

BRIEFING PAPER

Adaptation and Resilience: Responses to Changing Dynamics in Northern Karamoja, Uganda

Elizabeth Stites and Carrie Stefansky Huisman
November 18, 2010

Introduction

The research informing this briefing paper is part of an ongoing collaboration between the Feinstein International Center (FIC) of Tufts University and Save the Children in Uganda (SCiUG), and funded by USAID Food for Peace.¹ The objective of the fieldwork, in August 2010, was to better understand how communities in northern Karamoja have adjusted their livelihood strategies in response to changes in the past five years in international humanitarian policy, protection threats, and erosion of traditional livestock-based livelihood assets and opportunities.

Later research within this project will include a value-chain analysis examining commodities that have the potential to increase household income and food security in the region, as well as a synopsis of the existing literature concerning changing dynamics in livelihoods, food security, and conflict. A final synthesis report will be released in 2011 upon completion of these three study aspects and will serve as a resource for academics, policy-makers, and practitioners.

This briefing paper consists of a short discussion of the research methods followed by a summary of key findings regarding food security, food aid, livelihoods, and security. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations. As one portion of a larger study, the recommendations here are intentionally broad. More detailed recommendations will be included in the synthesis report released at the end of the project.

Methods

Research was conducted by a Tufts team in 10 sub-counties in Kaabong and Kotido districts over a 13-day period in August 2010. The team visited 9 communities, conducted urban interviews in 2 locations, and met with 5 international non-governmental organizations, 4 community based organizations,² and several local district officials. The team also met with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Kampala. Two teams of interviewers³ spoke with male and female

¹ USAID FFP is providing support to SCiUG for this work as part of the Livelihoods, Insecurity, and Value Chains Examination (LIVE) project.

² The team met primarily with Livelihoods and/or Food Security specialists at each of the international and local institutions.

³ One team consisted of an international researcher and a translator; the other team consisted of a Ugandan researcher and a research assistant.

respondents in 26 focus group discussions.⁴ Interviewers recorded data in notebooks and later transcribed the interviews. Coding and analysis were done with the NVivo 8 qualitative software program.

The research team interviewed respondents from the Dodoth, Jie, Ik, and Nyangia population groups, and gathered data in rural areas, district trading centers, and a resettlement site. The data and findings refer specifically to the study sample; thus, this study should not be considered representative of the wider population. Rather, the data reflect a snapshot of individual and collective experiences and perspectives on recent changes and events. We feel, however, that these findings provide important insights into current livelihood strategies and changes over time in northern Karamoja. Where possible, we make reference to how some of these patterns and trends appear to be similar or different to those noted elsewhere in Karamoja.

FINDINGS

Food Security

Status at time of research

Food security was still precarious in most locations as the field work was conducted before the harvest, and most respondents said that hunger remained a paramount concern. However, conditions were considered better than in previous years due to more reliable rains, which had led to both a greater supply of wild greens and better animal health, resulting in more milk. Wild vegetables were cited as the most commonly consumed food in most sites, and early or immature crops (including pumpkin, watermelon, tomatoes, and sorghum) were eaten in some locations.⁵ Young people working in Kotido town reported slightly better diets and were able to eat more beans and posho (ground maize), and respondents in the Moruitit resettlement site mixed greens with posho provided by Mercy Corps.⁶ Diets were slightly more diverse at study sites in the mountainous areas of Karenga and Kalapata in Kaabong, which is in line with greater diversity of cultivation in these areas.⁷

Consumption of residue (the dregs from making traditional beer) was mentioned in six locations in Kaabong and Kotido in August 2010.⁸ This is in contrast to research in Moroto and Nakapiripirit in 2009, in which consumption of residue was mentioned in nearly all study locations. This likely implies better food security in the northern sites at the time of the

⁴ Of these 26 focus group discussions, 12 were held with women only (split between female elders and female youth), 12 were with men only (split between male elders and male youth), and 2 were with groups of mixed gender (in locations where separation was difficult). Approximately 21 men, women, and youth were also interviewed at a local market in Kaabong town center.

⁵ Respondents indicated that they would not normally consume immature crops, but did so due to a lack of other alternatives.

⁶ Interview with Jie and Dodoth women, Moruitit resettlement camp, Kotido-Kaabong border, August 12, 2010.

⁷ At a manyatta in Kalapata, for instance, male youth listed maize, cabbage, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, sorghum, and cassava as crops they would grow when security allowed regular movement to their fields. Interview with Dodoth male youth, Kalapata sub-county, Kaabong, August 13, 2010.

