



KARAMOJA RESILIENCE SUPPORT UNIT: *Turning Evidence Into Action*

December 2023

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Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU)

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United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Contract Number: 617-15-000014
Karamoja Resilience Support Unit

www.karamojaresilience.org

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Suggested citation: Pattemore, C., Sawa, P. and Yarga, J. 2023. Karamoja Resilience Support Unit: Turning Evidence Into Action. Karamoja Resilience Support Unit, Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Kampala.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank the Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University for commissioning the study through support from USAID and in particular, Andy Catley and Mesfin Ayele for facilitation and technical support during the study. We recognize members of the KRSU team for their assistance in helping coordinate interviews: Dr. Raphael Lotira (senior resilience advisor), Vincent Lomuria (field coordinator), Judith Moru (research officer), as well Patric Osodo and Jacob Benen (logistics team). Special thanks go to the respondents and the agencies they represent – Karamoja Development Partner Group (KDPG), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies, District Local Governments (DLGs), and researchers and academics.

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Launched in 2019, the Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU II) works to enhance economic development and resilience levels among communities in Karamoja, north east Uganda. Their work encompasses three pillars:

- *Generating research and analysing evidence:* Exploring multiple pastoralism-related issues in Karamoja; highlighting and conducting research studies into often unexplored areas to develop data and knowledge that can be used by multiple regional stakeholders.
- *Dissemination of information:* Developing a greater overall understanding among stakeholders of the issues facing Karamojongs. This is achieved by sharing data and knowledge through multiple avenues – such as online papers, workshops, and training sessions.
- *Technical assistance:* This is primarily received by donors and development partners in the region, with KRSU offering logistical, secretarial, and coordination services when required or requested.

To gauge understanding of how KRSU's work benefits and is utilized in Karamoja, a rapid review was conducted in November and December 2023. The review involved face-to-face interviews with a number of the organization's partners – including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, academics, and donors. A total of 30 informants were interviewed: three academics, three government scientists, 11 members of NGOs and the United Nations, seven local government members, and six donors. The interviews were based on six core questions about KRSU's activities and performance, and included scoring of responses for some questions. The following details their responses, highlighting how KRSU activities support others' work and enhance awareness of, and engagement in, pastoralist activities in Karamoja.

Question 1: Please provide a general overview of your experience with the KRSU team and the resources, briefings, and reports produced by the project

Respondents unanimously recognized that KRSU plays a critical role in filling knowledge and research gaps – and, in doing so, raises understanding among stakeholders (such as NGOs) of which real, on-the-ground issues within Karamoja require tackling. “I look at KRSU as a hub of Karamoja,” stated Dr. Sidonia Angom Ochieng, researcher and lecturer at Gulu University Constituent College. “If you want any information that is evidence-based, you should go

to KRSU.” Rose Nakiwala, a nutritionist at the World Food Programme, concurred that KRSU's research is a first port of call. “If I want any research in the region, that's the place I go,” she noted.

Aside from the vast body of research created by KRSU, respondents appreciated the variety of topics within pastoralism that the organization explores. KRSU works to highlight an array of potential intervention areas and conducts research aligning with their partners' focuses – on thematic topics ranging from climate change, nutrition, conflict, water, alcoholism, insecurity, education, and disaster management among others. For instance, KRSU collaborated with Caritas to publish data on the impacts of alcohol consumption on Karamojong communities – work that was noted as vital by Mark Aol Musoka, advocacy and policy influencing officer at Caritas, as this issue has been widely unappreciated by those outside of the region. Meanwhile, Dr. Paul Boma, research officer and animal production scientist at the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), revealed that KRSU's pastoralism research in relation to topics such as COVID-19, food security, and the involvement of young girls, has been particularly beneficial in supporting NARO's meetings and training with development partners.

Respondents – especially researchers – highlighted that KRSU's in-depth knowledge of the Karamoja area and the team's on-the-ground presence is critical to its success and invaluable to its partners. “The KRSU team knows the communities and has their entry points in the region, which is an asset for research fieldwork. It allows you to do your work successfully,” asserted Anthony Egeru, associate professor of Human and Applied Ecology at Makerere University. “Because this is quite a difficult area, you need people who have knowledge of the community and can read the situation. The KRSU team in Karamoja masters that so well.”

