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Strengthening the humanity and dignity of people in crisis through knowledge and practice



## **Angering Akujũ: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja**

A Report on Livelihoods and Human Security in the Karamoja Region of Uganda

**Elizabeth Stites, Darlington Akabwai, Dyan Mazurana and Priscillar Ateyo**



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# Feinstein InternationalCenter

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Cover image: Former police post near Nakonyen, Moroto District.

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## I. Executive Summary

This report primarily draws on information from fieldwork conducted from 2005-2007 throughout Karamoja and in neighboring districts of Uganda, Sudan and Kenya. We interviewed over 900 individuals and carried out direct and participant observation in manyattas (the social, cultural, political, and economic unit for an extended family or several families), kraals (mobile cattle camps/fortified cattle enclosures) and town centers throughout Karamoja. We focused on the gender and generational dimensions of Karamojong livelihood and human security systems and strategies. We offer detailed information for those seeking to better understand the underlying causes of, as well as the effects of insecurity on civilian lives and livelihoods. We used gender and generational perspectives and human security and livelihoods frameworks in the collection and analysis of the data. We hope the report may inform the policies and programs of the Government of Uganda (GoU), the United Nations, donors, and international NGOs.

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Life in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda is harsh and defined by periodic and extended droughts, sporadic and often brutal violence, cyclical cattle raiding and chronic food insecurity. Home to just under a million people, the Karamoja region is the poorest in Uganda. Low and highly uneven annual rainfall mean that the most common livelihoods strategy is to combine limited wet-season cultivation with semi-nomadic pastoralism. Local communities rely on access to markets to sell natural resources or animals, to purchase food, to acquire inputs for agricultural production to purchase veterinary medicines, to seek casual labor, and to access health and other basic services. Raiding, theft, ambushes and poor road infrastructure affect the availability and price of grains and other essential commodities.

For most populations in Karamoja, food security is determined by access to and availability of animal protein and grains. Cultivated vegetables, wild fruits and wild greens supplement the diet. Communities with fewer animals, those that are more prone to animal diseases, and those that are more susceptible to raids are

likely to be more food insecure than those with larger, healthier and better protected herds. The balance between animals and agricultural production is critical to maintaining food security. Reliance on cultivation increases when animals are lost through raids.

A dual settlement system has traditionally allowed for the mitigation of vulnerability. Manyattas are semi-permanent homesteads inhabited by men, women, children and the elderly, and are usually near areas used for cultivation. The kraals are mobile or semi-mobile livestock camps, and are inhabited by a shifting population of adolescent males and females, women (including male elders) and children.

In previous generations, a group would follow the same approximate migration pattern each year, with variations based on water and pasture conditions. Regular movement patterns, however, became curtailed with the increase of cross-border and internal raids in the 1970s. Insecurity brought tighter borders and strained relationships among groups within and adjacent to Karamoja. Loss of lives and destruction of livelihoods have become a pattern of life. When the overall number of animals within a community declines to a certain point, the dual system of manyattas and kraals starts to break down. Shared access to grasslands and watering holes has decreased. Groups who often clash are separated by swathes of no-man's land. A number of prime grazing areas remain inaccessible due to insecurity. Manyattas that were once scattered are now closer together, home to larger populations, and often located closer to towns, trading centers or Ugandan military bases.

### Traditional Authority

Power is traditionally invested in an age-set and decisions made collectively at sacred assemblies. Initiation is an event of primary importance to male Karamojong and marks the passage to adulthood. Only two generation-sets can exist simultaneously—elder males in power and the junior generation-set which will eventually assume power. There is no set formula or time-frame for the passing of power. The last handover was in the late 1950s. Remaining members of the senior generation set are well-advanced in years, but have yet

to relinquish their official role. The frustration of the uninitiated males continues as their group advances in age and their own sons reach adulthood. Events associated with this frustration—an upsurge in raiding by uninitiated males and heightened tensions among the generations—have added to instability.

When the authority of the male elders is respected management of food supplies is more centralized and communal. As the authority of the elders diminishes, livelihoods are lost and impoverishment increases. When elders are less able to manage food security, further destitution, out-migration, and illicit strategies such as cattle theft and banditry can result. The elders are key players in working towards peace, but they have often been sidelined by governments. Policies that undermine traditional Karamojong practices and livelihoods also erode the power of traditional leadership and the ability of leaders to maintain order. Some elders have called for the need for reconciliation rituals between the people of Karamoja and their land, which has absorbed much blood. Some believe that their god, Akujū, is angered by the violence and has turned away from the Karamojong.