⁸ Residue was listed as a regularly consumed food item (by adults and children) in locations in Rengen, Panyangara (2 locations), and Kacheri sub-counties in Kotido, Lolelia sub-county in Kaabong, and Kotido town council.

research, but could alternatively reflect a shortage of sorghum for brewing and hence less residue for consumption.⁹

Changes over time and resulting adaptations

Karamoja is characterized by persistent cyclical drought and extreme climate variability.¹⁰ The region has experienced drought conditions for the past four to five years, but experienced higher rainfall in 2010. We asked respondents to recall a period in recent memory “when things were better,” or “before these recent years of drought.” Respondents discussed the ways in which food access and availability have changed in the intervening years and how individuals, households, and communities have adjusted to these changes. Major changes and adaptations included:

- Decrease in the overall diversity of foods in the diet and in the frequency of meals;
- Decreased reliance on animal products (mainly milk, blood, and meat);
- Decreased availability of cultivated crops (sorghum, millet, pumpkin, and other vegetables);
- Increase in foraged wild foods in the diet (collected mainly by women) with low nutritional value;
- Increase in wild game in diets in some areas, including monkeys and foxes (hunted by men);
- Increased portion of purchased food in the diet, funded through the collection and sale of natural resources (predominately by women¹¹);
- Increased consumption of residue, usually acquired through the barter of firewood or as payment for casual labor (generally by women). When available, cash is used to buy sorghum or other cereals;
- Increase in sale of small or unhealthy livestock to buy food at markets (animals usually sold by men, but sometimes by women);
- Shift towards agriculture in more fertile areas (such as Karenga and Kalapata in Kaabong) and decrease in livestock production;
- Recent decrease in food aid availability from previous years.

Respondents reported a decline in overall wellbeing, with the loss of dietary diversity considered the main cause of worsening health. For instance, many respondents said that heavy reliance on wild greens increased diarrhea in children. A group of elderly women in Kaabong stated:

⁹ Data were collected in Moroto and/or Nakapiripirit in February, April, May, and November in 2009. As fieldwork did not take place in August and was not representative, we cannot make definitive comparisons on the overall level of food security, but posit that the less frequent mention of residue consumption in northern Karamoja is indicative of differences in food availability and access.

¹⁰ See J.E. Ellis and D. M. Swift (1988), "Stability of African pastoral ecosystems: Alternate paradigms and implications for development," *Journal of Range Management* 41(6): 450-459.

¹¹ Men are increasingly engaged in collection and sale of “building poles” which are carried to markets. Men also often help with charcoal production. See Stites et al., “Foraging and Fighting: Community Perspectives on Natural Resources and Conflict in southern Karamoja,” Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, August 2010.

We used to grow more things, but the rain disappeared. Prior to these years of drought we had plenty of food. We also used to rely more on food items derived from animals. Everyone was healthier—even old women like us would have been fat and healthy.¹²

The most prevalent shift in food security strategies in recent years is the move from own production of livestock and crops to market purchase. One of the repercussions of this shift towards markets is a growth in the cash economy, with some male respondents stressing the new importance of cash in their lives,¹³ and many respondents discussing regular use of cash in trade and exchange.

2010 Harvest

The research was conducted shortly before the harvest, and respondents in most communities felt relatively optimistic about the predicted yield of this harvest in comparison to recent years. However, respondents in nearly every study site expressed concern about disease in the sorghum crop, usually referred to as *ebuta* or *edeke ao* (bee or honey disease). A representative from the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) in Kampala explained that fungal diseases of “honey dew” and “black smut” are endemic to Karamoja, and commonly occur when households do not have annual access to certified seed.¹⁴ Respondents reported that while large portions of the sorghum crop would be lost, they expected to harvest the unaffected parts of each plant by hand.

Discussion

Food security was improving in northern Karamoja at the time of the research due to early crops, better rains, and greater access to milk products. Hunger, however, remained the most pressing concern among respondents. A decrease in the diversity and quantity of food consumed is associated with declining health, particularly for already vulnerable populations, such as young children. The past five years of drought also impacted livelihoods and the environment, as more individuals are engaging in resource exploitation, casual labor, and the sale of livestock in order to gain the income needed to purchase basic food commodities. With insecurity continuing to be a major problem, women are facing increased risk of attack as they venture farther from home to collect food and resources. Simultaneously, the move away from livestock-based production systems will fundamentally change the region’s land-use system, which may increase the long-term vulnerability of households to drought.

Experience has made communities, households and individuals highly aware of their own vulnerability to climate, disease, market shocks, and the policies of external actors. This same level of awareness is not always apparent in outsiders working in the region. For instance, communities expressed concern about the problems in the sorghum crop, but most organizations and officials were either unaware of the disease or did not believe that its negative effects would be as severe as predicted by communities.

¹² Interview with Dodoth elderly women, Sidok sub-county, Kaabong, August 18, 2010.

¹³ Interviews with male youth in Rengen sub-county, Kotido, August 7th; Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9th; Kacheri sub-county, Kotido, August 10th; and Karenga sub-county, Kaabong, August 14th; and with male elders in Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9th.

