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# “Young people are the fulcrum of the community”: Youth experiences and aspirations in four districts of Karamoja, Uganda

APOLOU Baseline Qualitative Report

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER PUBLICATION 

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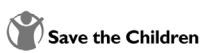
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# Executive Summary

This report presents findings on the experiences and aspirations of male and female youth as they interact with the economic and aid systems in the Karamoja sub-region. The findings draw on qualitative data comprising semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted from November 2018 to January 2019 by a team from the Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in collaboration with Mercy Corps as part of the USAID/FFP-funded Apolou Activity. In total, the research team held 48 focus group discussions in 24 sampled villages and 96 in-depth interviews with selected male and female youth in the four districts of Moroto, Kaabong, Kotido, and Amudat.

This study is longitudinal and will track the same cohort of young people (under age 30) over four years. This is the first report and should be taken as a baseline against which to track change. The study explores how the recent transformations in the sub-region, including expansion of markets, increase in trade, and monetization, are affecting youth and their communities. In parallel to a quantitative component, the study seeks to understand how these changes are influencing wealth distribution and livelihoods within the region. We are interested in who is benefiting from these developments, who is not, and why. We are particularly interested in how young people manage shocks, mitigate vulnerability, and seek to position themselves in their communities and broader society.

## Main Findings

### *Livelihoods and household dynamics*

Respondents engage in a range of paid and unpaid activities, mostly manual and rural based, with clear divisions by gender. Female youth reported an average of twice as many activities toward the sustenance of their household compared to their male counterparts. The most common activity

outside the home for female youth is farming; for male youth, it is grazing animals. Some female respondents reported performing activities normally conducted by men, such as collecting building poles and making bricks. Young men, however, reported minimal or no engagement in household work and took on few female roles.

Along with gender, seasonality is a key variable in determining the types of activities performed. In general, respondents reported a greater variety of activities in the dry season, with many geared towards food procurement and caring for animals under harsh conditions. Wet season activities center around cultivation in many of the study sites, and there is less movement by both genders away from the homestead. Male and female respondents reported working together to cultivate, although women do more tasks and spend more time in the fields, while still also attending to the rest of their domestic and reproductive duties.

Men continue to make many of the decisions within households, including at times over women's productive resources, such as livestock or income. Women appear to be more likely to be able to control income generated from stereotypically female activities, such as brewing or keeping poultry. Domestic violence still remains a major issue, partly caused by male dominance over female youth, although excessive alcohol consumption is a contributing factor. Importantly, such violence was said to go unreported to authorities. Elders may be called to help resolve some domestic disputes, although such settlements often favor the patriarchal status quo. However, some respondents noted that both non-governmental organization (NGO) and community development programs have contributed to increased awareness on gender and women's rights.

### *Savings*

Most people keep their savings in their homes, either hidden in their homes or homestead or on their person. Village savings and loan associations

(VSLAs) exist in most of the sampled villages, but very few of the youth respondents reported participating. However, VSLAs are largely seen as good places to invest, particularly those run by women. The main barrier to entry in VSLAs is the weekly payment requirements.

Only one respondent keeps his money in a commercial bank. Male youth have various strategies to spread financial risk, including investing in herds and lending money to friends who pay back with interest. Female youth have overall less control over finances and fewer resources with which to engage in such strategies. Less than 20% of the sample reported using mobile banking, though those who did appreciated the ease of the system.

### *Role of markets*

Most study participants access markets at least once per week, usually on the market day within their geographic area. Youth go to the market to buy and sell items, but socializing with friends is at least as important for males and, to a lesser extent, for females. Markets play a central social role in the lives of young people as a place to meet new people and exchange ideas. When asked how markets were changing, young people said that markets now attract more and different types of people than previously, and that more goods and services are now available at the markets. However, some sellers said that increased competition makes it difficult to sell all of their wares. This is particularly the case for women selling brew, charcoal, firewood, or vegetables.

### *Civic participation and leadership*

The study finds that despite the diverse groups that existed in the communities, many youth are not part of any group in their communities, and few reported being in a leadership role. Most groups are open to both genders, with the exception of Peace Committees, which are exclusively male. Youth sometimes reported feeling left out of groups, particularly those formed without an explicit youth component. The main challenges for youth participation in groups include lack of organization, absenteeism, heavy alcohol use (among male youth), elite capture, existing time burdens for women, and negative stereotypes about young men.

Most of the leaders listed within communities were male, and male youth were more likely to have access to these leaders than their female counterparts. Both genders, however, expressed views on the qualities of a good leader. These qualities include honesty, worthiness, neutrality, the willingness to stand up for community members, listening skills, and exemplary behavior. Youth reported that traditional male elders and local councilors play important leadership roles in their communities. Some male youth expressed trepidation about interacting with security sector personnel.

### *Health access and information*

Respondents reported good access to health services and used multiple types of care. However, traditional herbs and witch doctors were consistently the first line of treatment in the narratives of most respondents. If such methods are ineffective, nearly all respondents reported that they then seek western medical care in clinics or hospitals. Village health teams (VHTs) are also an important component of available care, particularly for the treatment of children. However, both male and female respondents hold a number of inaccurate beliefs about the risks of using modern family planning, ranging from infertility to more general negative health impacts. While female youth are more aware of modern family planning methods than men, many reported that they were not using any contraception because the number of children to have was either the decision of their male partner or “was up to God.”

### *Insecurity*

Whereas most respondents noted few to no cattle raids, theft of livestock and other household property still remains fairly common in many locations. Opportunistic small-scale theft of livestock takes place primarily in grazing areas; small livestock are also stolen from homes. Thugs also steal household items, food, moveable assets, and clothing. Women reportedly suffer the most from these thefts, as they rely most on the household items that are commonly stolen. Small livestock and poultry stolen from the homestead also often belong to women, as those of the men are more likely to be kept at the kraals. Some study participants attributed the above

problems of theft and attacks to moral degeneration and idleness among male youth. Because of idleness, youth are seen to turn to bad activities. A few female respondents also reported fear of being raped or sexually assaulted when out performing livelihood activities. These fears are most pronounced at night and near trading centers.

### *Aspirations*

The study found that youth aspirations are primarily oriented towards livelihood activities, including farming, starting a business, livestock rearing, or finding a paid job. Male youth were more likely to report an interest in making bricks, engaging in casual labor, livestock rearing, having a boda boda business, or finding full-time employment. Female youth were more likely to aspire to farming or brewing. Furthermore, youth who are currently in school more often described aspirations that involved completing school successfully and becoming employed. In contrast, their counterparts without education spoke more frequently of farming, keeping livestock, starting a business, and getting married. Youth were most likely to identify peers who had overcome challenges as their role models. These challenges included completing school, having successful businesses, or having positive relationships with others. Study participants identified major challenges that they faced to realizing their goals, including lack of basic needs, inadequate support from parents, and the obligation to provide for parents and siblings. They also spoke about a lack of sustainable livelihoods, poor access to capital, and an inability to pay for school fees.

### *Recommendations and implications*

We present a series of recommendations and implications for programming based on the findings from this report.

#### **Youth participation:**

- Increase youth involvement in existing groups or monitor spaces for the extent of youth participation and accessibility for youth. Opportunities for youth participation should consider gender balance.
- Efforts should be made to encourage female and male youth participation in VSLAs.
- An important avenue for youth inclusion

could involve forging connections with formal governance systems, police, and military bodies.

- Male elders are largely respected by youth and could serve as an important entry point for greater participation in group activities.

#### **Well-being:**

- Sensitization processes related to family planning must include male and female youth, religious bodies, and local leaders.
- Programs should engage with elders on early marriage and forced marriage in order to facilitate a reduction in these practices.
- Local traditional healers are an important group that can reach communities with important messages about formal healthcare.
- There is a need to understand the localized approaches and attitudes to modern family planning and more traditional means of child spacing in the community to appropriately inform sensitization campaigns and approaches.
- Engage male and female youth to be community leaders or sensitizers on the topic of preventing domestic violence.

#### **Livelihoods, education, and markets:**

- Any livelihood interventions or programs targeted towards female youth should be mindful of their existing complex combination of responsibilities.
- There is a need to target male youth with livelihoods interventions.
- Education levels remain low in Karamoja, and decision-making about going to and staying in school is complex. However, many youth identify as role models those who completed school. Programmers should seek a tailored approach to reducing barriers to education, including creating roles for youth to spearhead sensitization.
- Youth also see those who have successfully started businesses as role models. Programmers should implement sustainable micro-finance processes, and select successful male and female youth to stand as role models.
- Markets represent important social spaces for use. Programmers should consider such market locations as potentially facilitative for message delivery.



# 1. Introduction and overview

We designed this overarching multi-year research project for the Apolou Activity to shed light on a number of dynamics occurring in agro-pastoral and pastoral areas in Karamoja following improvements in security across the sub-region over the past ten to fifteen years. As markets expand, trade increases, and the economy becomes predominantly cash-based, there are concerns that wealth inequality may be rising, with only certain segments of society benefiting from the expansion. Moreover, people living in Karamoja continue to be vulnerable to climatic shocks, livelihood and food insecurities, and localized forms of violence. Limited access to basic services and resources such as water, education, financial services, and health care further weakens the well-being of the population. Young people under age 30 comprise the largest demographic in Karamoja, but still little is known about their roles in the community and the economy, or how they manage shocks and vulnerability. The quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study and its cross-cutting focus on youth will provide empirical evidence and learning for the Mercy Corps Apolou Activity to support their diverse interventions, both at the baseline phase and throughout the program.

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To examine the impact of the shift to a cash-based economy on different wealth, livelihood, and demographic groups, with a focus on coping strategies, resilience, and the different forms of market participation;
- To assess the effect of greater layering of programs on livelihoods, vulnerability, and aspirations of individuals, households, and communities;
- To examine the variations in livelihood interventions of people participating in and those left out of market systems and advances;
- To explore the shifting perceptions of the youth and adolescents (both male and female) on the changing economy.

Following these study objectives, the overall research project seeks to answer the following two overarching research questions:

- With the market expansion and increased monetization in Karamoja in recent years, what is changing for different livelihood groups, and how and why?
- Does a more intensive, layered set of programmatic interventions have a greater effect on participants of these programs than a less-bundled approach does?

While the quantitative aspect of the study pursues research questions related to the measurement of market access, wealth, inequality, and intensity of program interventions, the qualitative methods seek to answer the related questions:

- What are the shifting perceptions of youth and adolescents with regards to the changing economy?
- What are the youth's roles in the changing economy?
- How have the changes in the market provided opportunities for engagement of the youth?
- What are the enabling and hindering factors for coping in response to shocks, crisis, and chronic vulnerability by youth?
- How do youth interface with interventions, and how does the intensity of interventions (layering) influence youth livelihoods, economic engagement, and exposure to risks?

This report covers the qualitative component of year two of the Apolou Activity (October 2018 through September 2019) and represents data collected from November 2018 to January 2019. A separate report covers the quantitative component. We dedicated year one of the study to design and collaboration, and hence the data discussed in the qualitative and quantitative reports represent the first round of discussions with the study population. As discussed

in the methodology, we will be following this cohort of young people over the duration of the Apolou Activity. This will allow us to follow their stories and experiences over time. This report therefore takes the form of a baseline.

# 2. Methodology

## Data collection process

The qualitative portion of this research focuses on young people in order to understand their experiences, aspirations, and interactions with economic and aid systems. In year two of the Apolou Activity, the qualitative approach involved in-depth interactions with the respondents. Following site selection (discussed below), the research team traveled to the location, obtained relevant permission from local officials and elders, and explained the purpose of the study to the community. After a comprehensive informed consent process, researchers asked to speak specifically with male and female youth in focus group discussion (FGD) format. Participants self-defined if they fit within the “youth category,” and the research team conducted FGDs with one group of female youth and one group of male youth for each sample village (totaling  $n = 48$ ). Focus group discussions covered time use, education, health care, savings, security, migration, and the active civil society groups in each location.

Following the FGDs with male and female youth, researchers asked if two males and two females from each group would be willing to participate in a cohort study. The cohort study involves conducting in-depth interviews (semi-structured) with the same participant across four years of the study. This longitudinal design will allow the research team to explore male and female youth engagement in livelihood activities, decision-making, market interaction, governance, and financial strategies and systems, as well as aspirations. Ultimately, 48 female youth and 48 male youth ( $n = 96$ ) aged 15–27 were interviewed as part of the first round of the cohort study across 24 sample villages.

Lastly, the research team presented high-level findings from both the qualitative and quantitative components to various stakeholder groups in order to solicit feedback, “ground-truth” the findings, and begin the process of research uptake for program implementers. These events were participatory in format and targeted representatives of international

non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Karamoja, Mercy Corps staff and consortium partners, representatives from district offices in Moroto, Kaabong, Kotido, and Amudat, and community members in all four districts. Information from these sessions has been woven into this report.

## Site selection

All villages selected for the qualitative component fall within Apolou’s larger quantitative village sample and have received or are slated to receive programmatic support from Mercy Corps and partners. The criteria for purposive sampling involved seeking variation on the following characteristics: distance to market (near and far); distance to border (near and far); and youth programming (yes and no). In terms of geography, no sampled villages were adjacent, and no two villages shared the same parish. FGDs and cohort interviews were conducted in a total of 24 villages, which correspond to 24 distinct parishes (and 17 sub-counties) across Moroto, Amudat, Kotido, and Kaabong Districts ( $n = 6$  in each).

## Analysis

The team typed transcripts for each interview and uploaded the files into a qualitative analysis software program (Dedoose). Four research team members inductively coded interview text by themes, meaning they focused on patterns emerging from the data, as opposed to analyzing based on strictly pre-determined categories. At least two team members analyzed individual themes to ensure inter-coder reliability. Gender analysis of both male and female experiences is central to all aspects of this study.

# 3. Findings

## Livelihoods, household dynamics, and seasonality

Over the course of this project, we are seeking to understand the livelihoods of male and female youth in order to analyze changes in their lives, aspirations, and challenges and opportunities. The analysis examines how a number of factors influence youth livelihoods, including seasonality, gender roles and responsibilities, decision-making, access to productive resources, and formal and informal processes of inclusion and exclusion. We seek to understand and examine the changing context of social regulations and norms based on gender, age, and livelihood.

### *Household livelihoods*

Respondents interviewed for the study performed a range of livelihoods activities to generate monetary or in-kind support for their households. Most of the reported activities were manual and rural in nature, with clear differences by gender. For young women, farming was the most common primary activity outside the home, either to produce food for household consumption or as part of a casual labor scheme in which they were paid in kind or in cash. Female youth also carried out brewing, exploitation of bush products (such as building poles, thatch grass, firewood, and charcoal), and engagement in paid casual labor such as fetching water. Some women also engaged in petty trade, such as baking and selling local bread or boiled maize, or doing small-scale trade in vegetables and other produce. The responsibility of housework—including cleaning, food preparation and procurement, child and dependent care, and maintaining the compound—falls almost exclusively to women. Young women also are mostly responsible for caring for milking herds and poultry.

