children once they are discharged from feeding centres.¹⁰ This is because take-home food rations are often shared across all members of a food-insecure household, and NGOs have little ability to do adequate follow-up to see where and how the supplied food is being used.¹¹ In October 2016 in Abim, the perceived diversion of food supplements meant to boost nutritional status of children led the district's social services committee to propose that "punitive measures be put in place for mothers that are selling away the peanuts provided for their severely malnourished children."¹² In addition, the use of food rations as incentives for families to send girls to school, immunize children or use reproductive services has increasingly come under criticism for not only undermining genuine behavioural change but also for making populations used to stop-gap initiatives that fail to deal with the underlying causes of problems.¹³

¹⁰ See Final performance evaluation of Northern Karamoja Growth, Health, and Governance Development Food Assistance Project, final evaluation report, November 2018 draft.

¹¹ See Final performance evaluation of Northern Karamoja Growth, Health, and Governance Development Food Assistance Project, final evaluation report, November 2018 draft.

¹² See Min. 03/ADSC/28/10/2016, Presentation of departmental reports, in Minutes of the Social Services Committee of Abim District held on 28th October 2016 at the Production Hall, p. 10.

¹³ Key informant interview (KII), Mr Paul Adia, LC3 Chairperson, Rengen sub-county, Kotido District, 2 October 2018.

Food security

Karamoja

Like other East African pastoralists, rural households in Karamoja have long been engaged in diversified livelihoods, including opportunistic cultivation, petty trade, sale of natural resources and wage labour. They adjust the balance of these activities in response to both risks and opportunities and based on wealth and resources (Little *et al.*, 2001). Owning a healthy herd of livestock allows for consumption smoothing, regular inclusion of dairy products in the diet and an insurance policy against large- or small-scale shocks. A 2015 inter-agency assessment on resilience to food insecurity found that livestock ownership, along with informal social nets and involvement in small businesses, was key to absorptive capacity (i.e. the ability to take action against and cope with shocks) at the household level (Resilience Analysis Unit [RAU], 2015).

The past ten years have seen an increase in the number of households in Karamoja involved in crop production, in part due to government pressure and donor acquiescence (Levine, 2010). Accordingly, the amount of land that has been put under crops has increased significantly. Coupled with improved security that allows people to access fields and input markets, local food production has also reportedly increased overall (Mercy Corps, 2017). Many non-governmental organization (NGO) programmes aim at improving agriculture yields through agricultural extension outreach and better access to inputs, including storage equipment and improved seeds. However, some problems remain in regard to the willingness of traders to travel to or sell in the region, the timing of programmes (such as seed vouchers), the limited ability of households to cover non-subsidized expenses and continued vulnerability to climate shocks (Stites, Howe and Akabwai, 2017).

In Karamoja, factors that affect food and nutrition security vary from district to district, from season to season and from year to year. In addition, the assets (particularly livestock) held by a given household will influence resilience and food security. Overall, food security in Karamoja remains relatively precarious, with up to 80 percent of households reporting problems accessing food at the height of the lean period (April-June) in 2013 (Henry and Arthur, 2013).

Localized shocks may be climatic (such as droughts or floods), pest or disease related, or due to lingering conflicts or dynamics between groups. Herders in Kalapata sub-county of Kaabong, for instance, face the threat of cattle raids from the Turkana in Kenya. In Abim, the seasonal influx of large numbers of herders and their livestock in search of pastures and water can have both positive and negative effects on food security. This long-standing and symbiotic relationship allows the settled population in Abim to have access to animal products and also to benefit from fertilizers for their fields prior to the next planting season. However, there are also reports of theft of food and other assets (including livestock) by some herding parties, as well as the occasional destruction of crops that have yet to be harvested.¹⁴

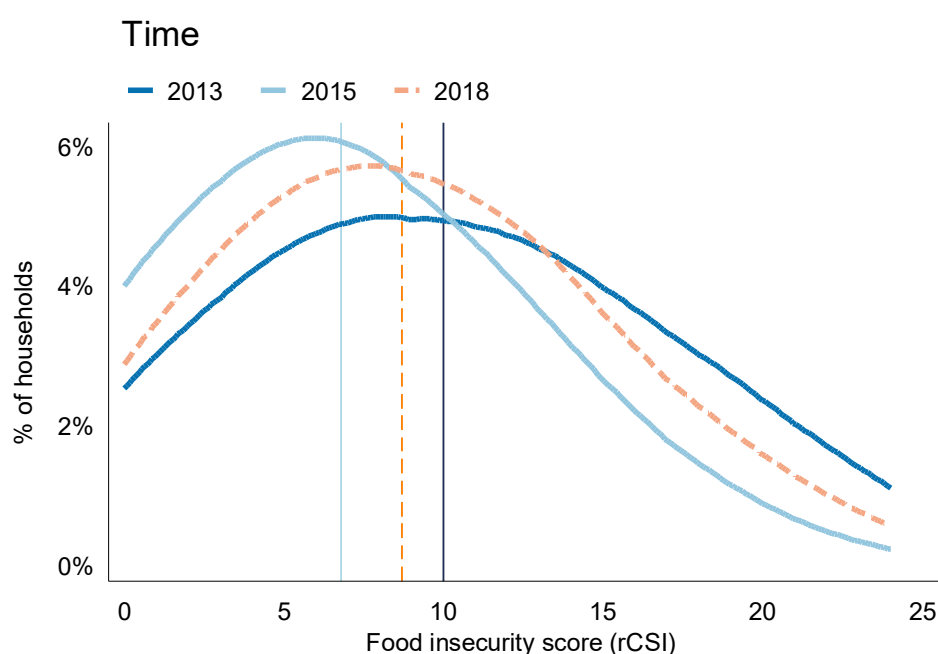
¹⁴ KII, Mr. Jimmy Ocheri, LC5 Chairperson, Abim District Local Government, 24 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

Northern Uganda

Food security in northern Uganda in recent years is highly volatile (Marshak, 2019). The longitudinal panel survey data from SLRC Uganda (2017), representative of households in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions, shows that food security, as measured by the reduced Coping Strategy Index (Maxwell and Caldwell, 2008), is characterized by a level of volatility beyond what is traditionally associated with or attributed to large covariate shocks. Despite being in Integrated Phase Classification Level 1 (meaning no to minimal food insecurity) in 2013, 2015 and 2018, food insecurity varied significantly across all three years in which data were collected as part of SLRC Uganda (Marshak, 2019; Figure 2).