¹⁴ Email from Agnes Atyang, Ag. FEWS NET Representative, August 25, 2010.

Though this year's rains are garnering more optimism among communities and organizations alike, Karamoja's unpredictable climate means that food insecurity will continue to underpin vulnerability, and will need to be continually assessed by stakeholders in the region.

Food Aid

In rural study locations respondents discussed their experiences and expectations regarding WFP's new food assistance strategy implemented earlier this year, the Karamoja Productive Assets Program (KPAP). WFP promotes KPAP as an ambitious program to help communities become more self-sufficient by building both physical assets¹⁵ and skills in project planning and management. At the time of the research, WFP was providing general food rations only to extremely vulnerable households (EVHs) without an able-bodied member, but these rations are due to stop at the end of November 2010.¹⁶

Respondents at most sites reported the existence of nearby "food-for-work programs,"¹⁷ and many said they were participating or had participated in these projects. Respondents seemed well-informed about certain aspects of the new strategy (such as the project-based nature), but lacked clarity on others (such as how vulnerable individuals were targeted for relief). Complaints fall into three broad categories discussed below: decrease in quantity and diversity of food aid, lack of inclusion in the new strategy, and problems with the mechanics of KPAP.

Quantity and Diversity

WFP argues that the food provided to participants in projects is meant to be an incentive, not a complete food basket.¹⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, the most common complaint among participants was that the food received is inadequate. Respondents reported that one 25kg bag of maize was provided per registered household, but that this food was not always distributed to all who participated in the work. In one location in Kotido district, respondents stated that each household received "one mug of maize" for work on a project.¹⁹ In most sites, the food was shared with households who did not receive assistance; as a result, the aid reportedly lasted just one to three days. Respondents were also disappointed that rations included only maize, and expressed preference for beans, oil and salt.

Lack of inclusion in the new projects

Respondents in all locations were eager to be involved in the KPAP projects, and were concerned that only a small number of people were officially included on the rosters. In many cases, respondents participated in the projects without being officially registered in the hopes that they would receive some aid, or that those who did receive food would share with all who worked. Exclusion of certain categories of people—such as the elderly, moderately disabled, and pregnant women—was the source of frequent complaints. This was compounded by confusion as to how rations "for the vulnerable" were to be distributed. Respondents were quick to identify

¹⁵ Assets within the program currently include: dams, group farms, and energy-saving stoves. These will likely be expanded to include other productive assets in year two of KPAP.

¹⁶ OCHA, "Uganda Humanitarian Update, September-October 2010." Available at <http://reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MDCS-8BBH5K?OpenDocument>

¹⁷ Respondents usually used "food for work" to describe the projects, rather than "productive assets."

¹⁸ Interview with Jimi Richardson, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, WFP, Kampala, August 19, 2010.

¹⁹ Interview with Jie women, Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9, 2010.

disabled and vulnerable people who were not receiving aid. This was presumably because such households contained able-bodied members who could join the work projects; however, in some instances, these individuals were not themselves officially registered. This targeting error and/or communication gap is resulting in widespread sharing of the food that is provided (whether as vulnerable rations or as part of the productive asset program), meaning that even the extremely vulnerable are not receiving adequate rations. While acknowledging these challenges, WFP recognizes the great demand for their projects, and hopes to increase participation by nearly fifty percent in the second year of the strategy.²⁰

Mechanics of the new strategy

Views differed as to the benefits of working for food as opposed to receiving free food aid. Some respondents seemed disappointed that “now we have to work for the food aid,” while others stated that they were “tired of receiving aid.”²¹ Respondents in many locations expressed an interest in greater self-reliance and were in favor of food-for-work. However, there was only mild support for the type of new assets being created and for the larger system. Respondents were disappointed with the short time-span of many of the projects (one to two months), explaining that they needed food over a longer and more consistent period. A representative from WFP agreed, recognizing that the

Women in at least one location stated that pregnant or breast-feeding women were not allowed to work on the projects (thereby disqualifying the majority of women in their reproductive years) and thus “had to rely on the men.”²³ Critically, participating in KPAP projects made it very difficult for women to provide food for their families through collection of wild greens or sale of firewood—their main food security strategies. Women at the same site discussed the difficulties of engaging in manual labor without food, and complained that in order to participate they had to leave their children at home alone. They said, “It is difficult to come home from workdays tired but with nothing to feed our families...[But] if we don’t want to or cannot work for one to two days, they remove our names from the register.”²⁴

Discussion

Most of the complaints relate to a gap between the objectives of the new WFP policy and the expectations of the intended beneficiaries. For instance, issues raised about the exclusion of vulnerable groups may be due to a lack of sensitization on WFP’s definition of extremely vulnerable households (EVHs). However, regardless of perceptions at the community level, there appears to be a targeting error whereby many households with a vulnerable member are not receiving food through the productive assets program and, if they do receive assistance, this food is delivered in small amounts at distant intervals, is shared widely, and lasts a very short time.