The main activities of male youth were grazing animals, livestock trade (for households that still

had herds), helping with cultivation, and house construction. Some male youth also worked in stone quarries and mining, burning charcoal, the cutting and sale of building poles, brickmaking, or casual labor in agriculture and construction sites or people's homes (such as digging pit latrines), or they hunted wild rats. While traditionally viewed in the region as women's work, some male youth in the study reported both making and selling local brew. Others sold alcohol or operated small shops within their villages. Young men reported minimal or no engagement in household work. Some respondents noted that male youth from poorer households were increasingly engaged in non-traditional livelihoods—meaning outside of the livestock sector. For these youth, their primary livelihoods consisted of casual labor and/or exploitation of bush products.

In terms of decision-making and control over productive assets, male youth control and manage productive livelihoods like livestock, while female youth primarily engage in activities that yield smaller monetary returns, such as income from brewing and their own casual labor. While care of poultry mostly falls to women, who makes the decisions about when to sell and how proceeds are spent varies, with some youth reporting it to be the decision of the father or husband, and others describing the decisions as resting with the female poultry-keeper. A male respondent explained decision-making over income within the household: "Money made out of livestock, poultry, and agricultural produce is under the control of a male, but that made of local brew is purely under the control a female because most times, she is the one who does such business."<sup>1</sup> Contradicting this view, a young man said, "The earnings from poultry and the products (like eggs) are spent by my wife because they [the chickens] belong to the ladies."<sup>2</sup> The resulting picture for male and female youth is that the productive activities with male involvement yield higher income than female-dominated activities, and that while most

1 Male youth, 21-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

2 Male youth, 25-year-old, Loroo Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

decision-making and control of the household asset portfolio rest with males, there are variations by household and circumstance.

Overall, female youth reported engaging in an average of twice as many activities toward the sustenance of their household compared to their male counterparts (see section on seasonal activities below). The specific tasks that men and women perform are largely determined by social roles and expectations. Respondents noted that the gender division of labor places an unusually high burden on female youth, as they are responsible for work in the household and compound, child and dependent care, and income generation. As male youth from livestock-owning families move out to the *kraals* (seasonal mobile cattle camps) over long periods of time, they are less likely to engage in multiple and diverse activities throughout the year. Along with gender, seasonality is a key variable in determining what activities youth perform over the course of the year.

### Seasonal activities and experience

This section examines how seasonality determines the activities that male and female youth perform and their experiences undertaking the activities. Overall, respondents reported that the dry season is more difficult, including more movement for labor and providing basic sustenance for their households. Hardship in the dry season is also regularly linked to food shortages. For example, a female youth described: "During the dry season, activities are directed toward survival strategies to counter with the scorching sun and lack of food."<sup>3</sup> In contrast, wet season time use centers around cultivation, even across the traditional pastoral zones sampled for this study. Female youth in a focus group discussion in Kaabong noted the difference in activities and workload: "The dry season has a variety of activities taking up female youths' time; the wet season has one major activity, gardening, which takes much time."<sup>4</sup> Whereas the dry season had diverse and multiple activities performed for survival, cultivation in the wet season still took the most time. See Table 1 for a list of activities by gender and season.

Respondents noted that in the dry season, nearly every household member performs some activity, often away from the homestead. In the dry season, those male youth from families that still own livestock move out in search of pasture and water for their herds. These movements can extend over several months; most of the women, children, and elderly stay behind in the homesteads. In the absence of men, female youth explained that their workload increases because they fill the gap left by their male counterparts. Women often become more involved with livestock during the dry season, particularly around watering the animals that have stayed within the homestead. (This labor-intensive activity frequently requires digging deep holes in dry riverbeds and passing up water with gourds.) Women may also take on more decision-making responsibilities and other roles typically associated with males in this context, such as thatching huts, cutting poles for construction, and fencing their homesteads. Such work is in addition to their regular productive and household roles.

In addition to the above, many women also diversify their livelihood activities during the dry season to generate income. Many of these activities require treks into the bush to collect bush products (thatch, firewood, charcoal, building poles, etc.). Women also move to trading centers or urban areas such as Moroto to sell products or in search of work. Some women take on *leja-leja* (casual labor) such as collecting water or working in people's homes. Brewing is a popular and common dry season activity performed by women.

In contrast, movement decreases during the wet season as the focus shifts to cultivation. In addition, as rainfall increases, both water and pasture availability improve, allowing livestock to be kept closer to the homesteads. Oxen are used, when available, to open the land for cultivation.<sup>5</sup> Respondents noted that male and female youth work alongside each other to cultivate the land, although female youth are engaged in a wider range of activities than their male counterparts. For instance, when male youth go to the garden with their female

3 Female FGD, Katikekile Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 12, 2018.

4 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

5 Oxen are not used for cultivation purposes in Amudat, as communities see this as abusive to animals.

Table 1. Range of activities listed by male and female respondents, by season

<b>Female activities</b>	<b>Male activities</b>
<i>Dry season</i>	<i>Dry season</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Cutting grass for thatching huts</li> <li>» Casual work in urban areas</li> <li>» Thatching huts</li> <li>» Collecting firewood</li> <li>» Making bricks for own building</li> <li>» Repairing homestead fences</li> <li>» Looking for wild greens/vegetables</li> <li>» Vegetable growing and watering</li> <li>» Cleaning, sweeping, and clearing the compound</li> <li>» Cleaning the house</li> <li>» Grinding cereals</li> <li>» Caring for sick family members</li> <li>» Caring for children and the elderly</li> <li>» Fetching water</li> <li>» Making porridge for children</li> <li>» Washing clothes and utensils</li> <li>» Preparing lunch and supper for the family</li> <li>» Bathing children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Cutting poles for sale in urban centers</li> <li>» Cutting poles for building own house</li> <li>» Cutting and burning wood to make charcoal to sell</li> <li>» Collecting wild fruits for own consumption and to sell</li> <li>» Hunting wild rats and game animals to sell</li> <li>» Casual work at road construction sites</li> <li>» Digging pit latrines</li> <li>» Grazing livestock</li> <li>» Working at stone quarries</li> <li>» Burning bricks to sell</li> </ul>
<i>Wet season</i>	<i>Wet season</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Garden work: clearing, bush felling, planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest activities</li> <li>» Casual work in people’s gardens</li> <li>» Gathering wild greens for cooking</li> <li>» Collecting firewood from the garden</li> <li>» Cooking breakfast before going to the garden</li> <li>» Bathing children before going to the garden</li> <li>» Making local brew to take to the gardens (in place of food and water)</li> <li>» Spending most of the afternoon in the garden</li> <li>» Making lunch for the family</li> <li>» Washing clothes and utensils</li> <li>» Sometimes taking a rest</li> <li>» Cooking supper</li> <li>» Milking cows</li> <li>» Preparing husband’s bath water and food</li> <li>» Bathing self and organizing beddings for sleep</li> <li>» Nursing sick family members</li> <li>» Caring for children and elderly</li> <li>» Grinding cereals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Opening land for cultivation of crops</li> <li>» Weeding crops that were planted</li> <li>» Chasing birds and monkeys from the garden</li> <li>» Harvesting the crops</li> <li>» Threshing, packing, and storing the crops</li> <li>» Grazing animals</li> <li>» Milking animals</li> <li>» Treating diseased animals</li> <li>» Following up raided animals</li> <li>» Collecting wild vegetables for home consumption</li> <li>» Making granaries in preparation for harvest</li> </ul>

counterparts, they return home earlier. The female youth work longer days in the garden and must still attend to their domestic duties when they return home.

Seasonal labor demands can lead to the withdrawal of children from school along gendered dimensions. For boys, study participants describe that families may require them to temporarily leave school to tend livestock. Girls, particularly in the cultivation season, are kept home to help with garden work or to fill gaps in domestic chores while their mothers are cultivating. As an illustration, one study participant explained, “Women spend a lot of time working during the wet season, they start by making sure everything at home is set and then go to the garden and spend the whole day there, it’s this very period that a lot of children are withdrawn from school to support their parents with garden work.”<sup>6</sup> Regular withdrawal from school affects education and contributes to high drop-out rates (see section on education). For females in particular, their workload increases with time. “In the past five years, how I spend my days has changed; before [when younger] I only used to do small works around the homestead, but, these days, I walk to town to sell charcoal and firewood.”<sup>7</sup> As children get older, they have more responsibilities and social expectations of them increase, with close adherence to gender roles.

The table is a snapshot illustrating the different activities that male and female youth perform during the main seasons. In particular, it illustrates the imbalance in work for female youth at all times of the year. Some female youth mentioned that they sometimes spend 8–10 hours in the garden in the wet season and still perform their usual domestic roles.<sup>8</sup> During a focus group discussion, a female youth described life for women: “Some of us work every day throughout the year, we don’t rest. We work morning, afternoon, evening, and night. For us women, we are like donkeys meant to work throughout the day, but if you have a good husband

he can help you in the garden and even take care of children at home while you work.”<sup>9</sup> Some males recognize the gendered imbalance in work, such as this 24-year-old male, who describes, “If I was female, I would be much more hardworking than I am now, especially when I compare the work that I am currently doing for my family.”<sup>10</sup> These differences help to illuminate some of the gender dynamics within the household and the different expectations and responsibilities for men and women. However, as described above, some men may take on household and childcare responsibilities and even more typically “female” activities outside of the home such as brewing, gardening, and milking and watering herds close to home.

We investigated household decision-making as well as the division of labor. As discussed above, women are more likely to perform traditional female tasks and also at times to expand into those activities normally done by men. Some respondents felt that this shift increased the burdens on female youth while allowing males to have more rest and free time. A male youth in Moroto elaborated on gender dynamics in his community: “Females are subjected to all kinds of hard work in the community, while males are just seated in their famous places known as ‘ekokwa.’ It’s the female’s role to look for what the children and their father/husband will eat.”<sup>11</sup> A young man in Kotido also felt that women faced a disproportionate burden: “The problem with being a woman is that all the household work will be yours no matter your size and strength. They are treated like donkeys who can do anything for work and for [their men]. I don’t wish to be a woman.”<sup>12</sup> While such awareness on the part of men may be an important step toward greater gender equity, we found relatively few instances in which this awareness was matched by efforts to alleviate the burden faced by women.

Women in the study population face additional challenges, including high rates of domestic

6 Female FGD, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

7 Female youth, 15-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 5, 2018.

8 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

9 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

10 Male youth, 24-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018.

11 Male youth, 18-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018.

12 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

violence, female genital mutilation (among the Pokot population), and restrictions on engagement in civic life and leadership. Male and female youth reported that excessive alcohol consumption—a widespread problem in the region—exacerbated domestic violence.<sup>13</sup> As described by this young man, “The domestic fights of a man and his wife are very common, made so by abundance of alcohol, which intoxicates these groups to start quarrels and fighting.”<sup>14</sup> A group of female respondents explained that domestic violence most often occurred when men exerted undue control over women.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, a group of male youth explained that violence erupts when a husband makes decisions (such as livestock sale) without the consent of his wife.<sup>16</sup> As found in earlier Feinstein research in Karamoja, the injuries caused by domestic violence are often severe enough to curtail the victim’s ability to engage in livelihood activities for weeks or even months. It is also not uncommon for death to result.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the tensions around women’s influence and decision-making is visible at the household level. Male and female youth who participated in focus group discussions described that domestic violence is often provoked when a husband sells a wife’s belongings, such as goats or chickens, without her consent.<sup>18</sup> An example was provided by this male youth: “In Pokot, it is always the man who irritates the wife to quarrel. He does this by secretly selling an animal and he goes to drink, coming back home when he is drunk. By then the wife has discovered the missing goat and the man cannot account for it. Instead the wife is beaten for quarreling bitterly.”<sup>19</sup> In other instances, however, women were able to control the income from their own resources, such as profit from brewing, poultry, milk products, etc. One male youth described that “decision-making processes have been changing gradually because women have developed the urge to do what men have been doing. For example, sometimes my wife

decides to do something without my knowledge but later on I find that it is a good decision....One day, my wife started burning charcoal to get her own money, and after that she started brewing her own *ebutia* [local brew].”<sup>20</sup> Much has been written about the role of brewing as an important source of income for women, with one publication describing “beer as the cattle of women” for its role in allowing women to have control of this form of investment.<sup>21</sup> As such, while women continue to be seen as subordinates to men in local culture, they have varying degrees of influence within their households and communities.

Although men make many of the decisions within households, there are some notable shifts and changes in gender dynamics. A small subset of male and female youth described that they had more gender-balanced relationships when it came to decision-making. Some respondents reported joint decisions over aspects such as purchasing assets and making choices around education and health care. This may be due to an expansion of roles for women or greater respect by men for women’s input, or a combination of the two. For example, a male respondent in Kotido said:

The decision-making process has been changing gradually because women have developed the urge to do what men have been doing. Sometimes my wife can decide to do something without my knowledge and I still find it good... today women are taught their roles and responsibilities in the community.<sup>22</sup>

The absence of males on a permanent or temporary basis (due, for instance, to migration with animals or in search of work) may increase the range of tasks women are responsible for, but also may have led to females taking on more decision-making roles within households. A female respondent noted: “Over the past one year because the household head

13 Iyer, Sekajja, and Stites, *The silent gun*.

14 Male FGD, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

15 Female FGD, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

16 Male FGD, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

17 Stites and Howe, *From the border to the bedroom*.

18 Male FGD, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019; female FGD, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

19 Male FGD, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

20 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.

21 Dancause, Akol, and Gray, *Beer is the cattle of women*.

22 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.



Table 2. Free time by gender

Female youth	Male youth
» Play local games like <i>omweso</i> (mancala game)	» Sleep under trees
» Read books	» Visit girlfriends
» Visit friends at home	» Partake in traditional dances
» Meet friends at the borehole or in the neighborhood	» Play games like <i>omweso</i>
» Tell stories with friends	» Play football
» Beading work	» Bathe and rest under the tree away from the noise of playing children
» Bathe and rest	» Play games like <i>akileis</i> (a type of chess)
» Plait hair	» Drink brew and tell stories with friends
» Take a walk to the trading center	» Traditional dancing ( <i>edonga</i> ) with friends and girlfriends
» Partake in traditional dances	» Hunt birds to pass time

moved to the *kraal*—even though he comes back once in a while to check on the family, especially during farming season—my mother has been making decisions within the household.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, some male and female respondents noted that both NGOs and government programs have contributed to increased awareness on gender and women’s rights, which in turn is leading to more acknowledgement of and respect for the rights of women. However, as women enjoy more rights, they may also have increased work responsibilities, thereby increasing their time burdens. Thus, such advances could ultimately mean that female youth spend more time working and have even less free time.