The distinction observed between the three years reflects movements around the average, rather than extremely poor or good years. The difference between years does partially correspond to variations in price data of staple crops.¹⁵

Figure 2. Food insecurity (rCSI) in 2013, 2015 and 2018



Source: Marshak, A., Stites, E., Attim, T. and D. Mazurana (2019). Recovery in Northern Uganda: Findings from a panel study in Acholi and Lango sub-regions (2013, 2015, and 2018). Feinstein International Center: forthcoming.

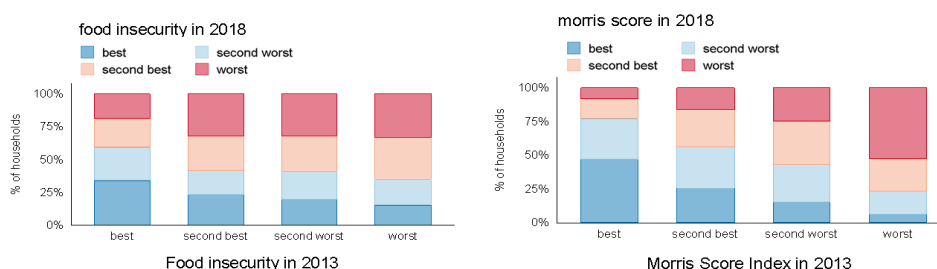
Other outcome variables examined under SLRC (Marshak, 2019), including asset wealth measured via the Morris Score Index¹⁶ and distance to services, also fluctuated between the three years of the study. In the case of food security, however, the variability for individual households over time is greater than the variability between households in any year. In other words, individual households report wildly varying levels of food insecurity from year to year, with

¹⁵ Maize retail price in Lira town using the FAO Price Tool (<http://www.fao.org/giews/food-prices/tool/public/#/dataset/domestic>).

¹⁶ S.C. Morris, C. Calogero, J. Hoddinott and L. Christiaensen, 2000, Validity of rapid estimates of household wealth and income for health surveys in rural Africa, *Epidemiology Community Health* 54: 381–387.

only 10 percent of all households falling into the same category of food security every year (worst, second worst, second best, best). (This compares, for instance, to 24 percent of households being in the same wealth category each year that data were collected.) For example, of the households who had the worst food security in 2013, by 2018 only one-third remained in the “worst” category. However, when it comes to wealth, one-half of the households who were in the worst category in 2013 remained in that category in 2018 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Churning of households within food insecurity vs wealth (as measured by Morris Score Index)



Source: Marshak, A., Stites, E., Attim, T. and D. Mazurana (2019). Recovery in Northern Uganda: Findings from a panel study in Acholi and Lango sub-regions (2013, 2015, and 2018). Feinstein International Center: forthcoming.

Importantly, there were no large covariate shocks occurring in northern Uganda over the period of the data collection. The SLRC data still show very high rates of mobility and short-term transition in levels of food insecurity (Marshak, 2019). This extreme inconsistency in food security at the household level was only picked up because the study followed specific households over time. Because the SLRC Uganda study only began in 2013, we cannot compare the status of or fluctuations in levels of food security within these same households in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. However, it could be argued that the expectation would have been for increased stability in these indicators as time progressed, implying that such volatility was likely to have also existed in the 2006–2012 time frame.

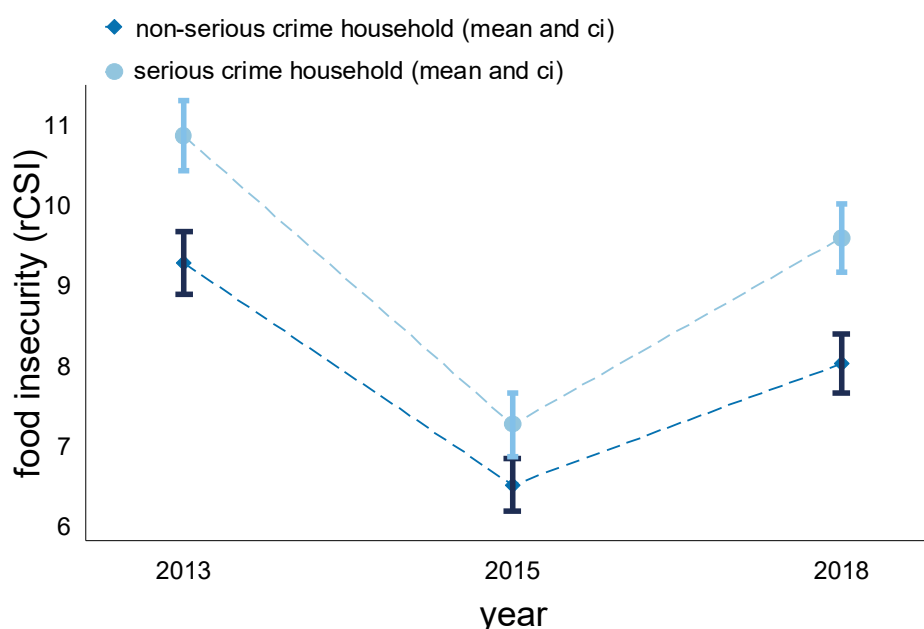
The SLRC Uganda data show that food insecurity in Acholi and Lango correlates significantly with livelihoods (Marshak, 2019). Households who switched their livelihood from own cultivation to non-agricultural casual labour or exploitation of bush products had greater food insecurity, while households who switched to own business had better food security. Shocks that affected a household’s livelihood also affected food insecurity. If a household reported experiencing disease of crops or livestock, then their food insecurity increased. The loss of a family member further contributed to heightened food insecurity, potentially reducing the number of individuals who contribute to household labour and income. Households who reported experiencing inflation or price hikes reported an increase in food insecurity. In regard to interventions, a household that went from not receiving livelihood assistance in one year to receiving it in another year decreased, on average, their food insecurity by 15 percent. Types of livelihood assistance with the greatest impacts were access to extension services and receipt of seed money to create a revolving fund.