A broader disconnect is over the ultimate goal of the productive assets program and the role of food within this initiative. According to WFP in Kampala, the purpose of KPAP is to support

²⁰ Correspondence with Jimi Richardson, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, WFP, Kampala, November 4, 2010.

²¹ Interview with Dodoth mixed group, Lolelia sub-county, Kaabong, August 18, 2010.

²² Correspondence with Jimi Richardson, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, WFP, Kampala, November 4, 2010.

²³ Interview with Dodoth mixed group, Lolelia sub-county, Kaabong, August 18, 2010.

²⁴ Interview with Dodoth mixed group, Lolelia sub-county, Kaabong, August 18, 2010.

development and recovery and to decrease the amount of resources dedicated to emergency food aid. Thus, food rations are incentives to participate in the program, and are not the end goal of the program itself.²⁵ In contrast, the intended beneficiaries view the work primarily as a means to acquire food, and are thus disappointed by the amount and variety of the food received. From their perspective, not only is the receipt of food conditional for the first time, but also the quantity, diversity and regularity of the food aid has decreased.

Staff members at Action Contre la Faim (ACF), one of WFP's implementing partners, appeared to recognize the inherent tension between the programmers and the communities. An assistant program manager explained that people "still remain focused on the food aspect of food-for-work, rather than the building of assets."²⁶ This has potential repercussions beyond the failure to meet beneficiary expectations, and may mean a low sense of community ownership of the programs. WFP's other main implementing partner in the area, World Vision, adhered to a position closer to that of WFP, saying that "the benefit of the new strategy is that communities are obtaining their own assets using their own capabilities. It is important that people believe in their own potential to build their communities and support their families."²⁷

At WFP's Kampala office, the project is largely viewed as being on the right track, and adjustments for 2011 include expansion of beneficiaries by 50%, and the introduction of various new assets more relevant to different ecological and livelihoods zones.²⁸

Livelihoods

There have been substantive and significant shifts in livelihood strategies in recent years in northern Karamoja as people have adapted to changes in livestock health and management, climate patterns, and security. State policies of disarmament have also influenced livelihood strategies, particularly in Kotido.²⁹

Common livelihood adaptations in response to internal stress and/or external shock include diversification, intensification, and migration.³⁰ These patterns are visible across Karamoja. Households and individuals are intensifying certain strategies, such as natural resource exploitation. This is most apparent in the gathering of wild foods to supplement diets and in the sale of firewood, charcoal, and building poles for cash or food.³¹ Diversification is also widespread and includes engaging in casual labor, adopting new strategies of cultivation, and increased

²⁵ Interview with Jimi Richardson, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, WFP, Kampala, August 19, 2010.

²⁶ Interview with Stephen Ofonya, Assistant Program Manager for Livelihoods & Food Security, ACF, Kaabong, August 16, 2010.

²⁷ Interview with Owodgiu Mathew and Victoria Ateluna, World Vision, Kaabong, August 16, 2010.

²⁸ Correspondence with Jimi Richardson, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, WFP, Kampala, November 4, 2010.

²⁹ Disarmament's effects on livelihood strategies are documented in earlier work by FIC and will not be addressed in detail here. Stites & Akabwai, "Changing Roles, Shifting Risks: Livelihood Impacts of Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda," Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, July 2009.

³⁰ Ian Scoones, "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis," Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, England, IDS Working Paper 72, 1998.

³¹ These patterns of resource exploitation are similar to those practiced in southern Karamoja, which have been documented extensively in previous FIC research and will thus not be discussed in detail here. See Stites et al., "Foraging and Fighting."

engagement in the market economy through the sale, for instance, of food or traditional brew. Migration by individuals or households appears to be occurring to a slightly lesser extent in northern Karamoja than in the central and southern parts of the region,³² but communities do report that many people have departed for Acholi, Kenya, Sudan, or other parts of Karamoja.

Diversification of Livelihood Strategies

Households in Kotido and Kaabong state that in the years prior to the drought, they were able to survive primarily on livestock production and some cultivation.³³ In many areas, diversification of livelihood strategies has been driven by a shift away from livestock due to loss of animals in the drought, the risk of keeping animals in an insecure environment,³⁴ and decreased control of herds under the military's protected kraal system. Diversification into multiple livelihood aspects was not necessary in the past, as explained by a group of Dodoth women: "We didn't used to have to do anything to support our families outside of raising our crops and animals—that used to be enough."³⁵

Three interviews at a Kaabong livestock market indicate a range of market-based strategies, all illustrations of livelihood diversification. The first interview was with a woman from Lolelia sub-county who was at the market to sell her last animal, a young goat. She received 12,000 Ush for the sale, which would buy food for two to three days. In this case, the market serves as an important location for converting assets into quick cash; however, the woman's distress sale is highly unlikely to boost her longer term food security or livelihood prospects.