## Free time

Respondents spoke of the ways they spend their free time, with clear differences between male and female youth. Overall, young men had much more free time and, not surprisingly, reported a greater number of diverse activities during their free time than young women. Free time is spent both within and outside the homesteads, with male youth spending more time outside the homestead than

their female counterparts. This is logical considering that many of the obligations of female youth require them to remain close to home. See Table 2 for a list of free time activities by gender.

## Experiences and views on migration

Migration has long been a strategy to cope with drought, poor harvests, or other shocks for the population of Karamoja. Much of this migration was seasonal or short term, and people relied on kinship and social networks for support.<sup>24</sup> Over time, however, migration has shifted, with people leaving the region on a long-term or permanent basis, migrating to large urban centers, including Kampala, and moving within the region from rural to urban areas.<sup>25</sup> This process is compounded by the trend throughout Eastern Africa of the poor being pushed out of pastoralism and finding few viable livelihood options within their home areas.<sup>26</sup> Given this context, for this research we collected information on youth views and experiences of migration. Although there is an inherent bias in talking to the respondents *within their villages* about migration to other places, we asked if they knew of people from their

23 Female youth, 18-year-old, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

24 Stites et al., Outmigration, return, and resettlement.

25 Sundal, Nowhere to go; Haug, Leaving drought and hunger behind; Stites, Burns, and Akabwai, “It’s better to sweat than to die”; Stites and Akabwai, Life in town.

26 Catley and Aklilu, Moving up or moving out?

communities who had migrated as well as whether they had contemplated migration as an option for themselves.

Somewhat surprisingly given the presumed trends, none of the youth interviewed for this study had immediate plans to migrate from their village. Respondents mentioned that migration to a new location would cut them off from their traditional land rights and experience within their village. They were also concerned that they would not be able to afford to buy land in a new location if they were to move. A group of female youth in Kaabong explained:

No one has thoughts of leaving the village to settle somewhere else, despite disturbances from neighbors and wild animals. We have enough land where we are currently and don't think we can get much land...from somewhere else, unless we are migrating to stay with our husbands, just like one of us moved from Karenga to Moroto.<sup>27</sup>

As noted in the quotation above, the one group who did migrate were women who moved to their husbands' villages after marriage.

The question of land was a key one in considerations about people's future. As much of Karamoja is predominantly agro-pastoralist, land is central to people's everyday lives and food security. In greenbelt areas, a shifting emphasis from animal husbandry to cultivation makes access to good-quality land particularly important. While most youth felt that their land access was secure under systems of customary tenure, some expressed concerns about decreasing land availability. They cited an increase in tensions and conflicts, both within families and among community members. Should land shortage become an issue or land tensions increase, they did see migration as an option, as explained by a group of young women: "We can migrate to other places. The main reason is to look for more agricultural land, as in Kalarlar there is frequent struggle for land."<sup>28</sup>

Some members of the study population discussed previous migrations. In one instance, focus group participants in Tapac on Mount Moroto explained that they had migrated to access both improved land and better services:

We migrated and don't wish to migrate again. Previously, we settled up the mountain hill, which was very inaccessible, but where we are now, none of us wish to leave no matter what. We now have enough land for cultivation here and some access to social services compared to before...the experience is good compared to where we were before.

This illustrates the importance of having a better quality of life, as well as apparent reluctance to go through another migration.

We also asked respondents if they knew people who had migrated. Some did know friends, family members, or people from their villages who had left in search of work or other opportunities, but the number of cases were relatively few. Those who had departed had often done so due in part to a push factor, such as struggles over land, family conflicts, poor land quality, and repeated threats from wild animals.

In incidents when someone left due to conflict over land, the departure was said to reduce tensions and enable the elders to resolve the conflict peacefully. However, respondents reported that people who left due to conflict almost never returned, implying that the "peaceful resolution" is in the favor of the remaining party. While at times there was no contact with those who had left, others shared positive tales of migration. A young woman reported, "An uncle left the village and settled...far away. He left due to lack of access to farmland. He moved out to look for land for farming, he acquired one and established his farm there. He now owns a big garden and built a house. He also said life there is good."<sup>30</sup> Even with such narratives, respondents themselves expressed little to no interest in permanent migration.

27 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

28 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

29 Female FGD, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018.

30 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

### Seasonal, temporary, and coping migration

Whereas permanent migration was uncommon among the qualitative study population, respondents noted that temporary and seasonal migration was common. For instance, in communities that still own livestock, many of the young men move with their herds during the dry season to access pasture and water. Most women, children, and the elderly remain in the *manyattas*. Coupled with the harsh dry season, this migration often corresponds with increased food insecurity at the *manyatta*. The absence of livestock during periods of migration was described as a stressor to the family's nutritional needs,<sup>31</sup> as described by this 21-year-old male: "During dry seasons, I move my animals to other places for pasture, and it's me the household head who is responsible for that. This movement of animals from their usual place to another place causes hunger in the family since the family depends on animal products like animal milk and also [prevents the] selling of some animals to meet family needs."<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the absence of men who are often the main decision-makers can create a gap in responding to such issues. As one female respondent explained, "My brother and father usually move within the year, and whenever they move it leaves a gap, especially in decision-making processes."<sup>33</sup> The absence of men means women and young people may take on roles outside their traditional gender responsibilities. Such decisions often include the sale of small ruminants from the herd that remains at the homestead; the sale of these animals allows women to buy cereals to fill food shortages. While messengers move regularly between the *manyattas* and *kraals*, a request to sell an animal does not always reach the male household head in time. Women explain that their husbands normally understand when there is a pressing need to sell an animal in their absence, and distress-sale decisions are often made jointly.<sup>34</sup>

Women also reportedly migrate seasonally. In the wet season, they move to find suitable land for farming. During the dry season, youth described that females regularly visit relatives or search for supplemental livelihood opportunities due to the lack of income-generating possibilities closer to home and dwindling food supplies. This dry season migration is often short in nature, and women return to the homestead with additional supplies to support the family. The absence of women and the highly gender-specific domestic roles performed by women in Karamoja can result in a care gap within the household. The burden most often falls upon older siblings, especially girls, who may be pulled from school in order to help with childcare and other domestic duties.

Temporary migration also has a social nature, whereby people travel to visit relatives or close friends living elsewhere. Such movement is particularly important in response to shocks such as a failed harvest or sudden loss of assets. Long-standing (often across generations) relationships between pastoralists and farmers served as important safety nets in times of hardship in the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> Households could turn to these connections for assistance and often sent children or youth to stay with these individuals until the situation improved.<sup>36</sup> Raiding violence and restrictions on mobility strained these relationships in the 1980s and 1990s,<sup>37</sup> but the concept of short-term movement in order to weather hardship remains ingrained. Respondents noted that people will travel to other sub-counties, districts, or into Kenya as needed to seek support. A male respondent explained, "My family members move to Nakonyen and to Tapac to visit distant relatives. When each of us go, for example, when my wife goes to Nakonyen, she comes [back] with enough food items; milk and a lot of maize to sustain us in case of a bad harvest."<sup>38</sup> The movement and visits to relatives are important for the survival of the household during a bad season or harvest.

31 See also additional evidence on this point: Stites et al., "A better balance."

32 Male youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

33 Female youth, 23-year-old, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

34 Stites et al., "A better balance."

35 Gulliver, The family herds.

36 Stites et al., Outmigration, return, and resettlement.

37 Stites, Identity reconfigured.

38 Male youth, 24-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018.

## Savings

### *Methods of savings and use of income saved*

The majority of people interviewed mentioned that they keep their savings (cash) in their homes. Some respondents bury money in a wooden or metal box; others store their cash in plastic bags on the roof of their huts; others store their money in a piece of cloth tied around their waist. The last method was the most popular among female youth. Older women reportedly prefer to keep their money in the granary. A few people mentioned that they keep their money with a trusted friend or family member. While village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) existed in most of the sampled villages, as discussed below, very few youth interview participants reported that they personally participated in VSLA groups. Only one respondent kept his money in a commercial bank.

Metal boxes that were difficult to open were popular as a means of encouraging people to save and not to spend impulsively. As one young man explained, "I store my money in a small metallic box that I bought purposely for saving because once coins are dropped inside, it cannot allow you to retrieve them back unless you cut it with a high-powered grinding machine."<sup>39</sup> Some people bury the boxes to deter thieves.

A few male youth respondents spread risk by having a diversity of savings. Some invest in livestock, while others lend money to friends who then pay it back with interest. These loans function as a form of savings. In contrast, female youth reported having limited access, opportunities, and control over productive resources to engage in these strategies.

A handful of male and female youth mentioned that they or a family member uses mobile banking. Despite low prevalence (17 of 96, or less than 20% of the sample), those who use it appreciate the ease of transferring, sending, and receiving money, and they also use it as a means to purchase mobile credit. One young man elaborated:

I do use mobile banking. I also use it to save, send or receive money...its services are always

available in our center. I actually send and receive money from my phone, and the people I mostly send money to or receive from are my friends and my family members.<sup>40</sup>

Some noted that mobile banking is more convenient than commercial banks, particularly because traders exist in most trading centers. (This was not the case for the most remote locations.) However, only a few respondents own mobile phones, and only a small percentage of those with phones use mobile banking. Some respondents noted that the high taxes imposed by telecom companies dissuade some mobile phone users from using mobile banking services. For other respondents, their inability to understand the procedures and requirements of mobile banking is a barrier to use.

Affordability appears to greatly influence people's choices in how they save. Hence, keeping money inside the house or with another person is seen as the least expensive and most effective option. This is particularly important in a place like Karamoja where banking outreach and access are low or nonexistent. However, people still worry about the risks involved in keeping their money inside their huts, due to the potential for loss through theft or fire.

### *VSLAs and access to credit*

Female and male youth described that VSLAs are one of the most common types of community-based groups that exist in villages, although some communities did not report having any VSLAs. A minority of male and female youth reported active membership, although none held leadership positions. Male and female youth described a range of reasons for their non-membership, including the absence of VSLAs in their village, their inability to meeting the weekly savings requirements, and the perception that youth were not invited to participate in their local VSLA. Despite low rates of participation, most of the youth respondents expressed a desire to be involved.

While some government or NGO programming was behind some VLSAs, others formed spontaneously. Of the reported VSLAs, group membership was

39 Male youth, 27-year-old, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

40 Male youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

mixed-gender or female only. Size varies from 8 to 30 members, and reported weekly contributions ranged from UGX 1,000 to 15,000 (USD \$0.27 to USD\$4.00). In addition to VSLAs, some youth were members of other forms of financial groups, such as the rotating “merry-go-round” model. Members contribute regularly, and the group pays out to one member on a rotating basis; this model does not normally provide loans. Other groups, such as livestock associations, had savings and loans components but did not appear to consider themselves VSLAs.

Despite the relatively low involvement of most of the youth respondents in VSLAs, study participants did feel that the groups were an important means of encouraging savings and a reliable source of loans. The option of taking loans seemed to be particularly appealing to the youth in the study population. Women reportedly mostly used loans to support brewing or cereal businesses, while men invest in livestock trade or shops that sell beer and *waragi* (hard alcohol). One male respondent explained, “I am a member of a VSLA...we save 10,000 per week. I got a loan of UGX 200,000 recently to expand my petty trade within the village and buy more livestock for sale to gain profits.”<sup>41</sup> As he described in the subsequent section, having access to capital, especially during emergencies, facilitated a sense of assurance and confidence for young people, especially those with family obligations. As a 20-year-old female described, “What I like about being in the group is that when I fall sick or have a food crisis at home, I am able to get a loan.”<sup>42</sup> Benefits were described by the youngest participants in our sample, such as this 15-year-old female: “Participating in savings has equipped me with the skills of saving money, which has made me able to support my family and business. When you save, you prepare yourself for the drought when it comes.”<sup>43</sup>

Thirdly, many VSLAs have clear rules and regulations, particularly with regard to consistent attendance at meetings, amount of saving

contributed, and prompt repayment of loans. Penalties and fines are levied for defaults.

Fourthly, although some groups are comprised of both genders, many respondents (including men) considered groups led by women to be safer to invest in. Respondents felt that male-only or male-led groups were more likely to suffer losses or were prone to misuse of funds. In contrast, female-led groups were believed to be more reliable, honest, and trustworthy, and to have better rates of repayment. A female youth study participant noted:

Males trust females when it comes to matters of VSLA groups; females are not easily corrupted, they also don't take sides during decision-making in the group...The importance of males in the group is that they help during mobilization as they can easily walk distances to reach members, follow up on loans taken, and they are good when it comes to disciplining the undisciplined ones.<sup>44</sup>

There were a few examples of groups in which non-members could borrow group savings, but this was felt to increase the risk of losses. VSLA groups operate on an assumption of shared risks among members. This sense of shared risk and responsibility might not be felt by a non-member, thereby increasing the risk of defaulting on a loan. Some VSLA groups had reportedly closed due to mismanagement and corruption by group leaders, causing financial losses as well as frustration for members. A member of one such group shared his experience:

Last year, I was saving in a VSLA composed of 30 males and 10 females between 16–24 years old, where I saved UGX 1,000 per week. At the end, I was able to save UGX 61,000 for the whole year, but the group was closed down because of certain irregularities in the administration... key among them was the lack of transparency in group administration.<sup>45</sup>

41 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

42 Female youth, 20-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

43 Female youth, 15-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

44 Female FGD, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 7, 2018.

45 Male youth, 21-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

This example illustrates that the integrity and credibility of VSLA leadership play an important role in the success and sustainability of such groups.

A good number of participants interviewed for this study were not members of a VSLA. Some respondents indicated that they were unable to afford the weekly contribution. Youth who were not part of VSLAs (non-members) said they are charged high interest rates (compared to group members), which affects their potential to access credit services or borrowing. Others, such as those who were away at boarding school or frequently out to graze livestock, said they could not be in a group because they could not attend regular meetings. In addition, some VSLAs that were linked to specific NGO projects were said to have closed at the end of the project, pointing to the lack of sustainability of such models.

### Meeting basic needs

VSLA groups are popular for their savings and loan components, and because they enable people to meet immediate pressing needs such as food shortages, medical emergencies, or school fees. In addition, VSLAs and similar groups help to build social connectedness within communities.

