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# The Impact of Insecurity on Livelihood and Social Service Provision in Kotido District

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## **UNDP HDI Violent Conflict:**

### **The impact of insecurity on livelihood and social service provision in Kotido district:** (By Nangiro Simon)

#### **Introduction:**

From January 2002 to date, Oxfam GB Kotido field office has been keeping a daily digest of insecurity incidences. This summary is an attempt to analysis the nature and impact of insecurity on livelihood and social service provision in Kotido district. It is based on Oxfam GB Kotido project field experience of living and working with the pastoral women and men in Kotido district.

#### **Background:**

Karamoja lies in the northeastern corner of Uganda, bordering Sudan and Kenya. It is divided into three administrative districts namely, Kotido in the north, Moroto in the centre and Nakapiripirit in the south. The name Karamoja is today used to include all the inhabitants of Karamoja. Karamoja region is semi-arid, with an average rainfall of 500-700mm per annum, variable in space and time. In response to these environmental conditions, the Karimojong take on extensive livestock keeping as their principal economic activity. They supplement this by opportunistically maintaining small gardens and fields of local crops.

Karamoja presents a unique development challenge for unlike the rest of Uganda it is semi-arid, and characterised by a combination of acute poverty, vulnerability to drought, poor infrastructure and basic social services delivery, limited marketing opportunities, natural resource degradation, social and cultural marginalisation, long-standing dependency on external aid and most importantly chronic insecurity. The region is the least socially and economically developed in Uganda, even among the generally poorer parts of northern Uganda as a whole.

Both the colonial and post-colonial governments viewed the Karimojong pastoralists production system and way of life as chaotic, outdated, economically unproductive, and environmentally destructive. Efforts were therefore made to settle them through imposition of boundaries, gazetting of land for game and forest reserves, restriction of movement to dry season grazing areas, forced de-stocking, marginalisation of customary institutions, and the intensification of cropping. With the result that there was increased competition for the already limited scarce resources leading to a declines of average herd sizes and destitution of pastoralist households. With no alternative to pastoralism, livestock raiding has emerged as a key livelihood strategy by some.

The failure, of Government and other development actors to address pastoral destitution has encouraged the 'institutionalisation' of violent conflict and raiding as part of pastoralism in Karamoja. Not surprisingly conflict is chronic and is part of daily life. The heavy militarization of the region arising from many years of misrule and breakdown of administration in Uganda has created a situation in which lawlessness; deprivation of life and property and gun yielding has become the order of the day.

The human impact of raiding and conflict in Karamoja is difficult to quantify. Gray (2000) reports that of more than 300 women interviewed during 1998 and 1999, virtually every one had lost either a husband or at least one male child to intra-tribal violence within the Karimojong. Raiding has become a major cause of poverty, removing a household's assets at a stroke. Ocan (1992) found in fieldwork that out of 160 respondents in Karamoja, 47 had lost cattle completely. The increased scale of raiding, particularly in the last decade, has led to periodic displacement of communities within Karamoja itself and in neighbouring districts and is also suggested to have had environmental impacts through the tendency of pastoralists to concentrate livestock for added security. The militarisation of Karamoja society has also had an impact on cultural institutions, and destruction of livelihood survival strategies.

According to the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) of IGAD, approximately seven hundred and twenty five (725) people were killed and 18,875 livestock were lost in the Karamoja region between June 2003 and April 2004. This high number of people killed and livestock lost depicts how grave the problem is and is more likely to continue to more suffering and loss of livelihoods and displacements.

In Uganda today the majority of street children and women estimated at over 20,000 in major towns such as Mbale, Iganga, Jinja and Kampala are from the Karamoja region. These are direct victims of poverty and insecurity in Karamoja.

**Context: Causes of Insecurity and its manifestation:**

Insecurity manifests itself in form of cattle raids, road banditry, looting of villages, properties and killing of people. These are frequent and indiscriminate in times of hardships such as drought, inter-communal conflicts and during clashes that may involve government forces against LRA rebels or armed pastoralists.

**Livestock Raids:** As already noted pastoral poverty and destitution has encouraged the adoption of violent conflict and raiding as part of pastoralism in Karamoja. This occurs in the form of inter-ethnic cattle raiding, often pitting one group against one another in a series of successive counter and revenge raids. Small groups of two to five youth steal small number of livestock, which if unchecked climaxes into communal raids involving a whole tribe. This situation is worse during times of hardship such food insecurity and worsens when there are no concrete interventions from government to mitigate the situation.

Livestock raiding is not confined to Karimojong pastoralist people alone but also their immediate neighbors in the Karimojong cluster and the neighboring districts. The nature of raids has since become complex and gruesome on the immediate people involved. 90 percent of reported cattle raiding incidences occur in the mobile Kraals and settlements during the night.

**Loss of livestock and lives:** As a result of raiding, many people have lost their cattle to raiders and are left with no other alternative to resort to. This leads cyclical raiding and to absolute poverty on the victims. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 for example, the Dodoth raided the Turkana of Kenya who were grazing their livestock in Dodoth territory. According to the Turkana District Veterinary Department 17,400 people crossed over to Uganda with 58,800 cattle, 145,000 shoats and 5,880 donkeys. After the conflict 8,715 cattle, 7,250 shoats and 527 donkeys died due to lack of water and 2,915 cattle 7,250 shoats and 174 donkeys were lost to the raiders. Sources from Turkana (Kenya) said that, the area around Oropoi was all littered with carcasses as thousands of livestock and human beings clustered around this small center stressing the already scarce water sources.