The next interview, with two women selling food items, provides an example of micro-enterprise. They purchase maize, beans and cowpeas and then resell mixtures for 100 Ush per spoonful. They report making approximately 3,000 Ush per day, only slightly more than the cost of the raw materials, but give half of the pulses and maize to their children. This allows them to provide food for their families while still making a small amount of cash income.

The third interview was with a group of women and girls selling local beer for 100 Ush per mug and 500 Ush per jug. Making traditional beer is common in the manyattas, and the women will accept credit when at home, but only take cash at the market. They can make approximately 10,000 Ush in profit on market days if they produce large quantities. Cash profits usually go towards buying sorghum for the next batch of beer. The leftover residue is taken home as food and is an important secondary profit. The women were pleased to be making even a small income, and felt that this provided a much better livelihood than engaging in casual labor or selling firewood.³⁶

³² Respondents, local officials, key informants and agency staff report a growth of urban areas in northern Karamoja, but not to the same extent as growth of Moroto and towns farther south. Likewise, while people report out-migration to Acholi or to resettlement sites, this does not appear to be on the same scale as is occurring, for instance, in Bokora communities to the south.

³³ Cultivation was much more important in some areas, such as Kalapata and Karenga in Kaabong, than in others due to local ecological conditions.

³⁴ Male youth in Kalapata sub-county explained, "We've lost or gotten rid of all of our livestock because of insecurity. People are now more focused on farming and on gathering wild food." Interview with Dodoth male youth, Kalapata sub-county, Kaabong, August 13, 2010.

³⁵ Interview with Dodoth women, Loyoro sub-county, Kaabong, August 17, 2010.

³⁶ Interview with mixed groups at Kaabong cattle market, August 16, 2010.

As indicated in the above examples, trading centers can provide options for livelihood diversification. The Tufts team interviewed three young people (two men and one woman) in Kotido town who had been trained as boda-boda drivers (motorbike taxis).³⁷ These youth came into town daily to work, returning to their villages each night. The young men are able to survive purely from driving their bodas, while the young woman sought additional casual labor. The three were pleased with their new livelihood strategies, and reported that they are considered the most successful youth in their villages and are greatly admired at home.³⁸

Many other respondents spoke of the difficulties in finding casual jobs in the trading centers due to high demand. Young people in Kotido mentioned this obstacle more frequently than those in Kaabong, and one group of male youth described the “exodus” of people from the rural areas to Kotido town looking for casual work.³⁹ Younger people were more likely to pursue casual labor in towns, and the work differed by gender. Men find jobs unloading lorries, pushing wheelbarrows, or transporting water, and can make about 500 Ush per task or 2,000 Ush per day. Women might find work washing clothes or dishes, cleaning houses, or fetching water.⁴⁰ Respondents were in agreement that women made less money than men in these sorts of casual jobs.

Migration

Migration often occurs in conjunction with livelihood diversification, especially when on an individual, temporary, or seasonal basis. In the context of Karamoja, it is important to distinguish migration from mobility, whereby members of a household move with animals to seasonal pasture as part of transhumance. Temporary and seasonal migration have long been part of livelihoods in Karamoja, allowing specific household members to access social networks, employment, or food sources in other areas.⁴¹ Current research in other parts of Karamoja indicates that more people are migrating, often for longer periods and to more distant locations, due to the deterioration of livelihoods and security. We sought to understand these patterns in Kotido and Kaabong.⁴²

Respondents reported overwhelmingly that hunger was the main cause of migration, with several groups listing insecurity as a secondary cause. One focus group in Kotido town council said that survival was the motivating factor for leaving the rural area, and a group of young men in

³⁷ They had been trained by Save the Children in Uganda (SCiUG), our institutional host for this research. We acknowledge that this may have created some bias in our data.

³⁸ Interview with two young Jie men and one young Jie woman, Kotido Town Council, August 11, 2010.

³⁹ Interview with Jie male youth, Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9, 2010.

⁴⁰ Reported rates for laundry ranged from 200-1000 Ush and from 500-1000 Ush for fetching water, washing dishes, or cleaning houses. Interview with two young Jie men and one young Jie woman, Kotido Town Council, August 11, 2010; interview with Jie young women, Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9, 2010.

⁴¹ See Stites et al., “Out-migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda: the case of Kobulin, Bokora County” Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, June 2007.

⁴² For the purposes of this study, we asked respondents in Kotido and Kaabong if anyone in their household was migrating and, if so, why, to where, what they did in their new location, how often they returned, what they brought with them, and how the rest of the household and/or community viewed this out-migration. To note, nearly all of our respondents were those who *had not migrated*, with exceptions of the interviews in the urban centers and at the Moruitit resettlement site. We are aware of the bias that this creates in the data, and the fact that these responses are from those who did not migrate (except where noted otherwise) should be kept in mind when reading this section.