## Marriage

Marriage in Karamoja involves the exchange of cattle as a bride price payment from the man to the family and clan of the woman. Being officially married “with cattle” gives a man recognition as an adult member of his clan and the ability to participate in decision-making within the manyatta and kraal. A woman who is married with cattle becomes an official member of the man’s clan. The rights and protections of the man’s clan are extended to a woman and her children following official marriage. This is particularly important if the husband dies, as a woman will have rights to her husband’s property (including his cattle) only if their marriage was official (i.e., with cattle). The man’s clan is obligated to care for the woman upon her husband’s death.

Children of both genders are highly valued: boys for their roles in maintaining the family herds, girls for future bride price and return of cattle. Our team neither saw nor heard evidence to suggest that female children received less food, medical care, or access to education than their brothers.

## Cattle Raiding Transformed

Cattle rustling or raiding is a traditional activity among pastoral groups in Uganda and elsewhere in the Karamoja Cluster. Raided cattle were used to redistribute wealth and food in times of scarcity, to acquire bride price, and to form alliances with other families, manyat-

tas and tribes. The near complete lack of law and order and justice institutions and personnel in Karamoja, the relatively unimpeded acquisition of weapons and ammunition, periods of repeated and prolonged drought, and the spread of livestock diseases have shaped practices of raiding. The most notable changes are the replacement of spears with firearms and decline in the role of elders, seers and women in sanctioning and supporting raids. Commercial raids carried out by small groups without communal consent are on the increase. In a commercial raid, cattle are not retained by the warrior or his family but are sold or bartered as quickly as possible for goods, food, cash, alcohol or weapons. Commercial raiding takes place not at the behest and oversight of seers and elders, but by young male warriors, often as a means for personal gain or at the behest of shopkeepers, livestock agents and politicians who provide weapons, ammunition and/or transport in return for a cut of the profit. The rise in commercial raiding has made raids more frequent and reduced the size of raiding parties. The absence of law and order in Karamoja has resulted in a system of impunity. There are few sustained or effective efforts to prevent raids, recover stolen property, or prosecute criminals. Without effective protection and law and order provision by the GoU pastoralists are left with little option than to purchase weapons and ammunition to defend their animals, property and families.

## Education

Education has long been contentious, viewed by many pastoral communities as a colonial or government imposition with no relevance for local populations. Illiteracy remains high, regular school attendance is still low, and many adults and children have no understanding of what occurs in schools or of the value of education. The Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) initiative seeks to provide elementary level education with relevant course content for the largely agro-pastoral population in the region. Enrollment in ABEK schools has increased steadily and many respondents are interested in it. However, people in a number of study sites reported that they had been promised an ABEK school that did not materialize. The majority of families we interviewed were not sending their children to either ABEK facilities or formal schools. No youth we interviewed raised education as a characteristic of a ‘good’ Karamojong boy or girl.

## Forcible Disarmament and Human Rights Abuses

Uganda's colonial and post-independence authorities have repeatedly attempted to disarm communities in Karamoja. In December 2001 the GoU launched a determined disarmament campaign. A preliminary voluntary phase was relatively successful, with substantial numbers of weapons handed in. However, from the perspective of Karamojong communities, civil society and the humanitarian community, the campaign was deeply flawed. All those we spoke to noted that communities who surrendered weapons were often attacked—sometimes within a matter of days—by stronger groups that had not yet been disarmed. The GoU failed to adequately protect communities that had given up their weapons. An ensuing phase of forced disarmament ended prematurely when the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) increased attacks in northern Uganda in March 2002 and many army units left Karamoja in pursuit. This created a security vacuum in Karamoja and attacks against disarmed groups intensified. The victims of such raids quickly sought to rearm themselves, and young men headed into South Sudan to purchase weapons and ammunition.

A new disarmament campaign began in early 2006, characterized by armed operations to track and recover raided cattle, efforts to arrest and prosecute criminal suspects (some of whom are then tried in military tribunals) and both forced and voluntary disarmament of the civilian population. Allegations of abuse of civilians by the army and its associated militias have been commonplace. Abuses reported by interviewees and international human rights agencies have included killing, rape, torture, ill-treatment, the burning of manyattas, theft of livestock and other assets, and arbitrary detentions (including of women and children) at army barracks. The army continues to use controversial cordon and search tactics to force communities to surrender weapons.

The GoU has developed guidelines for army conduct and given training to soldiers. However, the grave human rights violations alleged against military personnel have yet to be seriously investigated. The GoU has taken no measures to account for the majority of the reported violations, or to provide redress and reparation for the victims. It has not identified the laws and regulations under which the army carries out law enforcement operations, conducts searches and detains citizens.