One the most salient findings from the SLRC Uganda work is around the impact of war crimes and crimes against humanity upon household recovery. These experiences continue to have an impact on food security, even more than ten years after the conflict ended (Marshak, 2019). If a household reported that at least one member of their household experienced a war crime or crime against humanity, their food insecurity, on average, was 5 percent higher. Each additional crime experienced increased food insecurity by 1 percent on average.

Although more research is needed, this association might be due to the high levels of disability found in the households that experienced these crimes and the likely impacts of disabilities on livelihoods (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014b).

Research in Darfur, the Sudan, also found long-lasting effects for those injured in conflict (Fitzpatrick and Young, 2016). Furthermore, households that reported a war crime or crime against humanity experienced a greater increase in food insecurity in below-average years (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Food insecurity and experience of serious crimes, 2013, 2015 and 2018



Source: Marshak, Stites et al., 2019.

Comparing the two regions

In regard to both food security and nutrition in Karamoja and northern Uganda, we see volatility (in northern Uganda; it is unknown if this pattern also exists in Karamoja), continued vulnerability, stagnation of recovery and, to varying degrees, a worsening of indicators around nutrition. Some of these patterns may be explained by exogenous shocks, such as a few bad years, price spikes or animal epidemics. However, northern Uganda and Karamoja have now had more than ten years of recovery from conflict, which is often assumed to be the most disruptive and profound shock. Why is recovery in food security and nutrition not more evident? The SLRC Uganda study as well as work in Chad indicate that while asset wealth may recover, food security and nutrition are more slow and stubborn (Marshak, 2019; Marshak, Young and Radday, 2016).

The findings on the ongoing inelasticity of food security and nutrition in two regions that have seen marked improvements in security and high levels of international and national investment call into question many of our assumptions about recovery and development. Often, we assume that the constraints brought by conflict will end when the fighting subsides. This is sometimes called a peace dividend: that is, that markets will rebound, a variety of activities will return to their pre-war levels and things will improve for most people following the end of conflict.

Unfortunately, research on northern Uganda, Karamoja and a number of other locations calls into question these assumptions. In some areas of Karamoja, including Moroto District, which is home to the largest town in the region and has some of the best health care facilities, the prevalence of malnutrition remains at emergency levels.

Continuing challenges

Climate change and ecological degradation

Karamoja

The pastoral and agro-pastoral zones of eastern Africa exist in an environment categorized by a high degree of climate variability, erratic rainfall patterns and ecological fragility (Ellis and Swift, 1988). Climate change is undermining and will continue to undermine limited resources and increase the prevalence of natural disasters such as recurring droughts, flooding and prolonged dry spells. Successful livestock production is highly dependent on climate for rainfall quantity and distribution, availability of water and control of animal disease (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2017). While transhumant strategies inherent in pastoral livelihoods enable herders to access resources through mobility, these strategies are increasingly coming up against an inhospitable policy environment that limits this form of coping with climate adversity. Agriculture, an important livelihood in Karamoja and the predominant livelihood in Acholi and Lango, is even more susceptible to climate vagaries, as farmers are unable to move to better locations. A 2015 multi-agency resilience analysis in Karamoja found that diversified livelihoods were central to adaptive capacity (Resilience Analysis Unit [RAU], 2015). Such diversity is inherent in agro-pastoral systems that balance both agriculture and livestock, but widespread and prolonged shocks such as those associated with likely climate change can often overwhelm both livestock and agrarian production.

The expansion of settlements and permanent crop cultivations in green belt areas in Karamoja has increased the vulnerability of households in these areas to ecological hazards such as extended dry spells and unpredictable rainfall. For instance, the heavy rains received in the first half of 2018 in areas of Apeitolim (Napak District), Kapedo (Kaabong District) and Kacheri (Kotido District) caused flooding, which affected food production and led to scarcity of food in the second half of 2018. In addition, as households settle in these areas in hopes of shifting to crop production, pastoral groups who traditionally relied on these green belt areas for dry season grazing and pasture find themselves pushed out and their mobility limited, hence reducing their capacity to cope with climate fluctuations.

Environmental degradation is a problem in Karamoja in large part due to a heavy reliance on natural resource exploitation. This is linked to the demise of pastoral livelihoods and a gendered shift in economic responsibilities at the household level. As men's traditional roles as herders have diminished with the loss of access to cattle (Stites and Akabwai, 2010), women have become more actively involved in providing for their households' subsistence needs. Cutting of trees for firewood or charcoal production and sale is the primary means through which many women support their families. This has resulted in mass deforestation of the local landscape. In addition, women collect wild greens and fruits and thatch for their own domestic consumption or for sale.

In some areas, men who have lost their herds or are seeking to supplement the household income help with the charcoal production and also harvest tall trees to sell as building poles.

Northern Uganda

Upon returning from the IDP camps, households had to adjust to supporting themselves in the absence of the food assistance they had relied on for many years. While most people resumed agricultural livelihoods (Lehrer, 2013), the need for cash and the limited economic opportunities made many turn to natural resource exploitation, including the sale of firewood and charcoal (Mayega et al., 2015). The production and sale of charcoal in northern Uganda continues to be a major problem today, with an estimated 20–40 hectares (ha) of forest lost per month in Nwoya District alone, according to a local government official (Huxta, 2018). The urban demand for charcoal is high and growing, and charcoal burners from other parts of the country have moved into the north to take advantage of the forest resources. This has led, in some instances, to conflicts with the locals, who also fight amongst themselves over illegal tree cutting on each other's land (Levine, 2016). District officials in some northern locations have banned the production, sale and transport of charcoal and have offered incentives for those who preserve their trees, but such regulations are easy to get around with bribes to police officials (Huxta, 2018).

Climate change will impact both northern Uganda and Karamoja in the coming years. By most estimates, rainfall will decrease overall, rainy seasons will be wetter, and extreme weather events will be more frequent (Irish Aid, 2017). These changes will all have severe implications for the many already vulnerable people who rely on agriculture and natural resource management for their livelihoods.