Kacheri reported that while hunger was severe, there had also been “no good change at all as things are becoming worse and worse to the point that we want to run away from here.”⁴³

People were leaving rural areas for a range of locations, with differences by sending district.⁴⁴ Migrants from Kaabong were, in general, going to more rural locations and were travelling less distance than those from Kotido.⁴⁵ Respondents in Kaabong were also more likely to report temporary or daily migration, whereas those in Kotido reported people leaving for extended periods or permanently. Impressions from local organizations and officials regarding urban growth support this difference: overall, people reported that the population of Kaabong town council had not swelled substantially, whereas a population of relative new-comers from surrounding areas was reported in Kotido.⁴⁶ The more rural nature of migration in Kaabong may imply that people are seeking to pursue similar livelihood strategies in their new locations, as opposed to looking for new and different livelihood opportunities in urban areas or different ecological zones.

Respondents listed male and female youth as the main out-migrants. In all cases, respondents reported that the migrants made the decision to leave “on their own,” or “without discussing with their families.” Half of the focus groups reported that migrants returned with (or sent back) food or small amounts of money, whereas the other half stated that the migrants were too busy focusing on their own survival to send anything home. Most respondents felt that that out-migration had an overall negative impact on their communities and viewed the departure of relatives and neighbors as an unfortunate but often necessary means of survival.

Migration is not a universal option. Many people are unable to relocate due to family commitments or lack of economic and social resources; others say they are not tempted to migrate, pointing out that many of those who leave come back with little if anything to show for themselves. Local security protocols can also hinder migration, as is the case in two locations in Kotido where respondents report being blocked from leaving their communities by the UPDF.⁴⁷ Male youth in Kotido, for example, characterize migration as more akin to “escape”:

Things used to be good before the operations intensified because we used to go to Acholi and Nyangia without being blocked, but 2006 things changed for the worse. We were restricted from moving out. Only those lucky ones who took *panya* roads [hidden bush roads] managed to go... There has been no movement to Acholi apart from the lucky ones who left earlier

⁴³ Interview with Jie male youth, Kacheri sub-county, Kotido, August 10, 2010.

⁴⁴ Respondents in Kotido reported the following destinations for out-migrants: Abim, Acholi (Gulu and Kitgum), Lira, Moruitit resettlement site, Pader, Teso, Apetolim resettlement site, Kotido town council, and Karenga (Nyangia). Respondents in Kaabong listed: Kaabong town council, Kotido, Kitgum, Kenya, Sudan, Karenga, Morungule, Lolelia, and Moruitit resettlement site.

⁴⁵ It could be argued that migration to Sudan and Kenya was an exception, but these examples only came up in sub-counties near to these borders and in a small number of respondents.

⁴⁶ The Tufts team was not able to do a substantial number of interviews within the urban migrant community in either Kotido or Kaabong, but hopes that this will be the subject of future research.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Jie male youth, Kacheri sub-county, Kotido, August 10, 2010 and Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9, 2010. These reports are similar to information collected in these areas by a Tufts team in April 2009, where we were told that young men were prevented by the UPDF from leaving their communities, and were accused of raiding/theft if found outside the immediate area.

before the intensification of disarmament, though some have since escaped to Pader, Nyangia, and Acholiland.

At a higher level, policies against people from Karamoja designed to prohibit settlement in Kampala and other major metropolises hinder migration to these areas.

We conducted interviews in the mixed Jie/Dodoth resettlement site of Moruitit on the border between Kotido and Kaabong. People had moved to this location due to hunger, loss of livestock and insecurity, and were, for the most part, more positive about migration than those interviewed in sending communities. In contrast to out-migration to other areas, most interviewees at Moruitit brought their children with them. People at Moruitit were particularly pleased at the mixed nature of the community, with some reporting that they had come to this location with the explicit intent of “making peace” with their neighbors.⁴⁸ Security was much better than in places of origin, but hunger and lack of services remained a major problem, concerns echoed by staff at local and international organizations.⁴⁹ However, these same agencies were positive about prospects for this site becoming a sustainable community with more positive intra-group relations.

Discussion

Migration continues to be an important livelihood adaptation for populations in Karamoja, and individuals, households, and sometimes larger groups are moving both within and outside the region in search of better economic opportunities. Most internal migration is to the trading centers and much of the external migration is to neighboring regions that have long been traditional destinations for migrants from Karamoja. Migration is often temporary and/or seasonal but can be permanent; this is largely a factor of the type of work people are able to find.