In addition to conducting and disseminating research, a vital aspect of KRSU's work involved developing a Pastoralist Policy and Practice Course book, which was created following two year-long trainings with researchers at Gulu University, Makerere University, the Center for Basic Research, and Karamoja Development Forum (KDF). The course book is now being used to teach students at universities and colleges of agriculture. “I think what stands out [among KRSU's work] is this course on pastoralism, because it is really something that's good for this country,” stated Dr. Sidonia Angom Ochieng, a lecturer at Gulu University. The material created and shared in the

course book proved so valuable that it has since been used to develop other curricula at the universities. Revealed David Waiswa, a lecturer at Gulu University: “We used the training program developed within the KRSU framework to design and develop a formation unit within the MSc in Animal Production.”

Furthermore, KRSU-led activities, such as workshops and training sessions, offer platforms through which NGOs and researchers can interact and share their learnings. The organization was also instrumental in the development of the Karamoja Resilience Strategy (KRS), stated Edonu Janaan, a local government official in Moroto District. “They supported us a lot,” he said. For example, “they brought a consultant to ensure that we come up with a contextual document for Karamoja.”

In part thanks to KRSU’s efforts in producing and publishing timely, well-researched data and reports, Karamoja has become a well-recognized sub-region in Uganda – with challenges faced by those in the region now acknowledged and discussed by stakeholders at the highest levels. Arguably, the data KRSU collects and disseminates has the potential for much broader impact. “While Karamoja is just a case study, [KRSU’s findings] have implications for the broader part of the drier corridor in Uganda, what we call the cattle corridor,” stated Anthony Egeru. Michael Lomakol, program advisor at GIZ Peace Service Uganda, agreed, adding: “The studies KRSU have produced have been helpful to the region, but also to the entire country.”

Question 2: Have you read or referenced the KRSU II research? If so, are there any reports or briefs that stood out?

The vast majority of respondents had read KRSU publications, either online or when disseminated in print; others learn of publication content via meetings and discussions. Either way, it was agreed that no other organization conducts research in Karamoja to the same extent or quality as KRSU. “They are in good

contact with a lot of NGOs and organizations, and know what is relevant,” noted Dr. Ute Schneiderat, team leader at GIZ SCIDA III.

Many NGO respondents admitted only consuming research that is most relevant to their work and interventions. For example, organizations working in areas of conflict were interested in KRSU’s publications on conflict, while those focused on food security and livelihoods utilized KRSU’s research on livestock and agriculture in their operations. This is unsurprising, however, given that KRSU conducts research according to partners’ specific requests and areas of operation. Development partners and academics also typically focus on KRSU research that aligns with their current activities – with some using it when starting their own projects to gauge what information and areas have already been covered.

A few respondents referred to KRSU research specifically when applying for donor funding. Kul Chandra, field coordinator at the Institute for International Cooperation and Development (C&D), relied on information from KRSU when devising a donor proposal. “We were planning to submit a proposal to the donor on animal fattening and other products, such as milk and meat,” he shared. “For that, we needed a lot of information from the region, and... this particular publication of KRSU was very useful in extracting information to put in our report.”

The extensive experience of KRSU’s team members and their high-quality reporting is significantly appreciated, and the in-depth nature of the research means many partners use it to guide their own reporting and activities. “Some recommendations in KRSU’s reports help us to shape the way we conduct our work – especially when working with the local governments and the military,” explained Michael Lomakol. While detailed, the reporting from KRSU remains concise and focused – an element highly appreciated by many readers who are short on time. Dr. Ute Schneiderat also recognized that KRSU’s work is timely and

Table 1 Scoring of KRSU2 publications and coordination

Question	Median score (n=27 informants)
How would you rate the quality of KRSU publications?	8
How would you rate the relevance of KRSU publications to your work?	9
How would you rate the KRSU support to the coordination platforms?	8

Note: informants were asked to score using a scale of 1 (very low) to 10 (very high).



efficient – in that they conduct, analyze, and publish studies “very fast.”