An additional climate-related threat to environmental degradation in the north is diminished water access due to drought and excess flooding. Reduced rainfall in the north-central region decreased average income from crop sales by about 38 percent in recent years (Hill and Mejia-Mantilla, 2017). Given many households' dependence on this income, the continuation of this pattern will have a significant negative impact on livelihoods. The increased frequency of droughts throughout Uganda also contributes to food shortages for subsistence farmers (Cooper, 2018). Furthermore, inadequate land for farmers in the north-central region leads to over-cultivation and soil infertility, further decreasing the likelihood of a productive yield and sufficient income. Government programmes have provided modified agricultural inputs such as drought-resistant seeds for crops (including millet, sorghum, maize and cassava) and training in mixed farming methods to promote adaptation to environmental change (Mayega et al., 2015).

Poor governance and corruption

Karamoja

Government enforcement of the disarmament campaign made it possible for a previously "absent state" to return to Karamoja. Before the forced disarmament, government institutions and structures for enforcement were either absent or extremely weak. State authority existed only in towns and only during the day. The reach of judicial and state authority has expanded in recent years with the improvements in security. The face of representation has also expanded. For instance, today there are more women and youth in elected and appointed posts at the sub-county and district level, once the purview of male elders.

In the security sector, the capacity to respond to, mitigate and resolve diverse types of conflict in Karamoja has improved due to increased collaboration between formal security institutions and informal community structures, including peace committees and male elders. Police stations now exist in all district headquarters. These improvements notwithstanding, governance challenges are still manifest in Karamoja. A governance deficit is perpetuated by downwardly unaccountable political leaders and impudent local elites who take advantage of the illiteracy of ordinary civilians to grab land and resources with impunity. Corruption remains a major barrier to transparency and efficiency, particularly amongst the police (Hickey et al., 2016). A key informant interviewed in Kaabong in August 2018 explained that the police demand money from everyone who enters the police station seeking any form of assistance, whether they are a respondent or defendant.¹⁷ In addition, claims of police criminalizing civil cases in order to extort bribes from innocent people were reported by key informants in Abim,¹⁸ Kotido¹⁹ and Moroto.²⁰

The formal judicial sector has expanded in recent years. All districts (except Napak, which is served from Moroto) have a functioning Magistrates Court. High Court premises have been constructed in Moroto and a resident judge posted. However, expansion of access to justice remains difficult. Many communities prefer their conflicts to be resolved in non-formal structures because the “winner-take-all” outcome of the formal system clashes with traditional principles of consensus building, reconciliation and “win-win” solutions. The modern justice system places a huge burden on the complainant to establish the guilt of an accused person. In contrast, in the traditional justice system, guilt has been established by the time suspects are handed to police. The traditional system emphasizes telling the truth, accepting guilt, and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation for wrongs.

These principles are difficult to reconcile with notions of innocence until proven guilty. Likewise, the formal system has trouble accepting a system in which blood compensation for murder is still accepted.²¹ In addition to problems with community acceptance, the formal justice system remains mired in inefficiencies. For example, between July 2013 and March 2018, only nine cases had been entered in the Civil Cases Register at the Kaabong Grade 1 Magistrates Court.²² By August 2018, the Magistrates Court in Kaabong had never registered a case in which a practicing lawyer had appeared in court to represent a client.

Kaabong neither has a resident law firm nor receives advocates representing clients.²³ This means the Magistrates Court in Kaabong is largely redundant. Access to legal aid is limited to Kotido, where the Uganda Law Society Legal Aid Project

¹⁷ KII, Ms Claire Nambuya, Court Clerk, Kaabong G1 Magistrates Court, 22 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

¹⁸ KII, Mr Abert Asimwe, Grade 1 Magistrate, Abim District Magistrates Court, 28 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

¹⁹ KII, Mr Lotyang Paul, Kotido Grade 1 Magistrate, 13 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

²⁰ KII, Mr Robert Imalingat, Chief Magistrate, Moroto/Kotido Magisterial Areas, Moroto Chief Magistrates Court, 2 September 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

²¹ As recently as April 2018, in Napak District, the Jie paid several cows as compensation for a pregnant Bokora woman from Lokopo who was killed by suspected Jie herdsman while coming from Kanagar. Even when the case was reported to the police, the family of the alleged murderer surrendered cows for blood compensation to the UPDF for delivery to the relatives of the deceased as a way of preventing the start of revenge killings (see Min. 3.0/04/2018, Remarks from sub-county chairperson, in *Minutes of the Lokopo sub-county Council Meeting held on 26th April 2018 at the Community Hall, Aramam*, p. 7).

²² See Civil Cases Register, Kaabong Magistrates Court, accessed 22 August 2018.

²³ KII, Ms Claire Nambuya, Court Clerk, Kaabong Grade 1 Magistrates Court, 22 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

was, in August 2018, setting up at the Kotido Magistrates Court. A private firm offering legal aid maintained a modest presence in Morulem, Abim District.²⁴

Northern Uganda

There has been significant investment in recovery of formal institutions and structures for law and order (especially the police and local administration) and the judiciary in post-conflict northern Uganda (Levine, 2016). However, perceptions about inadequate protection of basic rights of citizens and inadequate access to basic social services in most of northern Uganda have remained widespread (Levine, 2016; Mayega et al., 2015). The most widespread challenges for civilians following the conflict were access to land to health care (Levine, 2016; Mayega et al., 2015).

Many in northern Uganda viewed formal institutions such as the police and the judiciary as not effectively fulfilling their mandate to resolve land disputes. Formal structures and institutions for land management and administration, when they exist, were cited as being ineffective, incompetent, corrupt or dysfunctional (Levine, 2016; Mayega et al., 2015). Customary local structures – when existent and functional – are often bedeviled by internal weaknesses. They are prone to manipulation and are often viewed as being compromised by the rich and powerful elements in the communities.

They also invariably lack adequate capacity to enforce their decisions (Levine, 2016; Mayega et al., 2015). In the face of this impunity, land grabbing by the state, the private sector and civilians in the north remains widespread.