Youth are the most likely to migrate, which raises some concerns for protection of minors and vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. In many cases, however, these youth are joining established social networks of previous out-migrants or residents of their home areas, and may have a degree of protection within these networks. Young people often leave their communities without consultation or approval from their elders or families, which may have negative effects on social cohesion, remittances, and the ability to return home if desired.⁵⁰ Communities of origin are, for the most part, unhappy about the out-migration of family members, and report that this type of migration by youth is both new and negative.

In the overall patterns of out-migration there is evidence that people may be shifting away from or abandoning altogether traditional pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods. Some are hoping to engage in more agriculture by moving to areas considered more arable, but it is difficult to know if this shift is driven by a realistic assessment of the risk or the hope of assistance from external sources. Many others are seeking ways of greater participation in the cash economy through jobs in the informal sector or provisions of goods and services in urban areas.

⁴⁸ Interview with mixed group, Moruitit, Kotido-Kaabong border, August 12, 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview with Simon Rumoi, DADO, Kaabong, August 17, 2010;

⁵⁰ More research on social networks and self-protective strategies of migrant communities would help to answer these questions.

Security and Protection

Insecurity and the lack of protection were major concerns for most respondents in the study population. Male and female respondents in almost all locations described attacks occurring in their homes, with targeted assets including food, jerry cans, saucepans, clothing, and blankets. In one location in Kotido, a woman reported, “The enemies enter the homes. They carry away everything. They may even force us to cook food for them. If I don’t give the things to them, they will kill me.”⁵¹ The sharp rise in insecurity within manyattas since the intensification of disarmament has been reported in all study locations since July 2008.

Respondents in two study sites in Kaabong reported improved security. One site was in Kalapata sub-county, where respondents have moved their homes farther up into the mountains for greater security. They credit their relocation and recent increased presence of the UPDF as behind the decrease in attacks.⁵² Respondents at a study site in Karenga sub-county also reported improved security, and credited this to the presence of their local militia, Platoon 4.⁵³

Most communities in the study population in northern Karamoja are still housing their animals in kraals adjacent to or near military barracks. Complaints regarding treatment by the soldiers continue, with the greatest number of alleged human rights abuses occurring in the Kotido sub-counties of Panyangara and Kacheri, but with incidents also reported in multiple sites in Kaabong. For the first time in our data collection in Karamoja, we heard reports of sexual abuse by the UPDF of local women. A group of women at a market in Kaabong town said:

We don’t go to the UPDF barracks to sell things or work out of fear...Sometimes UPDF soldiers will lure young women by paying 5,000 Ush for some work, but then they sexually assault them. HIV is already in the villages because of this behavior.⁵⁴

This was confirmed by a second group of women in a separate interview, who reported that it was “dangerous to take firewood to the barracks because the army men pull you into their huts and rape you, especially if you take firewood [up to] the door of their huts.”⁵⁵

Sexual violence among the general population was mentioned in multiple sites in Kotido and Kaabong. Women in Panyangara sub-county in Kotido reported rapes occurring inside their homes during attacks by the enemies, sometimes in the presence of the women’s husbands.⁵⁶ In an unusual acknowledgement of the extent of the problem on both sides, a group of elderly women at the same location pointed out that “our boys rape when they go to raid, too.” Staff from Mercy Corps in Kotido raised concerns over a growing number of rapes in Kotido town,

⁵¹ Interview with Jie young women, Rengen sub-county, Kotido, August 7, 2010. Women in Panyangara sub-county in Kotido also reported being forced to provide food for the enemies.

⁵² Interviews with Dodoth elderly women, Ik and Dodoth male youth, and Ik and Dodoth male elders, Kalapata sub-county, Kaabong, August 13, 2010.

⁵³ Respondents report that this militia was recently trained and supplied by the UPDF, though the Tufts team has been aware of the presence of this militia since our work in Orom sub-county in Acholi in 2006, at which point the UPDF were not offering support. Interview with Nyangia male elders, Karenga sub-county, Kaabong, August 14, 2010.

⁵⁴ Interview with mixed group at Kaabong cattle market, Kaabong, August 16, 2010.

⁵⁵ Interview with second mixed group at Kaabong cattle market, Kaabong, August 16, 2010.

⁵⁶ Interviews with elderly and young Jie women, Panyangara sub-county, Kotido, August 9, 2010. Interestingly, the older women

including the rape of a nine year old girl. They also mentioned a growth in prostitution, which they blamed on the UPDF presence.⁵⁷

Discussion

Although touted as a security measure, disarmament has had a mixed impact on security for communities. This is in accordance with our findings in all sites sampled across Karamoja since February 2009. Attacks on roads have largely decreased, while attacks in the bush, within homes, and against women are reported to have increased in almost every study site. This pattern held true for northern Karamoja as well. The two exceptions (discussed above) reported at sites in Karenga and Kalapata sub-counties are worth noting, but these sites are unique for several key reasons: i) populations in both sites live in mountainous terrain that is difficult to penetrate, ii) the Nyangia (in Karenga) and Ik (in Kalapata) are minority populations that have moved away from livestock-based production systems in order to decrease their exposure to risk,⁵⁸ among other factors, and iii) both communities have developed specific internal response mechanisms to cope with violence, namely forming a local militia in Karenga and moving higher into the mountains in Kalapata. Thus, these reported decreases in attacks cannot be credited to any great extent to a state intervention or provision of protection, but rather to the adaptations made by local communities to fill the continuing protection gap. As such, we can say that security remains a problem in all areas and continues to threaten livelihood strategies and food security. An increase in reports of sexual assault by the military and civilians further highlights the absence of law and order.