Several respondents who were in VSLAs noted that membership allowed them to meet emergency needs in the absence of other forms of capital. Some of these benefits may be from trainings associated with group membership, such as Mercy Corps' Mother Care Groups that contained a savings and loan component. For instance, a female respondent remarked: "There has been improved health, nutrition, and sanitation as a result, women have been empowered through trainings."<sup>46</sup> However, other respondents clearly discuss loans for emergency purposes. A different female respondent said:

I have taken a loan from the group twice...The second time I got a loan and used it for taking my child to the hospital in Kitgum District... Participating in the group has affected my

life positively in a way that even in difficult situations, I am able to get a loan from the group and survive.<sup>47</sup>

Through covering basic and emergency needs and earning income from investments (such as brewing or *mandazi* (fried dough) businesses), women may be able to expand their household roles and increase their social status. However, it is unclear how participants who borrow for immediate needs are able to repay the funds.

### Social connectedness

Involvement in VSLAs helps members to build social connectedness with others in the group. This is, in part, because VSLA groups operate on the principle of shared gain and loss. This group risk can help VSLA group members develop a sense of responsibility to each other; they share ideas and experiences. The social connection can also help members amicably resolve disagreements, which promotes peaceful co-existence. For example, this 27-year-old male described, "The VSLA has built peace and encouraged unity in the village, helping people to interact freely and share ideas and experiences in business."<sup>48</sup>

Some respondents mentioned that due to their involvement in the VSLA, they have made more and new friends. Through the connections, they are able to generate new ideas and plans for development. One male respondent explained that since joining the VSLA he has built strong relationships with other businessmen and expanded upon his business ideas. He devises new plans daily and will use a loan from the group to put the plans into action.<sup>49</sup>

For female youth respondents, participating in a VSLA enabled them to meet people they would not necessarily otherwise interact with. The role of a VSLA as a social place is particularly important for female youth in a context where their engagement in social life outside the household is limited or lacking. As one female respondent reported, she liked saving money, but "I also like the fact that I am able to

46 Female youth, 18-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

47 Female youth, 23-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

48 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

49 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

socialize in the group.”<sup>50</sup> Through the VSLAs, female youth may begin to engage in public life and other development initiatives in their community.

### **Business growth and skills**

Being part of a VSLA group enables some respondents to gain business skills. Money borrowed is often linked to a specific business plan or venture, and the group dynamic makes it difficult for people to misuse or divert funds. A male youth noted, “My involvement in the VSLA group made me learn new and better ways of handling money. This is because money was given to me as a loan for strictly business, and I had to bring it back with interest.”<sup>51</sup> The strict group repayment requirement helps to keep participating members in check and focused on their business goals because of the expectation to repay in a timely fashion.

In addition, respondents mentioned that VSLA membership brings opportunities for training and helpful experiences. Notably, respondents said young women gained a sense of empowerment from skills trainings and the opportunity to invest in business. They may also experience increased confidence and security within their families. A young woman explained:

I usually save UGX 10,000 per week, and I have taken a loan twice so far, which I used as capital for the business of making local brew for sale, and I also bought a goat. My participation in the VSLA has affected my life positively in a way that I am able to support my family from the savings.<sup>52</sup>

In this example, the young woman was able to acquire productive resources (the goat) and to gain control of income through brewing. Following this young woman over time will allow us to examine if and how she continues to experience additional positive benefits from the VSLA involvement and increased economic independence.

Similarly, VSLA participation for male youth may enable them to expand and bolster their businesses

and, in return, gain some status and key markers of patriarchy. Some male youth were able to increase their livestock holdings or start livestock trade after borrowing from a VSLA. One respondent noted, “My herd is steadily rising because nowadays, when someone has a problem at home, I just get money from the group account [as opposed to] those days when I used to sell livestock for any small problem that requires money.”<sup>53</sup> In this case, having the savings scheme provides the young man with a safety net and allows him to preserve his livestock assets. Such actions may assist young men in fulfilling their traditional roles as household heads or providers, thereby boosting their social standing. It is also through the growth of herds that they are able to marry and expand families, which is itself key to living up to the expectations of a patriarchal role.

### **Role of markets**

Most study participants accessed marketplaces at least once per week, normally on the specific market days in their area. Youth reported they went to the market to buy or sell items and to socialize with friends. Food stuffs were the most commonly purchased items (including maize flour, salt, onions, oil, and beans), followed by clothes, shoes, and household items (such as cooking and kitchen items). Respondents also reported buying chickens, small livestock, veterinary medicine, mobile credit, and inventory for their shops (including soup and *waragi*). People also sold items, particularly animals (goats, sheep, cattle, and chickens), bush products (poles, reeds, thatch, and firewood), and prepared goods (cooked food, local brew, and aloe vera juice). By gender, young men reported mostly selling goats, sheep, cattle, and construction poles; while young women sold reeds, chickens, firewood, local brew, and prepared food.

Marketplaces also play an important role in the social lives of youth in this study. Respondents go to markets to visit with friends, meet new people, and exchange ideas. A young man said he goes to Moroto town to buy what he needs, but also goes

50 Female youth, 21-year-old, Katikikile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

51 Male youth, 20-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

52 Female youth, 16-year-old, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018

53 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

to the “Naitakwae cattle market every Monday...to socialize with people, accompany his friends who want to buy and sell something...and to pass time during market days.” He added: “Everybody in the village goes, leaving only young children,” and hence he would have nothing to do if he stayed home, so goes to the market “even if I have nothing to buy.”<sup>54</sup> Another male youth said, “While at the market, I socialize, drink *ebutia*, meet friends, and sometimes even if I don’t have money...just walk there to pass time.” While men were more likely to discuss the social function of markets, several female youth also described going to markets to socialize with friends and family members.<sup>55</sup> Respondents were excited about markets; they clearly enjoyed going, meeting people, and having the opportunity to interact with peers.

We asked about how markets were changing, if at all. Most study participants said that the markets now attract more and different types of people than previously. Also, more goods and services are available in the markets. For example, one young man noted that Naitakwae cattle market is now “very interesting” due to the presence of musicians, media shops (where music is copied onto SIM cards), photographers, gamblers, food preparers, brewers, beggars, and herbalists.<sup>57</sup> However, we also heard that some people have trouble selling all of their wares due to the increase in the number of sellers at the markets. This seemed to particularly be true for women, who said that they were not able to sell as much of their brew, charcoal, firewood, reeds, or vegetables.<sup>58</sup> On the flip side, almost all respondents said that the items they wished to buy were all readily available at the markets.

## Civic participation and group leadership

In this section, we examine youth involvement in the various groups that exist within their communities. We investigated these groups and involvement in them in part because they create ideas about masculinity, femininity, life aspirations, and productivity among their members. We are interested in how male and female youth are included as part of the groups’ everyday life in the community.

First, nearly all the groups listed within the sampled communities are open to membership by both males and females. The exception is the Peace Committees, which are exclusively male due to the assumption that security falls exclusively within the male domain. Some groups form spontaneously, while others are linked to NGO or government programming.<sup>59</sup> Male and female youth noted, with positive regard, that both NGOs and government programs promoted a mixed gender model to encourage gender equality—although some groups are segregated such as Mother Care Groups and Male Change Agent groups, and some VSLAs remain divided by gender. Male focus group participants in Moroto said, “When such groups or associations are formed in Lodekela village, they will insist on gender balance.”<sup>60</sup> Overall, most respondents preferred mixed-gender groups to those that were exclusively one gender or the other. This was the case among both male and female study participants. For example, this male youth described, “[Group membership in Amudat Town Council such as] CAHWs [community animal health workers] and VHTs [village health teams] show that both sexes actually get involved in these groups.

54 Male youth, 18-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

55 Male youth, 24-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

56 Female youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019; female youth, 18-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018; female youth, 18-year-old, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 21, 2019; female youth, 19-year-old, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

57 Male youth, 18-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

58 Female youth, 15-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019; female youth, 20-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

59 For example, the Mother Care Groups were linked to Mercy Corps, while the literacy groups were linked to ADRA, another NGO. NUSAF 3 groups were tied to the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) under the Office of the Prime Minister. A few other groups were associated with the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) under the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development.

60 Male FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.



The group is more popular when it is gendered balanced!”<sup>61</sup> Similarly, in Moroto District, a female youth participant described, “Youth are not more likely to be separated into respective groups—sexes are mixed. Women alone can’t handle a group and men alone can’t handle a group. They should be mixed up.”<sup>62</sup> At the same time, not all study participants across locations expressed the same degree of tolerance for mixed groups—both in terms of participation and female leadership. “Males don’t feel good when they are in the same group with females,” described female youth in one group discussion.<sup>63</sup>

### *Types of groups in the community*

The most commonly reported groups by study respondents were village health committees (VHTs), village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), community animal health workers (CAHWs), Mother Care Groups, Peace Committees, and youth groups.

The VHTs are composed of males and females from the same village who are selected and trained to deliver immediate health services. A few youth within the sample (both male and female) reported that they are VHT members. The Mother Care Groups consisted of women only, although most female youth interviewed were not members of the group. They were reported to be responsible for teaching mothers about proper childcare for young children (including improved feeding practices), providing information on family planning, and sensitizing community members on better health, hygiene, and sanitation. They also promote and encourage pregnant mothers to use antenatal care services and to deliver at a health facility.

Community animal health worker groups (CAHWs) were reportedly made up of both male and female youth, although the research team heard of a few cases where only men were involved. The CAHWs were selected and trained to treat animals in their

villages and were noted as an important group within the village.

Peace Committees were the only group to explicitly exclude females. The Peace Committees are responsible for the security, safety, and peace of their community, and in particular, the prevention of livestock theft. The Peace Committees are comprised of male elders, the elected village head (LC I, Local Council), male youth, Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) soldiers, and policemen. The committees are meant to ensure that peaceful measures are pursued to resolve conflicts. In the case of livestock theft, they track stolen animals from the village and return them to the rightful owners. In line with the 2-for-1 resolutions passed at Nabilatuk and Moruitit in 2013, the Peace Committees are meant to ensure that the thief (or his community) surrenders two animals for every one animal stolen (plus a token animal for the Peace Committee).<sup>64</sup>

Additional groups mentioned by youth in select locations included: water committees, literacy groups, football groups, choir groups, NUSAF 3 groups, farming groups, tree planting groups, livestock trading groups, U-Report groups (SMS social monitoring tool), brickmaking groups, and disabled persons’ groups, among others.

### *Youth involvement and participation in groups*

Although youth were able to list many groups in their communities, few of our study participants reported direct participation in these groups. While representation was low, youth—particularly males—articulated their desire to be recognized for the important roles they play in the community. As described by this 27-year-old male, “Young people are the fulcrum of the community. They are the ones who run all the shows in the community by being security agents, workers during the wet season, shepherds of livestock, and agents of change.”<sup>65</sup> Despite playing supportive roles for leaders, most young men felt that these roles were not adequately

61 Male FGD, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District January 18, 2019.

62 Female FGD, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

63 Female FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

64 Stites et al., “A better balance”; Stites and Howe, *From the border to the bedroom*.

65 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.

recognized, such as articulated by this 26-year-old male: “Our situation as leaders in Pokot is pathetic. Youth are taken as messengers by almost everybody (elders, LC I, police, UPDF) when it comes to peace and security; we are laborers in herding animals, watering, and digging, and we have the energy to do exactly that.”<sup>66</sup>

Those who did belong to groups were most likely to be members of VHTs, CAHWs, and VSLAs (the latter being especially the case for women). Some of the young men were involved in Peace Committees. Only a few villages reportedly had no groups in existence. In some cases, youth said that while they were not involved in groups, their parents and other youth in the village were active. For those youth who were engaged as group participants, few held leadership positions.

Some of the youth noted that groups did not target the youth population, resulting in their being excluded. In other instances, youth attributed their lack of participation to their inability to attend regular meetings due to other commitments or, in the case of the VSLAs, not being able to afford the contributions. Other respondents said that no development programs had reached their villages due to their remote location, and hence no groups had been set up. For instance, a male respondent in Amudat explained, “The village is very remote, and we don’t have all the groups that are being asked like the Peace Committees, youth associations, women’s associations, VSLAs, farmer/pastoralists field schools, choirs, cooperatives, etc....it would need a deliberate effort by organizations...to start groups in the village.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, villages in hard-to-reach locations such as in the hills had few or no groups: “We don’t know much about groups here, unless someone comes to teach us about groups, [as] we are settled up the mountain...so we don’t know what groups do.”<sup>68</sup> Remoteness is a challenge; it affects access and exposure to development programs, stifling initiatives that could mobilize youth into

groups and associations for their own development. Participants in some more accessible locations described the inverse, where organizations provided considerable support. A 22-year-old man explained, “The aid organizations are doing super work because our villages are easily accessible for intervention. They are changing people’s minds.”<sup>69</sup> He went on to extol the presence of wide-ranging interventions related to family planning, hygiene, education, livelihoods, water, and sanitation.

Another challenge to youth participation in groups has to do with group dynamics. Poor cooperation among youth appeared to negatively impact the viability and functionality of groups within the community. Without committed membership and involvement, groups struggle to fulfill their purpose and survive. Respondents mentioned that some of the groups collapsed due to poor performance and absenteeism of members. This was regularly referenced when VSLA members took loans but later defaulted, as explained by a young man in a focus group discussion: “Nadulai VSLA had 20 members who used to contribute UGX 1,000 per week. It was unfortunate that Nadulai VSLA died because members delayed in returning whatever they had borrowed.”<sup>70</sup>

In addition, at least one respondent noted the issue of elite capture within some groups. He said that this was particularly the case for livestock associations, which were considered to be among the best and richest existing groups. He felt that livestock associations are prone to takeover by corrupt leaders, who reportedly give themselves loans from the group but delay paying them back. While this was only reported in one instance, the youth who raised this point stressed that this was a very sensitive issue and that he would be in trouble if it was known he disclosed this information.<sup>71</sup> Given this, we feel it is possible that this problem is more widespread. This and other presumed instances of corruption likely lead to financial loss, decreased

66 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

67 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

68 Female FGD, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

69 Male youth, 22-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, December 22, 2018.

70 Male FGD, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018.

71 Male youth, 24-year-old, Sub-county withheld, Kotido District, date withheld.

morale among members, loss of overall funds available to the rest of the group, and reduction of the funds available to the rest of the group.

Respondents also noted the challenge of regular monitoring of groups, by either the entity that initiated the group (such as an NGO or government program) or by members themselves.<sup>72</sup> Regular monitoring could help to address group dysfunctionality and provide direction for group guidelines and regulations, including assistance in resolving conflicts. At the same time, however, any monitoring or oversight by an external entity should include an exit strategy designed to maximize sustainability of the group.