KRSU’s research and reporting across numerous areas was applauded. For Dr. Paul Boma, three reports in particular have stood out: “One was the contribution of livestock to the economy of Karamoja, the other was the effect of COVID-19 on pastoralism, and the other one was on girl child education in relation to pastoralism and gender aspects.” And, thanks to its comprehensive findings, contextualization, and recommendations, the disaster risk management study was noted by Edonu Janaan as particularly helpful.

The dry nature of research and reporting often deters many from engaging directly with it – but this is not the case with KRSU’s work, stated Lokol Paul, district chairperson of Nabilatuk District. “Every report that you get from KRSU is exciting and relevant,” he enthused, “so you have to read from the first page to the last page.”

Question 3: Have you engaged in any coordination structure supported by KRSU II? If so, how do you think that the KRSU II has helped these coordination structures to function?

Development partners particularly noted benefiting from KRSU’s coordination structures and services. As members of the Karamoja Development Partner

Group (KDPG) or similar forums, such as the Karamoja Nutritional Partners Forum, they benefit from secretariat and coordination services provided by KRSU. This not only includes logistical activities, but also the provision of resources such as partner mapping and resource mobilization. “I find that they have a high level of coordination,” commented Róisín Carlos, programme officer at the European Union (EU) Delegation to Uganda. “The KRSU support to the KDPG has been important and helpful.”

Interviewees especially remarked on the beneficial impact of KRSU’s secretariat services. “[KDPG] would not be able to function without them,” asserted James Terjanian, food security and livelihoods coordinator at the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Uganda. “I can show up to a meeting and have everything prepared, and that is a big time saver.” Dr. Diarmuid McClean, development specialist at the Embassy of Ireland, concurred that KRSU’s services are vital to the ongoing success of KDPG. “KRSU’s secretariat role for the KDPG is invaluable, and we would like it to continue,” he stated. “The KDPG is very functional, and it’s very much because of the support that KRSU provides.”

KRSU also provides support to five sectoral working groups, each covering a specific area – including agriculture, health and nutrition, or conflict. Further, the organization played a key role in the development of the Karamoja Resilience Strategy (KRS), with a

number of respondents highlighting KRSU's influence during this process. "[KRS] has been well supported by KRSU in terms of ensuring we have well thought out ideas, which we use for fronting out the contextual issues in Karamoja and Napak District," said Nangiro Abrahams, district agriculture officer in Napak District. "For the Karamoja Resilience Secretariat [the group tasked to write the KRS], KRSU has supported us a lot. It has been well coordinated," agreed Edonu Janaan.

Additionally, KRSU is involved in the Karamoja Peace Actors – and, through meetings led by this group, "KRSU always share with members the kind of studies they are conducting and findings," explained Michael Lomakol. As Peter Simon Longoli at the Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) revealed, "We [KDF] coordinate the Karamoja Peace Actors group, and requested KRSU to do research for us. We continue to use that study with partners."

KRSU also organizes training sessions and meetings to facilitate information dissemination and ideas creation. "As a research organization, [we are] looking for research ideas, so KRSU worked with us," shared Dr. Paul Boma. "The first time they came, we hatched an idea of bringing together partners, research, local government, and organizations involved in agriculture in the region. Before COVID, they were funding those meetings, which involved basically sharing anything new that was coming out, and discussing research ideas for us to look into."

Finally, KRSU also holds 'Writeshops'. These are workshops during which KRSU team members work with partners and stakeholders to assist in the writing of strategies and programs, and generating technical information for program design.

Question 4: Have you been involved in any training courses supported by the KRSU? If yes, how did the training help you with your work?

While only a small proportion of NGO and development partner respondents had directly participated in KRSU-led training sessions (primarily because other colleagues attended instead), a larger number of researcher and academic interviewees had engaged in KRSU training. Sessions are not only valued as opportunities to learn, but to meet and engage with peers in the field.

Among those who had undertaken training, the general belief was that they developed valuable everyday skills and knowledge as a result of doing so. "The Pastoralism

Policy and Practice training provided a lot of knowledge, and also built my confidence in promoting pastoralism," revealed Lokol Paul. "At first, I was very careful when talking about nomadism because it is one of the practices that's marginalized in the knowledge world. But now I speak boldly. I promote what I know without fear."