Recommendations

Overall

- The Government of Uganda (GoU), in conjunction with informed stakeholders, should develop an evidence-based policy on pastoralism that strives to promote, support, and protect diversified pastoral, agro-pastoral, and agricultural livelihood strategies in Karamoja. This policy should aim to promote resilience and decrease vulnerability for the heterogeneous population in the region, taking into account the likelihood and prevalence of internal stresses and external shocks, including insecurity, drought, and climate change. The government should look to examples from surrounding countries in the region, and should also rely on the expertise of regional inter-governmental bodies such as COMESA, the African Union, and IGAD.

Food Security

- Strategies to reduce dependence on food aid are important and timely, but should be pursued mindfully, using lessons learned under similar conditions in other countries; with regular (external and independent) evaluations and resulting adjustments; and with extensive community involvement and ownership. Like donors and government actors, communities themselves want to decrease their reliance on outside assistance, but this

⁵⁷ Interview with Frewengel Michael and Loruk Peter, Mercy Corps, Kotido, August 11, 2010.

⁵⁸ In Kalapata, shifting towards agriculture and away from livestock still posed difficulties, as cultivation had to take place on the lower flat areas, and insecurity often made it difficult to access these areas. Interview with Ik male elders, Kalapata sub-county, Kaabong, August 13, 2010.

process must be gradual, tested, refined, and monitored for potential increases in vulnerability.

- The GoU and relevant stakeholders, particularly WFP, should not conflate agricultural with self-reliance, and should recognize the inherent and substantial risks and vulnerabilities associated with promoting sedentarized agriculture in a region prone to persistent drought and likely to experience increased ecological variability as a result of climate change.

Food Aid

- Targeting guidelines and selection criteria should be clear and well implemented so as to reach and account for extremely vulnerable individuals and households. Aid providers must also recognize that the sharing of food aid among households often decreases the rations available for the most vulnerable. Shifting away from assistance to vulnerable populations in a region as drought prone and impoverished in Karamoja is unlikely to be sustainable.
- WFP and its implementing partners should ensure that the KPAP projects are tailored to the local conditions, take into account climate variability, build on thorough and localized conflict analysis, and represent the most productive use of resources in each area. When projects meet these criteria, adequate opportunities for participation in the projects should be made available.
- KPAP or related projects should not crowd-out existing food security strategies, particularly in the early stages of project development and community participation. Women in particular must be able to participate in the projects (including women in their reproductive years—i.e., pregnant and breast-feeding) while also having time to procure food for their families. Failing to take into account the reality of continuing food insecurity and the associated coping strategies will only increase vulnerability in the longer term.
- WFP and others working on food security should recognize the complementarity between crops and livestock production and how local strategies balance these two systems to withstand crises caused by animal disease, droughts, market fluctuations, and other external shocks.

Livelihoods

- In order to support diversified livelihood strategies, including the careful balance between animal production and agriculture, mobility for shepherds and animals should be prioritized and prime grazing areas protected from settlement or incursion. If insecurity requires the continuation of protected kraals, plans should be drawn up well in advance of the dry season for protection of animals while moving to water and pasture under the control of their owners.
- Migration both within and outside of Karamoja is a long-standing and important means of coping with stress and shock. Any restrictions on migration should be in accordance with national laws on freedom of movement and settlement, and Ugandans originating

from Karamoja should be offered the same rights and privileges of those from other areas.

Security

- In light of continuing insecurity, the state and its security forces should focus on means of protecting both people (in settlements, kraals and towns and on roads) and assets (including but not limited to livestock). The GoU should seek to fill the protection gap through continued recruitment and training of police forces, building of the justice system (courts, judges, attorneys, gazetted detention centers for both adults and minors) and ensuring adherence to the rule of law through community sensitization, police outreach, and combating corruption within these systems.
- The GoU should actively and aggressively investigate, take appropriate (and transparent) punitive action, and report publically on the on-going allegations of human rights abuses and sexual assault committed by the UPDF. The disarmament operation will soon enter its fifth year in this iteration: this should be adequate time for identifying the systems that allow these abuses to continue and rectifying the problem.