Another challenge to youth involvement in groups, especially groups that entail income generation or contain a savings component, relates to their limited ownership of productive assets, such as livestock or land, that they could use to raise income. These assets are more likely to be owned or controlled by their parents, and youth are not always able to access these resources. For instance, a youth group in Kotido was hoping to do brickmaking as a group activity, but could not find suitable land on which to set up their venture. They tried using the lands that belonged to some individual members, but found this to be risky when there were internal arguments among members. This form of uncertainty made it difficult for the youth to proceed and succeed in their group activity.<sup>73</sup>

In the absence of productive resources, youth complain that they lack the financial means to finance and support their desired activities. Several youth groups interviewed mentioned that they cannot engage in activities such as sports teams and choir groups in the absence of such funds.<sup>74</sup>

Some participants also noted that the excessive consumption of alcohol by both male and female youth stood in the way of group participation. Due to low school enrollment and limited livelihood opportunities in Karamoja, many male youth are idle. Coupled with the ubiquitous, inexpensive, and potent waragi sold in small sachets, a number of male youth pass the time by drinking.<sup>75</sup> While many others, of course, do not drink or rarely drink to excess, there is a tendency to blame alcohol consumption on many of the problems facing Karamoja and the region's young people in particular.<sup>76</sup> The use of alcohol has been observed in many conflict and post-conflict settings as a coping mechanism, particularly for men who find themselves unable to fulfill their traditional roles as household heads, providers, and protectors.<sup>77</sup>

### *Female involvement in civic groups*

Young women faced some specific challenges in regard to group participation. The high expectations and demands on women within households limits their time to be involved in group activities to the extent of their male counterparts. Female participants in a focus group discussion explained:

Male youth are more involved in groups because female youth are always taken up with domestic responsibilities. For example, female youth are always in the bush looking for construction materials during dry season and during rainy season, they are busy with garden work.<sup>78</sup>

In such conditions, it is nearly impossible to ensure women's regular availability for groups. One woman elaborated, "I am the lead trainer of other mothers, and it's been challenging to train them because mothers have high expectations [upon them] from others. It's not easy to mobilize in case of meetings due to time and distance between members."<sup>79</sup> In

72 Female youth, 20-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018; male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

73 Female youth, 26-year-old, Kotido Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

74 Male youth, 21-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019; male youth, 18-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

75 Mosebo, *Coping with disorder*.

76 Iyer, Sekajja, and Stites, *The silent gun*.

77 Ahikire, Madanda, and Ampaire. *Post-war economic opportunities; Carlson and Mazurana, Beating wives and protecting culture*.

78 Female FGD, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018.

79 Female youth, 20-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

a context where women are already burdened with many roles and responsibilities, participation in group activities might be seen by some as an added burden that is best to avoid.

In addition to the heavy domestic time burden for women, negative attitudes held by some toward women's involvement in public life may curtail their involvement in groups. Some husbands reportedly feel uncomfortable with their wife's engagement in public life, and other men reportedly frown upon women taking part in community activities. For example, this 26-year-old male explained, "Women are looked down upon by men. They are not one hundred percent free to work as leaders, and they have to attend to household chores like taking care of the children and the family as a whole. Their husbands don't trust them during their outside travels away from the household."<sup>80</sup> In the view of young women, some male youth are said to be reluctant to work alongside women. A respondent in a female focus group discussion gave her opinion: "Males usually don't want to mix with women together because they think it's a waste of time to be in groups and also shameful to mix with women together."<sup>81</sup>

In some cases, limitations exist on the activities considered by the male-centric status quo to be acceptable for women. For instance, women cannot participate in the Peace Committees or be involved in other security matters. Respondents noted that in community meetings, women do not have the same representation or ability to express their views as their male counterparts. If they do speak up, they are often not taken seriously. For young women, age compounds this situation, as explained by a female youth who was in a VSLA group: "During meetings, some members don't respect others' opinions. I don't speak during meetings, and because they think that I am young, I am not given the opportunity to speak."<sup>82</sup> Age barriers also apply to young men, who must be initiated into an open age-set to be considered an

adult. Age-sets determine the authority and respect accorded to male individuals in their households and communities.<sup>83</sup> Age-sets no longer exist for women in Karamoja, but female youth have even less of a voice in the community than their male counterparts.

There was a general consensus that women hold few leadership positions in groups and the community. The barriers to female participation in groups described above hold for leadership as well, but may be exacerbated by views that women cannot or should not be leaders. As described by this 17-year-old female youth:

Women are looked down on and are not given the opportunity to share their minds and opinions in meetings within the village. They are sometimes not represented in those meetings and are not leaders. Even in their households, they are not allowed to make decisions that matter and even decisions about their lives. Women should be given the opportunity to be in leadership positions and to be involved in decision-making processes.<sup>84</sup>

In some areas, however, there was evidence of some change. A 21-year-old man explained, "Women nowadays are involved in leadership in my community, they now contend for posts that were previously exclusive to men and are proving to be the best leaders."<sup>85</sup> However, while women may occasionally attain leadership positions, respondents said that their positions are often less meaningful or powerful than those held by their male colleagues. In the words of one male, "Women are now representing the community...they even dare to contest with men in Local Council elections. This is because they have been recognized as the best leaders because they are impartial and tolerate no rivals. However, when a woman becomes a LC I, it will be her husband running the show."<sup>86</sup>

Despite the limitations that female youth face in their participation and involvement in group

80 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

81 Female FGD, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

82 Female youth, 18-year-old, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

83 Gulliver, The age set organization of the Jie tribe; Spencer, *Opposing streams*; Stites, *A struggle for rites*.

84 Female youth, 17-year old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

85 Male youth, 21-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

86 Male youth, 25-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018.

activities, respondents noted that when women do take part, they perform their work diligently and at times better than their male counterparts. Interestingly, it was most often young men who extolled the virtues of female participation and leadership. For example, one male youth stated, “Women who are in leadership are among the best leaders I have ever met; they are less partial than men and often execute their duties without bribery and corruption.”<sup>87</sup> Others mentioned that women are more “honest and transparent” than men,<sup>88</sup> and that “they hit measurable objectives and implement what they say, more than men do.”<sup>89</sup> Such positive attributes contrasted with views of male youth, which tended to be more negative. They were described as impulsive, stubborn, disrespectful of women and group rules, and prone to excessive consumption of alcohol.<sup>90</sup> While such views are not universal, they do illustrate the attitudes and perceptions that young people have toward some problematic aspects of male youth.

## Leadership

### *Qualities of a good leader*

We wanted to understand youth’s expectations and experiences of their local leaders, as well as how engaged youth are with governance structures and processes. These aspects are important because we are tracking aspirations and views of the future over time, and hence current imaginings of leadership are instructive. We asked youth what they thought the qualities of good leaders were, which provided a sense of youth expectations and experiences with leadership to date. It is important to mention that most of the leaders that youth had experience with were male and that female youth had much less access to leaders than their male peers. Both genders, however, were able to articulate their views on the characteristics of good leaders.

First, many respondents mentioned that a good leader is someone who is trustworthy and honest in their work with the community. These qualities

relate to a leader’s ability to care for and manage all things—tangible or intangible—that were for the greater good of the community. Good leaders were said to be people who openly shared ideas and information about developments in their areas. Additionally, a trustworthy and honest leader has the capability to resolve problems without bias and to remain neutral in their decision.

Respondents noted that a good leader would not cheat or steal from the community for their own good, such as by siphoning government or NGO goods and services for their own benefit or use.

Second, respondents noted that a good leader is someone who defends and stands up for the right and well-being of their community. Such a leader voices the concerns and problems that the community faces and seeks appropriate support as needed to resolve the problem. One female respondent noted, “The LC III is a very good leader because he reports community issues of raids, killings, and theft to the police, he fights for the rights of the young girls who are being forced to marry. He also brings soldiers to the *kraals* so animals are secured.”<sup>91</sup> While such a proactive view on the rights of young women may be an anomaly, what is notable is that this leader appears to prioritize the greater good of the community and, in turn, is trusted by his constituents.

Third, male and female youth emphasized that a good leader is one who listens, and one who mobilizes and regularly organizes and attends village meetings. He should be able to understand and clearly articulate the community’s concerns and serve as a bridge between different interests within the community and outside of it. This male youth provided an example of a male leader in his village, stating he “is very courageous and leads people very well. He organizes meetings whenever there is a problem and settles disputes from within and outside the village.”<sup>92</sup> Youth also described that a good leader should be a good communicator. A

87 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

88 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

89 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

90 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018; male youth, 25-year-old, Loroo Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

91 Female youth, 18-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

92 Male youth, 24-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2019.

good leader should be able to handle issues within their community while also knowing who to refer community members to when they need outside assistance.

Fourth, a few respondents mentioned that a good leader should be exemplary in his/her actions and choices, both in personal and public life. A good leader shows the way by what he/she does, how he/she behaves, and how he/she treats members of his/her household. A good leader should be a role model. He/she shouldn't engage in mistreatment, quarrelling, fighting, beating, or other abusive behaviors to a family member or others. A good leader should seek to live in harmony in order to set a good example for others in the community. As described by this female youth, "A leader is a person who is a role model in his home. He does not mistreat his household members by beating, threats, or quarreling. He sets a good example."<sup>93</sup>

### Key actors and their roles

As part of understanding leadership, we wanted to know whom youth viewed as the key actors in their communities, what roles these people played, and the extent of youth interaction with these individuals. Youth listed their local elected leaders, the supporting councils of these leaders, the male elders, seers and rainmakers, religious leaders, NGO staff, teachers, and member of the security sector (police, UPDF soldiers, and members of the Local Defense Units (LDUs)).

Respondents noted that local elected leaders (LC Is and LC IIIs, representing the parish and sub-county level, respectively) were instrumental in their community by ensuring safety and security. (This is interesting in itself, as the LC I and LC III do not have a direct security mandate.) Notably, LC Is and LC IIIs were most often cited (along with teachers and councilors) as examples of good leaders. In particular, male and female respondents describe

that the LCs do a good job in resolving conflicts among family and community members. Several participants described that LC Is (and elders) helped to guide male youth to engage in appropriate respectful behavior and played an active role in disciplining them when necessary.<sup>94</sup>

Local Council leaders were said to play an important role in helping to ensure that basic services, such as water sources, schools, roads, and health facilities were available and functional. In the event of any breakdown or problems with these services, local leaders are meant to coordinate efforts to fix the problem and to serve as an interlocutor with organizations. As described by this female youth, "[Our LC I] holds village meetings to tell the community what the aid organizations want us to do. He registers villager's names for group activities like garden demonstrations...[and] youth livelihood programs."<sup>95</sup> A male youth described, "The LC and Parish Councilors lobby for community boreholes, and they also advise on how animals should graze."<sup>96</sup>

Respondents listed the police and military (including both UPDF soldiers and LDUs) as key actors due to their security roles within the communities. Whenever livestock are raided or stolen, the security forces work with the local Peace Committees to track and recover stolen livestock. Both the military and the police address other security- and justice-related concerns in the community. Male and female study participants describe that youth—and male youth in particular—play an important role in keeping the community safe. In the case of a livestock theft, they act as messengers or trackers for stolen animals.<sup>97</sup> For incidents of domestic violence, male and female youth described that cases are generally brought before the LC I and/or elders, or simply not reported to the authorities. Police are generally referred cases that are considered more serious, often described in the interviews as instances where there is serious injury. Some respondents noted that security has

93 Female youth, 25-year-old, Loroo Sub-county, Amudat District, January 21, 2019.

94 Male youth, 24-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019; female youth, 15-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019; female youth, 18-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018; male youth, 25-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

95 Female youth, 17-year-old, Loroo Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

96 Male youth, 20-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

97 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

improved in their areas—particularly with the decrease in large-scale cattle raids—due to the combined efforts of the military, police, and local Peace Committees.<sup>98</sup>

Young people reported that male elders play an important role in the community. Elders are meant to hold and share the common vision and wisdom; they are the de facto “eye” of the community and are meant to ensure its survival and sustenance through generations. Among other things, elders are said to teach youth the way they are meant to live. This includes having respect for elders, being disciplined, and managing livestock correctly. Elders also play a key role in settling disputes, including over land, domestic matters, and cattle theft. As described by this female youth, “The role of the elders is to solve community problems like when male youth commit a crime...Even when someone in the community cuts a tree, the elders come and talk to the person. They keep law and order in the community. They mentor the youth.”<sup>99</sup> Elders are responsible for initiating and conducting ceremonies and rituals such as marriages, initiation, and the succession of power from one age-set to the next.<sup>100</sup>

Overall, young people reported that male elders are the traditional spiritual resource of the community, especially very old and respected elders. This finding is particularly interesting given that earlier work found many youth had decreased respect in the authority of the elders.<sup>101</sup> (We will continue to examine this aspect over the course of the panel data.) Youth explained that the spiritual role of the elders is both protective and predictive. They perform rituals necessary to avert potential threats, attacks, or epidemics. They also act as diviners who can foretell what the community will face and can advise leaders how best to avert negative outcomes. Many people believe that they would experience much suffering without the interventions of the elders playing this role. Elders offer animal sacrifices

to the gods for protection, good health, harvests, and other needs. Respondents explained that rain makers and seers also sacrifice animals to make rain during times of scarcity. As described by this male youth, “The elders play a key role in the community such as advising the youth, carrying out initiation ceremonies, and making sacrifices. Now we are relying on the elders to make sure the language of the Tepeth is taught to the new generation so it doesn’t die out, as most of them now speak Nga’karimojong.”<sup>102</sup>

While most respondents focused primarily on the role of customary leaders, a few pointed to the efforts of religious leaders in their communities. One respondent noted that the church has played an important role in speaking out against female genital mutilation.<sup>103</sup>

### *Interactions with external actors*

While many youth, especially males, had interactions with local leaders, including LC Is, LC IIIs, and male elders, interaction with external actors was reportedly uncommon. Such external actors consisted of both NGO workers and security sector employees. Although male youth were, for the most part, aware of the presence of these actors or individuals, few had had any personal interactions. Female youth were more likely than male youth not to have had interactions with police, Peace Committees, or aid organizations.<sup>104</sup> The few female youth who had interacted with external actors were usually part of an NGO-facilitated group, such as Mercy Corps’ Mother Care Groups. Young women often spoke positively about such interactions. For example, one female youth described, “I had an interaction with an aid organization about two years ago where I was a caregiver being trained to lead [groups of] mothers twice a week. The impact on the community is that mothers now know how to feed infants below five years, they know the methods

98 Stites and Howe, *From the border to the bedroom*.

99 Female youth, 21-year-old, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

100 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019. Carlson et al., *Tradition in transition*; Stites, *A struggle for rites*.