Limited opportunities for decent work

Towns are growing, livelihoods are diversifying, and economic opportunities are expanding in both Karamoja and northern Uganda. Many people, particularly young people, are increasingly relying on the urban centres for work to meet cash needs (Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019; Stites, Burnes and Akabwai, 2014). In addition, urban areas remain critical for access to services (such as health care and secondary education) and to financial services such as credit. Towns, trading centres and urban centres are also home to most of the markets for agricultural inputs and for the sale of cash or surplus crops and livestock or livestock products. This is an important function, given that an estimated 90 percent of households in the Acholi sub-region and 84 percent of households in Karamoja reported that crop farming was a major household activity (UBOS, 2017).

Although some of the urban areas in northern Uganda and Karamoja have seen rapid growth in recent years, the supply of decent jobs is inadequate to meet demand.

Many of the migrants are unskilled or semi-skilled and are seeking work in already saturated markets. This is particularly the case in Karamoja, where the economy is less diversified and human capital is generally lower. Those who do find work are mostly doing ad hoc jobs in the informal sector, often in the form of *lejeleje*, or casual manual labour here and there (Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019; Stites, Burnes and Akabwai, 2014). Many of the external interventions aimed at both Karamoja

²⁴ KII, Mr Graciano Achilla, Executive Director, Alliance for Public Legal Education in Uganda, Morulem Centre, Abim District, 28 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

and northern Uganda continue to focus exclusively on rural areas and the agrarian sector.

The nature of work in both locations is highly gendered. Women most often find jobs relating to the domestic sphere – food preparation, child-care, cleaning or making brew. Men are more likely to be engaged in heavy manual labour, including brick-making (in the wet season), construction, loading and unloading trucks and portering. There are social and human consequences for moving into many of these jobs. As mentioned earlier, women in the catering or hospitality sector are often assumed by friends and relatives to be sex workers, especially those who remain in the rural areas (Mallet and Atim, 2014; Atim, 2018; Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019). Those who can break into higher-skilled jobs, such as butchering, tailoring or carpentry, may have taken a course or have been taken on as an apprentice by someone already in the trade. Either of these routes into skilled employment requires a degree of financial and/or social capital to be able to afford courses, to secure sponsorship or to secure work as an apprentice.

At the national level, there is little impetus to translate whatever political will there is into dedicated interventions for undertaking systematic urban development, urban planning, expansion of basic services or job creation in these settings.

In Karamoja, district and town officials show little inclination to address urban growth or provide services as a public good. One issue is capacity, as there are few funds or officials dedicated to these issues in the northern locales. At the same time, the development mindset of international actors remains focused primarily on rural locations. For instance, the two five-year multi-million-dollar USAID/Food for Peace programmes in Karamoja that began in 2017 (led by Catholic Relief Services and Mercy Corps) do not include an urban component, even though a rapidly growing number of people in Karamoja are seeking employment in urban settings.

Livelihood transformation and loss

Karamoja

Karamoja has long been the poorest region in Uganda, with 61 percent of the people in Karamoja considered income poor, compared to a national average of 27 percent (UBOS, 2017). While livelihoods in Karamoja have greatly improved, due in large part to better security, these gains have been uneven. Livestock losses due to disarmament and the protected kraal policy were widespread (Levine, 2010), and poorer herders struggled to rebuild herds. Today, more people in the region have fewer livestock, and the livestock wealth that does exist is concentrated in the hands of fewer owners (Catley and Ayele, 2018). The decline in livestock, coupled with decreased available land for grazing and a push towards sedentarization, has prompted greater dependency on crop production in the green belt areas of Abim, Kaabong, Kotido and Napak Districts.²⁵ Those shifting to

²⁵ See Min. 03/ADC/14/9/2016, Reading, reactions and adoption of the previous minutes, in Minutes of the First Meeting of the First Session of the Third Council of Abim District Council held on the 14th September 2016 at Abim Hospital Hall, p. 11. See Min. 05/05/2016, Communication from the District Chairperson, in Minutes of Kaabong District Council Meeting held on 6th May 2016 at the District Council Hall, p. 9. See Min. 20/KDC/2012 in Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the First Session of the Ninth Council of Kotido District Local Government held on 29th June 2012 in the District Council Hall at 9:00 a.m., p. 4. See Min. 13/DLC/2016, Discussion of district land matters, in Minutes of Napak District Local Council Meeting held on 30th November 2016 at the District Headquarters main tent starting at 1:00 p.m.

farming are more likely to be the poor who have lost herds. Already in a precarious position, they have little capital and few resources to fall back on when crops fail (as they do regularly). Thus, we see increased vulnerability of those who are already likely to be the worst off. As discussed above, there are few viable alternative livelihoods available to people, leading to menial temporary work to secure cash in lean periods (Burns, Bekele and Akabwai, 2013). Many people report turning to credit in an effort to make ends meet, with a reported 62.9 percent of the households in Karamoja (the highest percentage in the country) borrowing money to purchase consumption goods or services (UBOS, 2017).

The decline of livestock has led to a significantly greater workload for women and girls in Karamoja but without an equivalent expansion in their decision-making power or control of key resources.

For men and boys, loss of livestock, stasis in succession of authority between age sets and a difficulty in procuring adequate cattle to pay bride wealth for wives has meant the loss of power, wealth and identity (Stites and Akabwai, 2010; Stites, 2013).

Northern Uganda

Post-conflict livelihood recovery has remained slow for many in northern Uganda (Levine, 2016; Mayega et al., 2015). When compared with the rest of the country, the region continues to experience high poverty rates, large household sizes, a high dependency ratio and low levels of adult literacy (UBOS, 2017). Levine (2016) describes the pace of the recovery as “very small steps forward, even for those who were considered as successful” as well as several steps backwards (p. 31). Even those considered successful remained highly vulnerable to small shocks. Mayega et al. (2015) attribute the slow pace of post-conflict recovery to governance deficits, which included not only limited access to basic social services but also corruption and unresolved land disputes and conflicts.