**Disruption of cropping activities:** People fear to tilt their gardens for fear of being attacked by raiders and has led to the abandonment of farm lands especially those whose gardens are far from settlements. Raiders have in the recent past abducted people from their gardens and forced them to reveal where livestock are kept. The victims are often tortured or killed and women and girls are raped or abducted as wives. Ripe gardens are harvested.

**High way road banditry:** High way banditry gave a new face and impetus to the insecurity and conflict, often targeting money and valuables for sale including livestock on transit. The victims have been travelers, the business community and service providers.

Road banditry is frequent on road highways where over 100 people have lost their lives in different ambushes along isolated spots between 2003 and 2004 alone. Twice Oxfam GB Kotido project staff has involve in road ambushes in December 2002 and in February 2003 along highways in Karamoja in which staff were injured and lost property.

Insecurity has made difficult and in some cases impossible for many households to sell their cattle to the markets. Over ten lorries ferrying livestock have been ambushed along the Kotido-Mbale highway. Acts such as these led to a decrease in cattle trade due to fear of loosing cattle to the raiders. Road banditry reduced earnings from livestock marketing as the following record illustrates.

Date	Sales in Uganda shillings
13 November 2002	53,519 314.00
11 December 2002	15,464,000.00
15 January 2003	5,100 000.00
5 March 2003	4,121 600.00

**Government disarmament and Indiscipline from Government Forces:** Where there is tension and distrust between the security agencies and the local communities such as when enforcing law and order, violence sometimes erupts. In the face of these brutalities and violence, there have been human rights abuse issues. The government program for disarmament in the region is still on, aimed at removing all illegally owned guns from the area. This has not been an easy exercise and often led to clashes that often spill over to widespread communal violence<sup>1</sup>. In Kotido the Jie warriors resisted provoking equal reaction from the government forces (UPDF). In May 2002, Panyangara Sub County experienced a violent conflict in which 900 households were left without livelihood support items. A Number of organizations helped the victims to rebuild their lives and livelihood. Oxfam supported distribution of Non Food Items worth over Ugh.100 million in the area.

There have been cases where robbery and killings has been associated with security forces such as the local administration police (LAPs), and the army. In 2002 two UPDF soldiers killed an Irish catholic priest Fr. Declan Otoole of Panyangara mission Kotido as he was travelling from Moroto to Kotido.

**The Lords Resistance Army (LRA) rebels activities:** The activities of the LRA in northern Uganda especially in the neighbouring districts of Katakwi, Soroti, Kaberemaido, Lira, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader from southern Sudan caused a lot of displacement in these areas. This led to the displacement of over 3000 children whom the humanitarian agencies are supporting in Kotido district. Those captured were turned into child soldiers.

The LRA infiltrated Kotido district and attacked Abim trading center 75 kilometres from the Oxfam Kotido Town district head quarters. The Target for the rebels included attempts to replenish drugs through attacking and looting health facilities and in July 2003, Abim Hospital and Morulem health centre were ransacked off supplies.

**Impact on social services:** Experience shows that increased insecurity affected the delivery of social services in the Kotido district such as health, education, water and shortage of supplies such as food, fuel. Development initiatives have stagnated or are performing at lowest capacity. The Government agents and other service providers are escorted by heavily armed guards during the execution of their duties, which creates an additional financial burden usually not budgeted

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<sup>1</sup> Twice the UPDF have clashed the people of Panyangara in the process of disarmament.

for. This has disrupted the surveillance and monitoring of diseases, as well as organisation and delivery of health care. These have affected the population, particularly children, who die of curable and preventable diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea.

The raids have led to the destruction of health and educational infrastructure. During raids, hospital facilities are overstretched and staff overwhelmed. In raids, between 50-100 men are usually wounded from the average of between 150-300 people who participate in a raid. Many Health Workers and teachers desert their work for fear of being killed in these skirmishes. Between 2003 and 2004 2 health workers and 5 teachers were killed in their duty stations.

### **Conclusion and Policy implications**

The causes of insecurity in Karamoja are complex however, pastoral poverty and underdevelopment is at the heart and as such calls for the development of national and sectoral policies on pastoral development if the root causes of conflict is to be sought (Rob walker 2002). There is need for the development of an overarching policy on pastoralism which, better identifies causes of poverty in pastoral areas, recognises continuing viability of mobile pastoralism and supports pastoralists' right to choose their livelihood strategy. The policies should Identify priorities, principles and approaches for pastoral areas, in relation to: land tenure, management of natural resources, livelihood diversification, drought management, appropriate formal and non formal education provision, livestock health services, disease control and marketing, appropriate preventive human health services, appropriate development and management of water sources, infrastructure and telecommunications and countering biases and misperceptions about pastoralism.

Uganda has an opportunity to mainstream pastoral issues into existing and emerging policies, legislation and planning frameworks such as the poverty eradication action plan (PEAP), the plan for modernization of Agriculture (PMA), the National Land Policy and National Land Use Policy. The Draft policy on improvement of veterinary services Draft Mines Bill and Policy and legislation on Wildlife Reserves among others.

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