101 Stites, *Identity reconfigured*.

102 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

103 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

104 For example: female youth 23-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018; female youth, 17-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019; female youth, 23-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019; female youth, 17-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018; female youth, 19-year-old, West Kaabong Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

of family planning, the importance of going for antenatal care in the hospitals, the importance of HIV testing and child spacing.”<sup>105</sup>

Some male youth respondents explained that they were afraid of the security personnel present in their areas. This is likely due to the role of the UPDF in the forced disarmament exercise that began in 2006 and was, particularly in the first few years, extremely brutal and specific in its targeting of male youth.<sup>106</sup> Given lingering stereotypes of male youth as raiders and warriors, it is not surprising that they may face harassment or other negative interactions with security personnel. The fact that most individuals within the security forces are male youth themselves may further exacerbate the situation. Complaints of corruption, especially of the police, further damage the impression that young men hold of the security sector. A young man in Moroto explained, “The police and the UPDF are good in their work but sometimes, they can frustrate people’s efforts in seeking justice. One day, the police took a bribe from my opponent and he was released. This annoyed me so much.”<sup>107</sup> While attitudes toward the UPDF have improved over time, general mistrust of the police has been documented in earlier Feinstein research.<sup>108</sup>

We now turn to perceptions of basic services among the study population.

## Health

### *Types of health services accessed*

Respondents used a wide variety of health services. However, almost all study participants revealed that they use traditional local herbs as a first-line treatment for sick family members. Knowledge about the uses of these herbs appeared to be widespread, but traditional healers may also be consulted for advice, or for illnesses that may have more nefarious

or supernatural causes. A young man in Kotido described a typical treatment process for a sick family member:

First, I go to the bush to dig the roots and cut leaves of specific trees to treat my patient in a form of first aid...If the patient fails to respond to both local herbs and medical attention, I consult traditional healers to ascertain the illness that is disturbing the patient. Most times, traditional healers and diviners treat illness related to witchcraft, curses, and evil spirits. They oftentimes offer sacrifices to purge away the air of pestilence in a particular family. Also, the traditional healer may choose to smear a patient with a particular color and type of muddy soil locally known as *emunyen*. After, the patient is monitored closely and fed with a specific type of food to bring back the energy lost.<sup>109</sup>

Herbs and traditional healers are the first line of defense, not only because they are convenient and often inexpensive, but also because some people consider them more effective than western medicines. For instance, women in a focus group discussion explained that some people in the village believe that herbs given by the traditional healers will heal people more quickly than western medicines. They explained that traditional healers also perform curative rituals, such as slaughtering a chicken and tying the intestines around the neck, leg, and wrist of a patient who stands in a river. The patient is then instructed to run from the river, as the belief is that the disease will remain behind in the river.<sup>110</sup> Discussions with male youth also revealed that they held faith in the efficacy of traditional medicine and had knowledge about herbs and their uses.<sup>111</sup> They referred to traditional medicines as being linked to their cultural heritage, as described by this male youth focus group participant: “Traditional healers are part and parcel of the village situation.”<sup>112</sup>

105 Female youth, 23-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

106 Human Rights Watch, “Get the gun!”; Stites and Akabwai, “We are now reduced to women.”

107 Male youth, 24-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018.

108 Howe et al., “We now have relative peace.”

109 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

110 Female FGD, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

111 As reported in several male FGDs: Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019. Some of the local herbs given to patients included, among the Pokot, *talomac* and *songowow*, which treat malaria or vomiting. Karamojong names for herbs included *elira*, *ecucuka* (aloe vera), *ekuene*, and *panyurut*. The leaves of *kalogwo* are used for cough, leaves of *kutkutia* for cough/flu, *koptuwo* for stomachache, aloe vera for headache, *songowo* for headache, *korkrwo* for diarrhea, *yowo* for syphilis, and *chepskiryo* for typhoid.

112 Male FGD, Kotido Sub-county, Kotido District, January 12, 2019.



Traditional methods may be the preferred first option, but nearly all respondents explained that they would seek western medical care for family members if the herbs and traditional healers were not effective. The next line of defense was most often a public clinic. In addition, the village health teams (VHTs) play an important role in assessing a patient's condition and making recommendations for referrals. Respondents explained that the VHTs are responsible for (a) mobilizing young children for immunization; (b) giving first aid to people before they are referred to the health centers or hospital; (c) promoting community health and hygiene; (d) monitoring malnourished children; and (e) educating pregnant women on antenatal care and accompanying them to deliver at the health centers. Respondents said that care by the VHTs was especially important in children's health. Women in a focus group discussion in Kaabong said that the VHTs came equipped with a number of tools and strategies, including painkillers and advice for mothers as to when to take their children to a clinic.<sup>113</sup> Community members place a high degree of trust in the VHTs, providing an opportunity to enhance and strengthen the capacity of these groups.

When seeking formal health services, respondents were mixed on describing their usage of public health facilities (either a health center or hospital) or private clinics. The calculus seemed dependent on distance and the severity of the illness, with more serious illnesses warranting a direct visit to a hospital. Respondents on the whole described positive experiences interacting with public health center staff, although there was a minority of respondents who described "fearing" health staff or being "shouted at." As described by this young male, "Our medical personnel are not bad, but only sometimes they take long to attend to our patients. They sometimes quarrel with us, and that has brought fear to us."<sup>114</sup> Feeling disrespected or intimidated by medical staff at public health services also arose in interviews in Kotido and Moroto Districts, but the overall impression was positive,

similar to this impression described by a female youth: "Our relationship with the nurses is very good because immediately you reach the facility, you are received well, prescribed, and given treatment."<sup>115</sup>

Other challenges related to public health centers included long wait times, understaffing, and a lack of medication. These factors pushed people who could afford the cost to private facilities, as described by this young man:

I mostly use private clinics for my family's treatment. This is because private clinics handle us with respect. They also offer services on time, i.e., they attend to the patient very fast without delay, and that's why I like taking my family to private clinics for good treatment and quick services. And in private clinics, drugs are always available compared to the public health center. We go sometimes to the [public] health center, and they again tell you to go the private clinic or go to the nearby drug shop and buy drugs.<sup>116</sup>

The process of being referred from public health centers to private clinics for medication was a common theme across interviews. It should be noted that the cost of utilizing private health services was reported as prohibitive for some village residents.

In terms of access, respondents reported that their nearest health facility was between 2 and 50 kilometers away. Reaching a facility took between 30 minutes and 5 hours. However, access worsened in the rainy season, and respondents reported that some people are cut off from facilities due to flooding.

### *Family planning*

Respondents receive information about modern family planning methods from health centers, hospitals, VHTs, schools, and advertisements. Outreach and sensitization programs by mobile health workers also provide information. People reported learning about birth spacing, condom use, and other modern contraception methods. According to Apolou Activity program staff, studies

113 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

114 Male youth, 25-year-old, Lor Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

115 Female youth, 22-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, December 14, 2018.

116 Male youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

have shown that knowledge about modern methods of family planning is quite high (at about 65%).<sup>117</sup> However, while knowledge was clearly spreading, there was also widespread misinformation about modern family planning. One young man said, “Some drugs given to women to prevent pregnancy are not good...These drugs can cause permanent infertility, or cause the woman to gain a lot of weight.”<sup>118</sup> While infertility was the concern most often expressed (more often but not exclusively by male youth), others fear excessive bleeding,<sup>119</sup> “dire consequences,”<sup>120</sup> or other complications (e.g., one young man was concerned that condoms would get permanently lodged inside a woman<sup>121</sup>). A minority described that use of family planning wasn’t necessary because breastfeeding was both a preferred and more effective form of contraception.<sup>122</sup> Many youth, particularly women, had ambivalent views about modern family planning. For instance, one young woman, who reported that she had learned about contraception from both school and the hospital in Kaabong, said:

I find family planning good and bad at the same time. Family planning is good because it aids in child spacing, which enables parents to properly feed their children and give them proper education without much inconvenience. Family planning is bad in the way that it affects women, especially at the time they want to conceive. In most cases, they fail to get pregnant.<sup>123</sup>

Overall, male respondents were more likely than females to not know about or “not believe in” family planning. While women had greater awareness of modern contraceptive methods, many female respondents reported that women did not use family planning because they did not get to decide how many children to have. This decision was—often—up

to the husband or was determined by God’s will. As a male respondent explained, “My wife has no power to restrict the number of children she has to have unless God wills it by making her barren...As long as life endures, I will produce more and more children.”<sup>124</sup> Male status in Karamoja is closely linked to the number of children a man fathers. This view, combined with the lack of status for women, makes it difficult for women to take control of their reproductive health, even if they do have accurate information and access to modern contraception.

Participants of dissemination workshops pointed to the large role that the church and religious leaders play in discouraging the use of modern family planning methods.<sup>125</sup> Another obstacle to family planning is hesitancy among families to discuss their desired number of children. This reluctance was widespread in our interviews. A man in Kotido explained that it was considered very dangerous to specify the number of children to be born. This could challenge God’s plan and lead to the death of those who were already alive.<sup>126</sup> These and other superstitions, combined with widespread misinformation about contraception and further exacerbated by a lack of agency for women, indicate the extent of the uphill battle that will be required to expand knowledge and use of modern family planning methods in Karamoja. On a positive note, the recent gender and youth assessment commissioned by Mercy Corps did find a high rate of use of cycle beads by women to track their monthly cycles.<sup>127</sup> Such methods are only effective if women have regular menstrual cycles, use the tracking tools properly, and are able to negotiate with male partners to avoid unprotected sex during the fertile period. While this combination of luck, knowledge, and influence may not apply to many women in

117 Dissemination event, April 2019.

118 Female youth, 18-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

119 Female youth, 23-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018; female youth, 23-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

120 Male youth, 25-year-old, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 7, 2018.

121 Male youth, 27-year-old, Loka Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

122 Female youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019; female youth, 20-year-old, Rengen Sub-county Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

123 Female youth, 18-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

124 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

125 Dissemination workshop, April 2018.

126 Male youth, 26-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

127 Wasilkowska, Apolou gender assessment.

Karamoja, the use of cycle beads does indicate an awareness of reproductive processes, which is a necessary and important step in promoting family planning. Participants in dissemination workshops also described that communities may be more open to the notion of child spacing over family planning, as this is seen to be more in line with traditional means of family planning.<sup>128</sup>

## Education

Most youth interviewed were not currently enrolled in school. Many were past school age, but those who were not explained that they were not in school because of a lack of funds or the need to assist their families with domestic and livelihood activities. Across focus group discussions with male and female youth, the most commonly cited reason for girls or boys either not to attend school or to drop out related to a lack of ability to pay school fees. This was not, however, the only barrier reported to school attendance. A common second factor cited by male and female youth across all four districts was the necessity to support the household through income generation or general support.<sup>129</sup> For boys, this was most often the need to look after livestock, although a minority reported the need to work in gardens or seek casual labor in trading centers. For girls, their efforts were less likely to generate income, but instead revolved around the necessity to assist in domestic labor, taking care of younger siblings, and farming. Such trends were found across all four districts in the sample.

The family composition also seems to affect the rate of attendance, as described by this female focus group participant: “Some families with only one boy make their child to stop going to school so that they can take care of the cattle compared to some homes with many male children.”<sup>130</sup> A few study participants also described that when there is only one female

child in the household, she is more likely to be pulled from school in order to support the mother in taking care of the compound.<sup>131</sup>

Focus group participants explained that negative attitudes from their parents toward school had also hindered their education progress. This was especially true for girls. Such negative attitudes generally manifested in the belief that school would make their daughters sexually promiscuous. A young woman in Kaabong explained:

The main barrier to enrolling in school today is ignorance of some parents and the community about the importance of school. Up to now some parents still believe that their children—especially girls—will become prostitutes if taken to school. The cost of school has also become so high that children from humble backgrounds may not be able to afford [it]; [there is] also the desire of parents to marry off their children for cattle.<sup>132</sup>

Another common theme was that parents keep girls from attending school because of their wish to marry them and to access bridewealth. Bridewealth payments do not generally take into account a girl’s educational levels. As such, investments in girls’ education are seen to have lower yields than sons’, as daughters are absorbed into their husbands’ families after marriage. As described by this female youth, “Parents have a belief that educating girls has no valuable returns compared to educating a boy—girls even after education will migrate and stay with their husbands.”<sup>133</sup> Another female youth explained, “Parents give away girls for bridewealth, and these girls are forced to marry a man who has a lot of cows. The household head has poor perceptions of girls who are educated.”<sup>134</sup> Much of the discussion linking marriage and girl’s attendance referred to “early marriage,” indicating that this is still a regular practice across study sites. The

128 Dissemination workshop, April 2019.

129 See for example (but not limited to): male youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019; male FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018; female FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019; female FGD, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

130 Female FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

131 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

132 Female FGD, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018.

133 Female FGD, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

134 Male FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

link between sexual promiscuity, bridewealth, and education is best summed up by this young woman in Amudat: “Most men say girls who go to school end up being prostitutes. When girls are taken to school, the father of the child will not get cows as bridewealth.”<sup>135</sup>

We sought to understand the gendered differences for dropping out of school. (To note, this does not take into account those who never enrolled in school.) When comparing responses, the average age for boys to drop out was between 15 and 17 years old. Most drop-outs for boys came after Primary Seven (equivalent to 6th grade in the United States). The main reasons for boys to drop out were lack of funds, responsibilities at home, the need to work to support the household, being an orphan, peer pressure, and desire to marry. As mentioned above, a number of respondents said that boys may be pulled from school to care for livestock, especially in families with one or few sons. One male youth reported:

My father stopped me from going to school and engaged me in looking after his animals. I could not eat if I attempted to go to school and left the animals to go alone; I could only eat if I went for animals. My father used to beat me badly, and he stopped me from going to school.<sup>136</sup>

Some participants revealed that some boys simply got bored with school and decided to quit or left after failing examinations.<sup>137</sup> A common theme for boys was to leave school after impregnating a girl.<sup>138</sup> As described by this female youth, boys drop out of school because they have “trouble with girls. They get involved with girls and impregnate them, which forces them away from school.”<sup>139</sup>

Overall, girls appear to drop out of school before boys, at age approximately 10 to 13 years old. Many of the reasons for girls to drop out were similar to those of boys. In addition, many respondents said that girls drop out due to forced early marriage, sexual abuse, and pregnancy.<sup>140</sup> Unplanned pregnancy was one of the most common reasons cited for dropping out of school across all four districts.

Similarly, girls often drop out of school because they do not have access to sanitary materials.<sup>141</sup> As in many other contexts, girls drop out of school once they start menstruating. As described by this male youth, girls have “a lack of pads against menstruation and they drop out because of shame!”<sup>142</sup> Female genital mutilation among the Pokot and some Tepeth communities can also lead to girls’ withdrawal from school.