The SLRC Uganda research indicates that people in northern Uganda generally lack the education levels or access to jobs that will help pull them out of poverty (Marshak, 2019). The few households in the Acholi or Lango regions that had someone working for the government (3 percent of the entire population) or owning livestock (4 percent of population) had the greatest wealth and lowest food insecurity. In addition, livelihood support and social protection programmes are rare. Perhaps most importantly, those households with members who suffered serious crimes during the war are significantly worse off than those households that do not contain such members. This illustrates the enduring nature of the conflict – even ten years on – upon the people of northern Uganda.

Conflict over land

Conflict and competition over land rights, access and ownership remain a major issue in both northern Uganda and Karamoja, although with some significant differences. Drivers of land competition in both areas include government concessions to the private sector (for mining and gas exploration, private ranches and commercial farms), government gazetting of lands (for reserves or infrastructure projects) and expansion of urban settlements. These concessions and takeovers frequently take place without consultation with or knowledge of the public (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

In northern Uganda, land disputes are often rooted in the competing claims that arose after families returned from the IDP camps to rural areas. Competition normally centres on boundaries, ownership rights and inheritance. These disputes are often gendered, with women reporting greater difficulty in accessing land, particularly if they are widowed or single. For instance, a woman interviewed in Gulu had left an abusive marriage and attempted to claim land at her natal home that she had inherited from her father. Her brother and uncles blocked her claim, and, in an unusual move, she took them to court. She won the case, but the harassment and abuse she continued to experience was such that she abandoned her efforts to farm and moved to Gulu (Stites, Atim and Tracy, 2019). Many other women find that the land they believed they were entitled to has been taken over by male relatives.

In Karamoja, where much of the land is held communally under customary title, the majority of the population has a limited understanding of their land rights. The government is a main perpetrator of land grabs in the form of large-scale concessions to private companies, especially in the mineral-rich eastern zone (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Gazetting of land for forest reserves, national parks and wildlife corridors may be done with environmental considerations in mind²⁶ but effectively limits grazing and access. Local respondents and officials in numerous locations report that the expansion of game parks and wildlife corridors is leading to more encounters between humans and wild animals, resulting in the loss of crops, the spread of animal disease and the loss of both human and animal life.²⁷ In particular, the spread of tsetse flies into a broad area of western Karamoja is spreading trypanosomiasis from wild animals to domestic cattle herds.²⁸

²⁶ See Min. 09/09/2015, Committee reports, in *Minutes of Kaabong District Council Meeting held on 10th Sept. 2015 at the District Council Hall*, p. 25. Over 70 percent of the land in Kapedo sub-county in Kaabong has been earmarked as a wildlife corridor. KII, Mr Simon Omony, Senior Assistant Secretary, Kapedo sub-county, Kaabong District, 21 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

²⁷ See Min. 09/09/2015, Committee reports, in *Minutes of Kaabong District Council Meeting held on 10th September 2015 at the District Council Hall*, p. 17; FGD with members of Kapedo sub-county area land committee (ALC), Kaabong District, 21 August 2018 (facilitated by Frank Muhereza). See FGD with members of Dodoth Elders Council, Kaabong district, Wednesday 22 August 2018 (facilitated by Frank Muhereza). See Min. 26/COU/12/2011, in *Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the First session of the Ninth Council of Kotido District held on 22nd December 2011 in the District Council Hall at 2:00 p.m.*, p. 4. See Min. No. 18/COU/11/2016 in *Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Tenth Council of Kotido District Local Government held on Friday 28th November 2016 at the Youth Centre (former Court Hall)*, p. 13. See Min. 03/ADC/14/9/2016, Reading, reactions and adoption of the previous minutes, in *Minutes of the First Meeting of the First Session of the Third Council of Abim District Council held on the 14th September 2016 at Abim Hospital Hall*, p. 12.

²⁸ FGD with members of Sidok sub-county ALC, Kaabong District, Tuesday, 21 August 2018.

Local respondents in Karamoja report that elites from the region are also engaged in land grabbing, especially in the more fertile western green belts.²⁹

More research is needed, but these transfers likely involve a combination of purchase and appropriation, likely to the disadvantage of the mostly uneducated local population. In addition to loss of land rights due to concessions or private holdings, there is increasing competition over land access in the green belt area due to the expansion of crop agriculture. Reports exist of people from the neighbouring Teso sub-region moving into this zone to start farming (as well as becoming involved in local politics).³⁰ These wetter areas have long been important sources of pasture and water for herds in the dry season, with large numbers of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists moving westward into these areas. While shared-use agreements with farming communities may be possible, such negotiations would ideally need a pro-pastoral policy environment and support from local leaders.

The formal institutions and structures for land administration and management in Karamoja are either non-existent or, where they exist, operationally weak, understaffed and poorly facilitated. As of October 2018, Kotido was the only district in Karamoja that had recruited a qualified district lands officer. The positions in the other districts were either vacant or held by a staff member acting in that particular capacity. Abim had done away with the position altogether due to lack of wages.³¹ District land boards exist in some districts but remain weak.³² Sub-county-level area land committees (ALCs) are in place, but most members have little knowledge as to their responsibilities. Such bodies are reported to be easily swayed by elites to allow land transfers at the expense of the poor.³³ Corruption is also alleged, as in the case of an ALC in Abim that charged people for lodging a case, for visiting a piece of land under discussion and for transport to the site.³⁴

As in Karamoja, private investors also contribute to land disputes in northern Uganda. An assessment by Mercy Corps (2011) found that this was due in part to a failure on the part of some investors to engage with local communities in a transparent fashion and mistrust of outsiders by locals. Cases of land appropriation by the state are also common (Levine, 2016). Land disputes that arose following the return from camps can go unresolved for years and have at times led to violence (Levine, 2016). Local populations have expressed eroded confidence in both formal and customary institutions to manage the land issues (Levine, 2016).

²⁹ FGD with members of Kapedo sub-county ALC, Kaabong District, 21 August 2018.

³⁰ KII, Mr Fideli Omugetum, Chairman, Ethur Elders' Council (*Othem Abiro*), Abim District, 26 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

³¹ See Min. 03/ADC/14/9/2016, Reading, reactions and adoption of the previous minutes, in Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the 1st Session of the 3rd Council of Abim District Council held on the 14th September 2016 at Abim Hospital Hall, p. 17.