The involvement of experts from other countries and regions in the training sessions was also appreciated by participants. For training on pastoralism, KRSU "invited some trainers from Kenya and Tanzania who are experts in the field," recalled Samuel Kayongo, a research officer at NARO. "They shared with us various pastoralism interventions, which was key."

Furthermore, those trained by KRSU as a Trainer of Trainers were subsequently hired by NGOs such as Mercy Corps to educate other individuals at various levels. After completing his training, Dr. Paul Boma was recruited by Mercy Corps to conduct training sessions with government and national- and regional-level stakeholders. During these, he sensitized participants on pastoralism policy – sharing general information on the topic, highlighting policy gaps, and revealing the role policy can play in directly supporting pastoralists.

While the most attended KRSU training course among interviewees was that on Pastoralist Policy and Practice, training on Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards was also recognized by Ocaa James, lab officer at C&D. "I believe that training has given me quite a number of knowledge in the response to the emergencies," he said. "I was quite impressed with that training."

Question 5: Can you describe any key policy-related issues that KRSU has supported?

While KRSU is not directly involved in policy advocacy, it plays a significant role in influencing and supporting policy development through other avenues. For instance, through learning platforms, the organization crafts key messages that serve to influence policy and programming. They also provide direct support to government – such as assisting the government of Uganda in crafting their five year strategy, and advising the Ministry of Agriculture in their review of a strategy on foot and mouth disease control.

A number of respondents recognized the impact that KRSU's work has in shaping and driving policy

change. “To me, they have done a lot in terms of policy regarding pastoralism,” shared Dr. Maureen Kamusiime, Resilience Challenge program manager at Mercy Corps. “The research they are doing in the field of pastoralism, emergency, and nutrition... the evidence they produce can be used by anyone to push for policy reforms.”

One element of KRSU’s policy work has involved “trying to spearhead the passing of the [pastoralism] policy,” said Dr. Paul Boma. “While it has not yet passed, it has at least reached cabinet level, who can now go through it and decide whether to accept it or pass it with some changes.” Other respondents observed that KRSU should be given full mandate to spearhead the implementation of such policies – and, with adequate financial support, would be able to encourage greater progress through lobbying, meetings, and stakeholder engagement.

By participating in meetings with local leaders, politicians, policy makers, and government officials, KRSU has been able to encourage the creation of bi-laws and other legal declarations. “After discussing climate change and the environment with KRSU, we took a decision that districts should come up with environmental coordinates,” shared John Paul Kodet, chairperson of Nabilatuk District. “Napak District has got one, passed in line with the directive of the president.”

KRSU research is also used by stakeholders to support their own activities in the policy arena. For example, in developing the Disaster Risk Management Act, Edonu Janaan revealed he used KRSU reporting to inform work in this area. “I have been in the consultant’s meetings and referred to the KRSU document – which basically allowed me to highlight where the gaps are,” he explained. As a result, “I have made sure that we come up with a nice looking act which speaks for everyone.” Research data from KRSU was also noted as being critical in the introduction of a ban on cutting trees for charcoal burning, as well as bi-laws designed to protect wetlands and open up land for agriculture.

Other respondents mentioned KRSU’s work pertaining to policies such as the transitional justice policy, the human wildlife conflict policy, and the IGAD migration policy. Above all, it was observed that KRSU’s continued advice to stakeholders, government, and other actors has supported decision-making regarding strategies to address problems around development and conflict in Karamoja.

Question 6: Please share any other comments or suggestions you might have on KRSU’s work

This question resulted in an array of great ideas, observations, and suggestions.

A prominent aspect of feedback related to the need for KRSU to continue its activities in Karamoja. Not only is KRSU’s work vital from a regional perspective, it “is very instrumental in exposing and linking Karamoja to the rest of the world,” stated Mark Aol Musooka.

Respondents revealed being worried what will happen if funding stops – with many stating they require the presence of KRSU for their upcoming and early-stage activities to continue and succeed. For instance, “we need continued support from KRSU, especially in our bid to finalize the Karamoja Resilience Strategy,” stated Simon Peter Loput.