Other challenges to staying in school included lack of funds for basic needs and school materials and distance to school. In addition, some schools lacked upper primary classes, making it more difficult for students to attend. Respondents said that the lack of adequate classrooms meant that ramshackle grass huts housed some of the higher primary classes. This reportedly made it difficult for students to attend school regularly.<sup>143</sup>

In addition, some of the young people interviewed said that they would like to go back to school, but felt they were too old and had too many additional responsibilities to manage, including marital duties, childcare and domestic work for female youth, and livestock and income-generation activities for male youth.<sup>144</sup> Others described that there is “peer pressure” to stay out of school, or they felt that

135 Female youth, 25-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

136 Male youth, 21-year-old, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

137 Female FGD, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018; female FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 12, 2019.

138 Male FGD, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018; male FGD, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

139 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

140 Female FGD, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

141 Male FGD, Amudat Sub-county, Amudat District, January 24, 2019.

142 Male FGD, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019.

143 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

144 This was a very common theme across districts. See for example: female youth, 15-year-old, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018; male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018; male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019; female youth, 21-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018.

too much time had passed since they were last enrolled.<sup>145</sup> However, one study participant reported that he feels motivated to go back to school when he sees that some of his friends who proceeded with their education are now working as teachers or with local NGOs in Moroto.<sup>146</sup>

### Benefits of education

We asked youth respondents what they thought the benefits of education were, if any.<sup>147</sup> The main benefit reported was the acquisition of knowledge or skills that may lead to future employment, including as a teacher, doctor, engineer, or lawyer.<sup>148</sup> Male youth in a focus group said that education could allow you to become a driver or pilot.<sup>149</sup> Such employment, respondents explained, would allow one to earn money to support his or her family as well as contributing to the development of the community at large. Support to families was envisioned to include basic needs, sibling's school fees, and care for parents and relatives. Respondents said that those who complete school can acquire wealth, buy livestock, and build permanent houses for their parents. A female participant in a focus group explained, "Education improves the standards of living of both the child and the parents—one can build a house, get a job, buy food, support during medical [care], [help with] bills payment and with better treatment...Educated children can bring development projects to their community, for example construct boreholes, latrines, and more schools."<sup>150</sup>

In addition to acquiring an income and supporting their families, youth respondents pointed out that educated people are the ones who usually become community leaders. Listed positions for educated

people included Members of Parliament (MPs), LC Vs, and women representatives. Youth were also more likely to cite as role models those who had finished school.<sup>151</sup> As described by this female youth, children who go to school "will become role models for other children in the community and encourage other children to go to school."<sup>152</sup> Educated children are thought to be better suited to support their families economically.<sup>153</sup> Educated children also served as an example to families who did not put their children in school. For instance, in a focus group with female youth, one participant noted that parents learn a lesson when they see children who have been educated bringing their families gifts such as food and clothes.<sup>154</sup>

### Experiences of (in)security

Karamoja, once infamous for brutal cattle raids, no-go areas, and road ambushes, has become a very different place over the past ten to fifteen years. There is a general agreement among the study population that cattle raids are rare in the wake of forced disarmament. This does not mean that there is no insecurity, but rather that the nature and severity of insecurity has changed.<sup>155</sup> We gathered information on the experiences, perceptions, and means of coping with insecurity from the youth respondents. We sought information on daily safety as well as the gender dynamics of these experiences.

#### Theft of livestock and other assets

Although large-scale cattle raids are extremely uncommon, theft of livestock and other household property remains fairly common. Livestock thieves primarily target herders grazing in remote areas. Petty theft within the *manyattas* is still very common,

145 Male youth, 25-year-old, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 7, 2018; female youth, 17-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019; male youth, 27-year-old, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

146 Male youth, 25-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018.

147 We acknowledge an inherent bias in this topic, as it was posed by interviewers who were quite clearly educated, and hence there may have been an inclination to point to educational benefits even if such views were outside the norm for respondents.

148 Male FGD, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, January 18, 2019; male FGD, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018.

149 Male FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

150 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

151 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018; female FGD, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 11, 2018.

152 Female FGD, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

153 Female FGD, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

154 Female FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

155 Stites and Howe, *From the border to the bedroom*.

with the main targeting being moveable household assets and small ruminants. People blame such actions primarily on *lonetia*, which loosely translates as “thugs.”<sup>156</sup> These young men may be from outside the community or even from households within the village. As explained by members of a male focus groups discussion, “They steal chicken, goats, saucepans, or even local brew or cooked food. They can steal even sorghum from the granary at night.”<sup>157</sup> Women may suffer disproportionately from *lonetia* thefts due to the loss of basic household items and foodstuffs. In addition, livestock stolen from the homestead in the dry season are more likely to belong to women because many of men’s livestock are away at the *kraal*. One woman lamented, “Let me tell you, just last week, I lost my two goats that I had tied next to my home to graze. Up to today, I have not recovered them. We have thieves who move during day and night-time, and they mainly target small household appliances and property and livestock, most especially goats.”<sup>158</sup> One respondent alleged that the *lonetia* in his area might have support from the local livestock association. He said that powerful individuals in charge of the livestock association funded and encouraged the *lonetia* to steal livestock from other communities and to sell the animals for profit.<sup>159</sup>

Experiences of insecurity also differ by location. For instance, one of the areas to still experience occasional cattle raids is the portion of Kaabong that borders Kenya. This area, inhabited by Dodoth, is also a mixed grazing ground used by the Jie, Matheniko, and Turkana. Theft by Turkana is particularly common during the shared grazing period in the dry season. For instance, male youth reported an incident in October 2018 in which 28 head of cattle were stolen; Turkana who were attending a peace meeting later admitted to this theft.<sup>160</sup> Other regions of Kaabong experienced

occasional cross-border attacks from South Sudan.<sup>161</sup> As discussed above, while *lonetia* crimes often occur among or within neighboring communities, they are often also inter-group. Some Pokot respondents in Amudat said that they had problems with Pian *lonetia*. They knew that the thieves were Pian because “it is a taboo for Pokot to steal from a fellow Pokot.”<sup>162</sup> Similarly, Tepeth residents of Tapac attributed a “constant threat” to the neighboring Ngiputuko section of the Matheniko.<sup>163</sup> Some of these attacks between groups are based on long-standing enmity or tit-for-tat patterns, while others may simply be due to proximity and opportunity.

Peace Committees, with support from the security forces, normally follow up on animal theft. This can be either the police or UPDF soldiers, often depending on the distance to which the animals are to be tracked, the proximity of the forces, and local views on the reliability and honesty of the police versus the UPDF.<sup>164</sup> While the police are widely viewed as more corrupt, some respondents noted that UPDF soldiers may delay in their response to a reported theft and may also take some of the animals for their own use.<sup>165</sup>

Respondents reported incidents of road ambushes in Lokori Sub-county in Kaabong. They alleged that armed groups specifically target boda boda (motorcycle) riders. “When they meet you on the way, they undress you and take your clothes and everything you have,” and at times also kill people.<sup>166</sup> This and other incidents point to the continued presence of small arms within communities. Most mentions of gun violence in the data come from Kaabong, which shares relatively porous borders with South Sudan and Kenya. While the data are not representative, further research may indicate an increase in gun crimes in this area. At present, community members express nervousness, as in the

156 Stites and Marshak, Who are the *lonetia*?

157 Male FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

158 Female FGD, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

159 Male youth, 24-year-old, Sub-county withheld, Kotido District, date withheld.

160 Male youth FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

161 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

162 Ibid.

163 Male FGD, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, November 12, 2018.

164 Stites et al., “A better balance.”

165 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

166 Male FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

description given by male focus group participants in Kalapata, Kaabong: “On 3rd December 2018 at night, a boda driver was shot dead along with a UPDF soldier [passenger] with just one bullet...the culprits are still at large!”<sup>167</sup> A second focus group in Lotim, Kaabong, confirmed this incident.<sup>168</sup>

Some study participants<sup>169</sup> linked the reported rise in thefts and attacks to moral degeneration and idleness of young men, as described by this male youth: “Most youth are idle and often resort to bad behavior, which causes insecurity.”<sup>170</sup> The erosion of traditional pastoral livelihoods and growing inequity of animal ownership (as confirmed by the quantitative data) have resulted in fewer livelihood responsibilities for many young men. Both male and female respondents point to the “idleness” of male youth, and this idleness is believed to drive youth toward engagement in criminal or otherwise harmful actions. Many blame hunger in particular for *lonetia* behavior, which previous Feinstein research shows increases during the hunger season.<sup>171</sup> Limited police deployment and delayed responses to reported crimes further compound the poor security situation.

People’s experiences of “security” or “insecurity” extends beyond physical threats or violence to include social and economic well-being. In Karamoja, much of social and economic security centers on the ownership of livestock. Not surprisingly, when asked about their security situation, a number of respondents discuss the problem of livestock diseases that have claimed large numbers of cattle and goats. One respondent pointed to the recent loss to pneumonia of his favorite bull, an important symbol of manhood and status within the community.<sup>172</sup> When livestock herds are depleted, households struggle to fulfill their social obligations. This can impact their engagement in social safety nets and further compound their poverty. Poorer

herders—who make up the majority of the study population based on the quantitative data—are particularly vulnerable to livestock loss as it is more difficult to rebuild small herds. The resulting economic impact often leads to worsened food security at the household level and the increased use of coping mechanisms to make ends meet.

### Land disputes

Disputes over land were cited as a common problem in villages across all districts, and one that occurred mostly during the cultivation season. Male youth explained, “During the wet season, neighbors pick up serious conflicts over land, [such as] accusing a neighbor of having cultivated across the land boundary.”<sup>173</sup> A few respondents described that land disputes can become violent or deadly, as described by this male youth: “There are also land boundary issues that result in [land] wrangles, for example the boundary between the school and the village has brought a lot of misunderstandings. And also land wrangles between community members are rampant, and people end up killing each other through witchcraft.”<sup>174</sup> Other cases end up in long-standing enmity between relatives or within communities. Respondents explained that the most affected households are often those with little knowledge of their land rights or boundaries. These households, often headed by women or young people, are vulnerable to those seeking to take advantage of them. As described by this participant, “Land disputes target youthful neighbors who are often ignorant of their ancestral land boundaries.”<sup>175</sup> Previous Feinstein research has shown that land disputes particularly affect widows and women who are in polygamous marriages.<sup>176</sup>

167 Male FGD, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018.

168 Male FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

169 Female FGD, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018; female youth, 26-year-old, Kotido Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

170 Male youth, 21-year-old, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

171 Stites and Marshak, *Who are the lonetia?*

172 Male youth, 24-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

173 Male FGD, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

174 Male FGD, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 7, 2018.

175 Male FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

176 Howe et al., “We now have relative peace.”

### Public disturbances

Respondents said that public disturbances were a problem in their communities. Excessive consumption of alcohol was commonly involved. A woman in a focus group said that the “major occurrence of public disturbances take place at the drinking joints, where people drink a lot of alcohol, get drunk and, as a result, fights occur.”<sup>177</sup> Male elders normally handle such disturbances and attempt to resolve them peacefully. If unable to do so, elders will forward the matter to the police.

### Domestic violence

Domestic violence is reportedly rampant in most of the villages sampled for this study, as was confirmed by previous research conducted by Feinstein.<sup>178</sup> Most commonly committed by a male spouse or domestic partner against a female, the violence takes the form of physical, verbal, or psychological abuse. Excessive consumption of alcohol by one or both parties is often a factor. Respondents cited disputes over household roles as the start of many instances of domestic violence. For example, women in a focus group in Kaabong described:

Men are very rude, lazy, and just expect everything to be done by a woman. Any mistake results in beatings for the woman. Violence in the homes is sometimes caused by the failure [of the woman] to prepare food, [the] reason maybe being that the woman is tired or has no money to buy food...Most of such household violence goes unnoticed and disappears like wind. [These issues] are resolved from within the household and no major efforts are done, [although] sometimes [people] do report such culprits of domestic violence to concerned and responsible [parties].<sup>179</sup>

In a focus group discussion in Kotido, a woman explained, “In most homes, violence is caused by men who neglect their families by not providing the

basic needs and then come to just ask for food. If there is no food, they beat the woman, and yet they spend money on alcohol and carelessly or with other women.”<sup>180</sup>

Some cases of domestic violence are reportedly linked to disagreements over household property. Respondents explained that this could be the case if the husband sold property without the wife’s consent, even if the property was the woman’s or was within her domestic sphere. As explained in a focus group with female youth in Amudat, “Most fights in the house occur when men sell household assets like goats or chickens without consulting the woman, although the property is for the woman. [Men] believe a woman is not supposed to own any property and she should be under a man.”<sup>181</sup> The problem is further compounded by the limited property rights of female youth.<sup>182</sup> While married women may be able to place some claims on socio-economic resources through their husbands, this is more difficult for unmarried female youth. This was captured in the following interview with a young man who described, “Women are nowadays picking up the morale to participate in various civil and political affairs...but women face many challenges such as lack of income for starting up businesses to support their households’ survival. Besides, girls particularly are not favored either; when it comes to asset ownership, girls are not given anything to inherit, and this has made them poor.”<sup>183</sup>

Domestic violence cases that cannot be resolved by the household are normally referred to the male elders or, in some cases, to the police. A district official explained that “women know their rights but are not protected,” because communities are often located at a distance from police stations.<sup>184</sup> The handling of cases of domestic violence by elders and/or police in a social context that is highly patriarchal often leads to blame being placed on the woman for failing to uphold her domestic or marital

177 Female FGD, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

178 See: Howe et al., “We now have relative peace”; Stites and Howe, *From the border to the bedroom*.

179 Female FGD, Kaabong West Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 5, 2018.

180 Female FGD, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 11, 2019.

181 Female FGD, Loroo Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

182 Male youth, 22-year-old, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

183 Male youth, 23-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

184 Dissemination workshop, April 2019.



obligations. Research into customary authority systems by Feinstein in 2012 found that women were at times beaten by the council of elders if ruled to be “to blame” for the domestic violence they had experienced—such as, for instance, if the food was not prepared on time.<sup>185</sup>

### Other forms of sexual and gender-based-violence (SGBV)

The study population reported other forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in addition to prevalent intimate-partner domestic violence. Several women reported fear of being attacked when engaged in livelihood activities away from the *manyatta*, such as collecting wild food or firewood or making charcoal. For example, this female youth described, “I feel safe while at home, in the village, going to town, and farming. My major challenge with security is when I am going for firewood, most especially when I am alone. I feel very insecure because thugs could rape me.”<sup>186</sup> Other women felt particularly vulnerable when walking home at night after selling brew or alcohol in the trading centers. This female youth described, “I feel safe during the entire day except for certain occasions, for example when I’m coming back from the trading center after selling brew. There are always a lot of drunk men along the way who could rape me. However, I offset this fear by moving in groups. I [meet] my friends from the same the village, and we move together.”<sup>187</sup> As this quote suggests, female youth at times move in groups to minimize exposure to attacks because they feel less safe when traveling alone.<sup>188</sup> Young men in a focus group in Kaabong reported that armed Turkana thieves sometimes raped women.<sup>189</sup> It is important to note that insecurity for women has long been an issue in Karamoja, and we do not have data on whether incidents of sexual violence are changing over time.