³² KII, Mr Lomilo Charles, Secretary, District Land Board, Napak District Local Government, 1 September 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

³³ KII, Mr Nelson Olwit Otim, Acting Chief Accounting Officer, and Secretary District Land Board, Abim District Local Government, 27 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

³⁴ KII, Mr Fideli Omugetum, Chairman, Ethur Elders' Council (*Othem Abiro*), Abim District, 26 August 2018 (interviewed by Frank Muhereza).

Cash sales of land have also become increasingly common since the end of the war in northern Uganda (Mercy Corps, 2011). In addition to gendered intrafamilial conflict, there are reports of intergenerational disputes over land. Youth are more likely to sell family land to access cash, which may be driven by youth seeking other employment opportunities in lieu of the agricultural livelihoods of their parents (Mercy Corps, 2011).

This pattern and ensuing tensions are exacerbated by the fact that most land in Acholiland is communally owned by families, enabling one owner to sell it without the consent of others. Research by Joireman (2018) confirmed that a growing youth population contributes to the trend of youth selling land to gain cash to invest in other livelihoods. As a result, there are widespread perceptions that youth are the instigators of conflict in intrafamilial land disputes (Joireman, 2018). The resolution of intergenerational land conflicts is typically mediated by clan leaders, who manage boundary disputes and minor land issues (Joireman, 2018). A decision reached through this traditional mechanism, however, is often not well respected or enforceable, particularly due to erosion of traditional mechanisms during the conflict.

On the other hand, children and young people can also be the victims of land grabbing in northern Uganda, particularly those without a “well-intentioned” guardian who can help ensure their right to customary land (Joireman, 2018). The LRA conflict resulted in widespread orphanhood, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation by land grabbers. Older family members have reportedly at times blocked land claims by those who were minors during the conflict. The ability of these children to access this land depends either on a family member who acts as a steward for these claims or on customary leaders who are willing and able to enforce children’s customary land rights (Joireman, 2018).

Conclusions and implications

A tenuous peace

It is widely agreed that Karamoja is more peaceful than it has been in many decades. There are, however, several reasons why this peace is tenuous. At present, the relative peace is largely maintained by the presence of the UPDF, who continue to engage in activities normally performed by police forces. Recent memories of the brutality of forced disarmament means that people are unlikely to rearm while the UPDF remains in the area. Representatives of security agencies interviewed in Karamoja between August and September 2018 cited the continuing use of one to three guns during cattle thefts; it is assumed that these guns are amongst those not surrendered during the disarmament. In addition, some observers believe that many weapons remain hidden throughout the region and in caches across the border, and that remobilization could happen relatively quickly (Hickey *et al.*, 2016). Ultimately, while disarmament may have brought peace to Karamoja, the campaign addressed the symptom of the insecurity – that is, the weapons – without effectively addressing underlying destabilizing factors, including poverty, marginalization, erosion of livelihoods and inadequate policy or programmatic support for the lives or livelihoods in the region. Some of this is gradually changing as a result of economic growth and diversification of opportunities, but it is unclear if the pace of change will be adequate to meet the needs and aspirations of the population. Much of this growth is taking place in urban areas, and a growing number of young people are migrating to these areas in hopes of taking advantage of these opportunities. However, there are inadequate national and local investments in urban development in both Karamoja and the north-central region. Most NGO interventions are also predominantly rural. In the foreseeable future, the demand for urban employment and services will likely continue to outpace the supply, a condition that could have the potential to contribute to urban crime and migration out of the region.

Another threat to the peace in Karamoja is the lack of disarmament of neighbouring groups and the continued raiding incursions across the borders. Raiders from both Toposa and Turkana continue to pose security threats to herders and communities in Karamoja, providing a strong defensive motivation to rearm. Numerous cattle thefts were reported along the Kenyan border in both Kotido and Kaabong Districts in October 2018 and were confirmed by security agencies. It is widely known that the Turkana conceal their firearms when entering Karamoja to access dry season grazing,³⁵ notwithstanding efforts by the UPDF to prevent them from crossing into Uganda while armed.³⁶ Poorer households with small herds are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of raiding because of the difficulties in rebuilding herds from a small base. Losing a few animals for these households can bring potentially devastating effects upon livelihoods.

³⁵ See Min. No. 31/COU/01/2017 in Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Tenth Council of Kotido District Local Government held on Friday 31st January 2017 at the Youth Centre (former Court Hall), p. 14.

³⁶ In a security meeting held between the brigade commander and the leaders of the Jie and Turkana on 7 January 2017, it had been agreed that “no Turkana would be allowed to cross into Uganda with firearms; they would keep to their known traditional grazing zones, rather than penetrating deep into Uganda; areas for Turkana grazing be demarcated clearly.” See Minute No. 31/COU/01/2017 in *Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Tenth Council of Kotido District Local Government held on Friday 31st January 2017 at the Youth Centre (former Court Hall)*, p. 15.

As discussed in this paper, those who lose herds are more likely to shift to crop production and to experience a gendered shift in household responsibilities. Given the precarious nature of cultivation in a semi-arid region and the already extreme time burden on women, these shifts are likely to increase vulnerability to food insecurity.

A third threat to peace in the region comes from the continuing instability in South Sudan. The earlier extended civil war in the Sudan resulted in a reliable and steady flow of arms into Karamoja from traders and armed groups. It is unknown if weapons are again coming into Karamoja from South Sudan, but history indicates that conflict and upheaval spread readily in the region.

Peace in northern Uganda is more secure than in Karamoja due to the movement of the LRA out of the region. As in Karamoja, however, structural issues that underpinned the conflict have not been effectively resolved, including northerners' sense of economic and political marginalization from the wealthier southern part of the country. President Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) party has little support in the north, due in part to the government and military's somewhat ambivalent role in the LRA conflict. However, the president does not require northern support for electoral success, which primarily depends on the pro-NRM southern constituencies (Kustenbauder, 2010). As such, the incentives for political inclusion of the northern region have been minimal for the president. The political dividends he has gained from years of instability and conflict will take significant time to remedy.