Local leaders, on the other hand, rely on data and information from the KRSU team for various activities. For example, they use KRSU reporting to help set development agendas in their regions, and recognize which areas require interventions. “I want to appreciate KRSU for doing a good job and doing good studies in Karamoja, where they involve the communities,” asserted Edonu Janaan. “We need to have studies that are backed up with contextual issues which involve the people of Karamoja.” Michael Lomakol reiterated the importance of KRSU’s research in the region. “We don’t have any other research institutions in the region, yet most of the studies inform the government, the local governments and other institutions.”

In addition to conducting and disseminating research, KRSU’s work in advisory and consultation capacities were also well acknowledged. “I think the KRSU team is doing good work. They are giving advice on what to intervene on, and which are the critical areas to address in the Karamoja context,” shared Simon Peter Aleper, program coordinator at the Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative. John Bosco Nyanga, regional peace building coordinator at Saferworld, also noted the important role of KRSU platforms in collaboration. “[KRSU] want to create platforms for engaging and supporting one another, and also looking at ways to support locally-led interventions that empower local communities.”

Should KRSU receive funding to continue, respondents offered recommendations on ways the team and their activities could expand to have an even greater impact within Karamoja. A number of

interviewees believed KRSU should enhance their scope to include a focus on other aspects. “Their work should expand to look at social aspects in Karamoja outside pastoralism, as this could be very helpful,” stated Candela Fito Onraita, civil peace service advisor at GIZ Peace Service Uganda. Ocaa James agreed, suggesting that KRSU focus on cultures and traditions that hinder development in Karamoja. For example, they could “look at children being used to look after cattle instead of being in school,” he said. “This [tradition] contradicts with child rights and is also risking the lives of children.”

Some respondents highlighted that longer meetings and increased numbers of workshops would allow for greater information sharing and training opportunities. “When sharing information, two hours is not enough,” said Dr. Emanuel Emaruk, assistant project manager at VSF-Belgium. “More time should be allocated so that partners can discuss a topic and draw conclusions.” Kul Chandra added that additional workshops would be an effective way to engage local authorities and development partners, while other respondents requested more Training of Trainers sessions – especially as many government institutions lack the resources to offer training themselves.

Following on from the development of the successful Pastoralism Policy and Practice course, academics and researchers stated they would like to see KRSU engage in more university-based activities – taking on a greater role in the co-creation of programs and helping incorporate more KRSU knowledge into curriculums. “I think part of the research work KRSU is doing needs to be embedded within the higher education ecosystem in Uganda,” stated Anthony Egeru. For instance, “It could be that part of their work becomes research projects for students.”

Others felt KRSU should expand the nature of their work, and be allowed to champion or spearhead policy making and implementation. With their high level of expertise, KRSU can take on the role of engaging partners, government, and donor partners – so that policy creation and implementation is sped up and the Karamoja Region is not left behind in terms of development and behavior change.

Finally, it was recommended that KRSU research and reporting is disseminated at a wider level: not just to donors, government officials, and NGOs, but to the public. “In terms of dissemination, more must be done to reach a wider audience, including communities. It is important,” said Muzafaru Ssenyondo, nutrition officer at UNICEF Uganda. One way this could be achieved?

Through radio programming, suggested Josephine Amodoi, a livestock officer in Moroto District. You cannot expect people to make changes, she said, when information “has not come to your attention.” Better promotion of the KRSU website would also draw more visitors at a public level and help increase awareness about the organization’s work and issues at hand.

There’s no doubt that KRSU is a critical player within Karamoja – supported and trusted by a wide range of critical stakeholders. Their research and analytical work has helped shine a much-needed light on issues requiring urgent attention in the region, many of which have been overlooked by others – such as the relationship between pastoralism and alcohol consumption in communities. Interview respondents resoundingly agreed on the importance of KRSU’s presence, with a number expressing concerns about how their own work will continue should support from KRSU cease.

The varied recommendations for the expansion of KRSU’s activities in the region not only indicates how much work there remains to do in Karamoja, but how revered the organization is by its peers – reflected in requests that KRSU adopt a more prominent role in high-level decision-making. As Dr. Ijala Anthony Raphael, senior research officer at NARO, stated: “KRSU is a very good partner and relevant to their area,” he said. “I would ask KRSU to stay around because we are not yet there and the community is still challenged on a number of issues – such as food security, cattle rustling, and pastoralist transformation. These are key issues that need skills and support.”