### Forced marriage

Forced marriage is a form of gendered insecurity for both female and male youth. These marriages most commonly occur when parents force youth to marry against their will. For female youth, this often entails marrying a much older man. Several respondents (including young men) described efforts by their parents to forcibly marry them off. These experiences were a source of great distress. Often, such youth run away from home, as was the case for this young woman in Kotido:

In the past five years, my feeling of safety was bad because my father was threatening to force me into a marriage I didn’t want. I was always insecure, worried, and stressed...I was really scared because my father [tried to] force me to marry some old man because he has animals, but I refused. I ran away from home to my boyfriend, whom I just decided to get married to. Now that I have a husband, I really feel safe.<sup>190</sup>

Interestingly, a male respondent whose mother wanted him to marry a girl she had identified shared a similar sentiment: “My mother has identified a suitable girl for me to marry yet it’s not my mission to get one. These are the things that are making me unsafe.”<sup>191</sup> Participants of dissemination workshops described that elders may play a role in upholding norms that promote early marriage or forced marriage.<sup>192</sup> Cases of forced marriages of young girls are, when known, reported to the LC I and the police. Older adolescent girls or boys have few recourses.

### Life aspirations

#### What do young people hope to accomplish in the coming years?

When asked about their future hopes and plans, most respondents wanted to engage in livelihood

185 Carlson et al., Tradition in transition.

186 Female youth, 16-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.

187 Female youth, 19-year-old, Lotim Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 6, 2018.

188 For example: female youth, 17-year-old, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019; female youth, 21-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018; female youth, 17-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018; female youth, 16-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.

189 Male FGD, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

190 Female youth, 20-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

191 Male youth, 22-year-old, Katikekile Sub-county, Moroto District, December 12, 2018.

192 Dissemination workshop participant, April 2018.

activities that would generate income. The most popular response was cultivation or crop farming, followed by starting a business, advancing their education, livestock rearing, or engaging in paid employment. Income-generation ideas included trading in food and/or animals, brewing alcohol, milling, or starting a boda boda business. Youth also reported an interest in making bricks, engaging in casual labor, or full employment. Female youth were more likely to describe a wish for crop farming and brewing businesses, while male youth focused more on livestock rearing, trade, and boda boda businesses.

Of interest to note are how elaborate and multi-layered the plans and aspirations were for both male and female youth study participants. The future was often divided into short- and long-term goals, touching on a variety of possible income-generating activities, or accumulating capital to secure the well-being of the family. For example, this male youth from Amudat explained that he and his wife plan to “cultivate crops like maize, and to eventually sell and use part of the money to buy livestock for breeding. At the same time, we breed chickens, and when they grow we will take them to sell at the Karita market and use part of the money to buy a goat.”<sup>193</sup> This female youth described, “I would like to spend time next year with family and friends. My major goal is to become a businesswoman, so I want to farm first to get sorghum and brew and then start selling small items in the village like salt, soap, and so on with the money from brewing.”<sup>194</sup> Sustenance was an important theme arising from interviews of both males and females, such as described by this young woman: “When I think of next year, I would like to establish more gardens and plant so many crops to help me sustain my family throughout the year.”<sup>195</sup>

In describing their aspirations, both male and female youth seemed to be making realistic calculations about the opportunities available to them given their personal experience and the environment. As a young man in Tapac described, “Next year, I

would like to expand my cattle business and become very busy trading with the Pokot. I see this as the only work I can do because I don’t know how to read and write. I’d also like to plant more crops to feed my household and siblings at home.”<sup>196</sup> Youth who were currently in school were more likely to describe aspirations that involved completing school successfully and becoming employed. As described by this female youth, “Thinking of life in the next year, I’d like to better my life by making more money for school fees from my brewing business and spend my days at school and with friends. My goal is to study so hard and become either a medical professional or a teacher, and the way to do this is to read hard and pass science subjects. In the next five years, I am looking to get my Uganda certificate of education, a professional job, and then marry.”<sup>197</sup> As described in the former quote, youth without education spoke more frequently of farming, keeping livestock, starting a business, and getting married. Due to the longitudinal nature of this study, we will be following up with these youth and discovering the extent to which their aspirations and reality intersect.

### *Challenges in realizing aspirations*

The team asked study participants about the major challenges faced by youth. Young people described that they suffer from lack of access to basic needs including food, inadequate support from parents, and the need to provide for parents and other relatives. They also spoke about a lack of sustainable livelihoods, poor access to capital, and an inability to pay for school fees and scholastic materials. Male youth described that they are overworked and often cheated, especially when providing *lejaleja* (casual labor) in mining areas. This young man expressed his frustration at his situation:

Most young people in Tapac who accept to study are frustrated when it comes to furthering their education. They end up stopping in [Primary Seven] and fail to enroll in [secondary school] because of lack of support from the family and

193 Male youth, 26-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

194 Female youth, 17-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018.

195 Female youth, 23-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018.

196 Male youth 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

197 Female youth, 18-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018.

also nepotism and favoritism in [the receipt of] government and NGO scholarships...Another challenge is that the youth in mining areas (Kosiroi) are cheated, overworked, and fed with very bad alcohol, which is affecting their health.<sup>198</sup>

When speaking more generally about challenges faced by male youth, both female and male respondents described that alcoholism is prevalent. During the interviews, respondents spoke about excessive drinking as a problem for “youth” without reference to their gender; however, their language use indicates that they are likely referring to males.<sup>199</sup> As this female youth described, “Youth are involved in drinking alcohol, and hence, they forget their responsibilities as household head.”<sup>200</sup>

Some male youth went on to say that although they play critical roles in their communities—including keeping the peace and carrying out the elders’ wishes—they do not have adequate opportunities. Young men in one focus group described lacking appropriate job skills for the labor market, due in part to dropping out of school early. In their opinion, most secondary school scholarships target girls, and few projects in their area seek to engage male youth.<sup>201</sup>

In describing their own challenges, female youth reported feeling overworked and overwhelmed with managing household and family responsibilities, and being able to provide for their families through cultivation or small business. Such challenges include the difficult physical demands for home repair (such as cutting poles and reeds). Young women across all four districts in this study also regularly described not having access to sanitary materials for dealing with monthly menstrual flows and that this limited mobility and curtailed

schooling.<sup>202</sup> As this young woman described, her challenges include “inadequate clothing, such as sanitary pads to help me during my monthly periods. Every day I am over-burdened by domestic chores, agricultural work, cutting poles and reeds for hut construction.”<sup>203</sup>

While a few female respondents described that they face challenges related to domestic violence, forced marriage, and rape, these themes were more prominent when asking all respondents about the challenges that female youth face in general. As described by this young woman, “The main challenges that women face [here] include forced marriages...they are left to do a lot of work particularly as breadwinners at home. They are violated domestically, and they are not allowed to be leaders in the community.”<sup>204</sup> Male youth echoed these insights, as described in the discussion on security elsewhere in this report.

### *Sources of external support*

We asked youth from whom they received support or assistance. Respondents said they get support from parents and friends for questions about relationships and marriage. For instance, a young woman explained, “Some months ago I had a misunderstanding with my husband and I left my home, so I shared with my mother the issue, and she was able to help.”<sup>205</sup> Such social connections were also cited as a source of support for victims of domestic violence, as described by this young woman: “I go to my sister or best friend for advice or guidance. I asked, ‘Is it advisable to leave your husband because of domestic violence?’”<sup>206</sup>

Police help with security, community leaders help with violence, and teachers assist with education. As detailed in the above sections, both male and female

198 Male youth, 25-year-old, Tapac Sub-county, Moroto District, December 10, 2018.

199 See also: male youth, 23-year-old, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 21, 2019; male youth, 24-year-old, Kacheri Sub-county, Kotido District, January 10, 2019.

200 Female youth, 25-year-old, Karita Sub-county, Amudat District, January 22, 2019.

201 Male youth, 21-year-old, Payangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

202 See for example: female youth, 15-year-old, Amudat Sub-county, Amudat District, January 24, 2019; female youth, 18-year-old, Lokori Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 8, 2018; female youth, 16-year-old, Lobalangit Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 7, 2018; female youth, 17-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 15, 2018; female youth, 15-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 9, 2019.

203 Female youth, 17-year-old, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019.

204 Female youth, 18-year-old, Lodiko Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 3, 2018. See also: female youth, 17-year-old, Loro Sub-county, Amudat District, January 19, 2019; female youth, 23-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

205 Female youth, 20-year-old, Kalapata Sub-county, Kaabong District, December 4, 2018.

206 Female youth, 23-year-old, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 14, 2018.

youth feel neglected and hope for more external support from NGOs and government sources. As described by this male youth in Moroto, “We request Mercy Corps or any other organization to assist us with recovering our VSLA, which collapsed earlier.”<sup>207</sup> A male from Kotido District asked for “Mercy Corps to have our youth selected and taken for CAHW training in Kotido so we can come back well equipped to treat our livestock.”<sup>208</sup> Male youth were more explicit and vocal in asking for direct support from NGOs and the government. In addition to the above quotes, male youth across all four districts expressed interest in facilitation to form youth groups, VSLAs, more CAHWs, and livestock restocking.

207 Male FGD, Nadunget Sub-county, Moroto District, December 13, 2018.

208 Male FGD, Panyangara Sub-county, Kotido District, January 13, 2019.

# Recommendations and implications

As expressed by one respondent, “Young people are the fulcrum of the community.”<sup>209</sup> Youth hold the potential to be the base of all activities and the forward energy within their communities, but they often feel left out, unheard, and overlooked. We hope that the longitudinal nature of this research will shed light on ways in which youth can be better incorporated through multiple entry points. Based on the primary data collected in the first year of this qualitative study and combined with validation sessions with various stakeholders, the research team presents the following list of recommendations and programmatic implications.

## Youth participation

This study demonstrates the interest and willingness of youth to be involved in a variety of groups that could support meaningful community participation and support their livelihoods. However, many youth feel excluded from groups, both in terms of participation and leadership. A general recommendation is to *increase youth involvement in existing groups or to monitor spaces for the extent of youth participation and accessibility for youth*. Opportunities for youth participation should consider *gender balance*.

Specifically, youth have expressed a wish to engage in VSLA groups. Some males feel excluded from female-only VSLA groups, while other VSLAs have collapsed due to mismanagement or lack of support. *Male and female youth should be included in VSLA systems, and programs should support their sustainability*. In addition to program support to groups, *elders appear to be an important segment of the community to engage* in order to expand the space for male and female youth within communities. Apolou could consider dialoguing with elders about their perspectives on male and female youth in order

to understand what attitudinal barriers may exist locally for their inclusion, as well as opportunities to extend their meaningful participation.

Another important avenue for youth inclusion could involve *forging connections with formal governance systems, police, and military bodies*. Apolou could support female and male youth in engaging and interacting with these bodies in order to resolve local disputes and improve security. Given that people perceive much of the insecurity to emanate from male youth, such connections could serve as effective deterrents. At present, Peace Committees are generally “off limits” to female youth, despite the fact that several studies have shown the importance of female inclusion in peace processes.<sup>210</sup>

This study also indicated that female youth face multiple burdens of caring for family and children and managing household and compound responsibilities, while engaging in agricultural work for household food consumption *and* participating in a range of livelihood income-generating activities. Female youth describe extreme fatigue given the multiple roles they play. As such, the study recommends that any *programs targeted toward female youth be mindful of their existing complex combination of responsibilities* in order to diminish placing extra demands on their time.

## Well-being

Findings have shown that family planning usage is minimal and that knowledge is often inaccurate or misleading. Female and male youth often reported that it is up to the male to decide how many children to have, and resistance to the concept (particularly among male youth) was palpable. Meetings with stakeholders also indicated that the church has been dissuasive of family planning and that community

209 Male youth, 27-year-old, Rengen Sub-county, Kotido District, January 8, 2019.

210 See for example: UN Women, Facts and figures.

leaders may prevent the adoption of such practices. Stakeholders described that child spacing (as opposed to family planning) may be a message that is more acceptable to community members, as it is more in line with traditional practices. Given that attitudes varied by location, it is advisable to have a deep contextual understanding of attitudes toward modern versus traditional family planning within each community, including the influential players who may reinforce perceptions. Tailored responses should be based on this analysis. Additionally, male youth must be included in this process, as they are often the decision-makers for reproduction within a household. *Sensitization processes related to family planning thus must include male and female youth, religious bodies, and local leaders.*

Health services are widespread and generally accessible for youth, but traditional methods remain the first line of defense. *Local healers thus present an important group that can reach communities with important messages about formal health care.*

Early marriage and forced marriage remain regular practices in Karamoja, resulting in negative physical and psychological consequences, particularly for young women. Interviews with stakeholders have highlighted that elders in some locations may uphold norms that promote early marriage. *Programs should engage with elders on early marriage and forced marriage in order to facilitate a reduction in this practice.*

Domestic violence continues to be a common occurrence across study sites. Responses to domestic violence are not uniform across communities. As with early marriage, community leaders (elders and LC), the church, and police have a role to play in sensitization and law enforcement. *Apolou could also engage male and female youth to be community leaders or sensitizers on the topic of domestic violence.*

## Livelihoods, education, and markets

This study has shown that market access is good for male and female youth, and that markets represent important social spaces for youth. Apolou

should consider such *market locations as potentially facilitative for message delivery.*

Education levels remain low in Karamoja, and decision-making about going to and staying in school are complex. Factors influencing such decisions include financial resources, the need for household or productive labor, shame and lack of adequate sanitary materials for pubescent girls, early marriage and pregnancy, and negative stereotypes around girls who attend school. Apolou could analyze these push and pull factors at a community level and *seek a tailored approach to reducing barriers to education, including creating roles for youth to spearhead sensitization.*

Both female and male youth in this study explained that their aspirations primarily involve the creating of small income-generation projects that expand into larger endeavors. They are also most likely to admire community members who have started and maintained successful businesses. Apolou could consider supporting aspiring youth through *group micro-finance processes* or by selecting successful *male and female youth to serve as role models for the community.*

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