The structural inequality between the north and the south is deeply entrenched in Uganda's colonial history, when northern labour was exploited for commercial projects in the south (Kustenbauder, 2010). Following the end of LRA violence, the country received significant foreign assistance, which currently makes up approximately 7.4 percent of Uganda's gross national income (Development Initiatives, 2019). The Ugandan government relies on this external assistance, and low levels of development in northern and northeastern Uganda provide justification for continued solicitation of aid from donors. This reliance on aid further weakens the government's incentives to develop effective governance to deliver services, particularly to populations in the north (Development Initiatives, 2019).

The slow pace of change

A huge amount of donor funds has been invested in Karamoja and northern Uganda, and there are often complaints of minimal visible impact, particularly in Karamoja. Issues of limited capacity, low education and high illiteracy and endemic corruption certainly play major roles. In addition, many of the programmes face uphill battles in effecting behaviour change and in countering decades of reliance on outside assistance. For instance, behaviour change campaigns around WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) have realized relatively few results due to cultural beliefs about best practices. Pregnant women, for example, fear using pit latrines due a belief that the baby could fall out of the womb and into the pit. In addition, inadequate trainings and investments in building the latrines mean that the pits are often too shallow or the structures incomplete, compounding people's dislike of them.

The limited impact of such programmes is in line with the research, which demonstrates that information alone is insufficient to stimulate behaviour change (Avis, 2016). Campaigns and programmes that aim to change behaviours at the individual, community or social level must also create supportive social environments that encourage regular dialogue and participation of programme participants. Furthermore, individuals' behaviour is highly dependent on relationships that guide psychological and social decision-making in different contexts (Avis, 2016). Based on results from a programme implemented by Concern Worldwide to improve child nutrition outcomes in Karamoja, behaviour change required counseling and negotiation skills to accompany information campaigns (Fernandes, 2013). Building relationships with community members and ensuring that household-level relationships reinforce, rather than undermine, information are key to successful change.

A structural problem for the Karamoja region is the long-standing expectation of receiving food aid. This issue is perhaps most pronounced amongst local officials and authorities. For example, although 2016 was generally a bumper harvest, in November of that year (post-harvest) the district councilman of Kotido reported that much of the population was food insecure. He said that "in a bid to lobby for support, we also need to resolve and declare our district hunger stricken," and hence the district council "unanimously resolved to declare itself food insecure."³⁷

The expectation of aid also exists amongst at least some segments of the population. Research for a doctoral thesis published in 2015 found that many individuals in Moroto District said that, if food aid were to cease, they would either starve or migrate to a region where aid was available (Acaye, 2015). Changing these perceptions will require more economic opportunities and governance mechanisms that incentivize better administration of land and resources to bolster resilience of vulnerable communities. Widespread corruption in the public sector has further eroded the social contract between the national and local governments and the populations of northern and northeastern Uganda; this lack of trust will continue to be a barrier to productive public administration.

The nature of interventions

Often interventions in both Karamoja and northern Uganda are place based, such as extension programmes in rural areas or vocational skills training programmes in urban or peri-urban locations. In reality, the population – and in particular the youth population – is not place based. They are moving between rural and urban areas in search of better work, social freedoms, investment opportunities and improvements in the lives of their children. In addition, while remittances are often presumed to flow from urban to rural locations, data from both northern Uganda and Karamoja indicate that the exchange occurs in both directions. The primary goal of an urbanite sending money home is to provide economic support; the primary goal of the rural dweller sending money or goods to urban areas is to maintain and support social ties. Most place-based interventions fail to take into account this dynamic and the fluidity between these economic, social and locational spheres.

³⁷ See Min. No. 19/COU/09/2016 in Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Tenth Council of Kotido District Local Government held on Friday 28th November 2016 at the Youth Centre (former Court Hall), p. 22.

In addition, many of the place-based interventions do not consider the changing nature of these areas more broadly. In Karamoja, for instance, farming programmes need to be aware of the fragility of cultivation as a livelihood strategy and should seek to encourage farmers to diversify with other activities, including raising small ruminants and poultry. At the same time, the data from this and other pastoral regions indicate that small-scale herders are particularly vulnerable to loss of livestock and associated destitution. Market expansion – a popular theme in many development programmes – may do little to stop and may even expedite this trend, as struggling pastoralists engage in distress sales and are left with few resources. In northern Uganda, young people are looking to urban centres for new opportunities and ways of life, but the dearth of support, skills and services in these areas contribute to a precarious existence. At the same time, more than a decade after the end of the conflict, steep challenges remain for rural communities. Interventions after the conflict sought to return people home, provide training and input support for crop production and revamp basic services (such as education, health and water). Despite the interventions, agricultural incomes did not grow as fast as had been expected, and the proportion of population living in absolute poverty did not decline as fast as in other regions of Uganda. To illustrate, 34.7 percent of people in Acholi lived in absolute poverty in 2016/2017, compared to the national average of 27 percent (Karamoja was 60.8 percent).

Diversification at the household level in both regions is key to livelihood sustainability and resilience. Interventions often seek to support or promote diversification with skills training or micro-loans for small businesses. However, data from both these geographic areas illustrate that diversifying can come with costs.

In northern Uganda, for instance, the SLRC data show that people with more diverse livelihoods are more likely to pull children from school – whether to engage in these activities or to help with domestic tasks is unknown. In Karamoja, many people have shifted into agriculture. While this was for many initially an attempt to diversify out of livestock, people with few animals have difficulty maintaining or rebuilding a herd after a shock. A number of these farmers now fall into the group of the very poor who have no livestock holdings and are entirely at the mercy of the weather and crop cycle. Programmes such as the introduction of improved seeds may help people make a shift into more balanced or improved crop production, but such interventions to date have not been sustainable without subsidization from outside actors.

The recent trajectories of recovery in Karamoja and northern Uganda are remarkably similar, even while the context, livelihoods and challenges in each location are importantly unique. National actors should not seek to derive combined approaches or policies that lump together these two areas. In both cases, however, the lived reality, history and experiences of the population should be central to designing appropriate, effective and sustainable responses to the ongoing obstacles to a stable peace and full recovery.

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ISBN 978-92-5-131747-1



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CA5760EN/1/11.19