## Need to Tackle Underlying Causes of Insecurity

Karamoja receives little attention from international donors, agencies and organizations in comparison to the north-central region of the country, home to the long-running insurgency between the LRA and GoU. Coverage by the international media usually depicts instability in Karamoja as due simply to cattle-rustling among tribes and across borders. The Ugandan media and politicians repeatedly stereotype the Karamojong people as backward and primitive. Insecurity in the region is dismissed as a 'cultural problem' or characterized purely as criminal behavior. Little attention is given to the implications of this insecurity on the local population.

Events in Karamoja have profound implications for security in Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and beyond. Chronic and pervasive insecurity is underpinned by the absence of effective state protection, minimal capacity of local law and order forces, and a barely functioning civilian judicial system. Not surprisingly, the demand for firearms for self-protection is high. With no effective police or penal system, weapons are also acquired for participation in criminal acts, including raiding cattle, revenge attacks, and road ambushes. This widespread demand has fueled a dynamic trade in small arms, with traders coming from as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo to Karamoja's weapons markets. South Sudan has long been the primary source of guns coming into Karamoja. Given Karamoja's centrality in the regional weapons trade, stability in the wider region is unlikely to be sustainable without security in Karamoja. Security in Karamoja will only be possible if the underlying causes of insecurity—violent conflict among groups, lack of law and order institutions and mechanisms, the deterioration of livelihood systems, and political, social and economic marginalization—are addressed in a comprehensive and collaborative fashion.

## II. Introduction

*There is too much blood being spilled on the land. The rituals are not performed as they should be. The government approaches us and our children with violence; they do not know our lives. The insecurity is finishing the animals and the young men. Perhaps Akujū has left us for now to finish ourselves.<sup>1</sup>*

### Study Rationale and Methods

Relatively little in-depth material has been published concerning the current human security and livelihood strategies of the Karamojong people who occupy the semi-arid and sparsely populated northeast of Uganda. Following discussions with UNICEF in June of 2006, a team from the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University built on its ongoing work in the region and designed a project to gather detailed and specific information on livelihoods and human security of groups within Moroto district.<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork included visits and interviews with the Bokora, Matheniko, Tepeth and Pokot. These four groups were selected in order to 1) provide in-depth information on different livelihood strategies and human security issues, and 2) capture a range of livelihood, human security and protection strategies and systems within central Karamoja.

Dr. Darlington Akabwai, Ms. Priscillar Ateyo, Dr. Dyan Mazurana, Ms. Elizabeth Stites and four Karamojong colleagues who remain anonymous are responsible for the data collection and analysis presented in this report.<sup>3</sup> The data and analysis we present are drawn from three primary sources, which include key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 921 individuals. These interviews and direct and participant observations were carried out in manyattas and their corresponding satellite kraals, as well as in town centers.

1 Interview with key informant #2, December 11, 2006.

2 We had initially planned to conduct the work in northern Karamoja with the Jie, Dodoth and Nyangiya, but were unable to access these areas in late 2006 due to the forced disarmament activities being carried out by the Ugandan government and military and the resulting insecurity.

3 This anonymity is in response to security concerns regarding the potential sensitivity of some of the findings in this report.

The first source of data comes from the team's fieldwork, interviews and observations from 2005-2007 on issues of insecurity, disarmament, and the weapons trade in Karamoja, and includes data from 457 individuals. In Uganda, this fieldwork was conducted in Karamoja in the districts of Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit, as well as in the neighboring districts of Kitgum, Lira and Katakwi. Fieldwork was also conducted in Toposaland in South Sudan.

The second source is from interviews and observations conducted during fieldwork in December 2006 and March 2007 with traditional elders (always men), young men, women, young women, boys and girls of the Bokora, Matheniko, Tepeth and Pokot groups in Moroto, as well as from interviews with key informants. During this phase of the research 425 individuals were interviewed.

The third source is through interviews and observations at the Kobulin and Nakiriomet (Lomorotoit) resettlement sites in early March 2007. We visited these locations shortly after the relocation of some 670 women, men and children from Kampala to Moroto. At the time, these sites housed approximately 350 people who had opted not to return to their original communities elsewhere in the region. At Kobulin, we interviewed young people who had returned with family members, unaccompanied young people, women and men of varying ages, and several of the personnel working at the Kobulin site. At the Nakiriomet resettlement site we talked to young people, a few women and men, and several elders from the surrounding area who were present to view the possible relocation sites. We also interviewed social workers and representatives of community-based organizations involved in the resettlement process. At Kobulin and Nakiriomet, we interviewed 39 individuals.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the fieldwork, we sought to document and analyze:

4 Specific findings from this portion of the work are detailed in Elizabeth Stites, Dyan Mazurana and Darlington Akabwai, *Out-migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda: The case of Kobulin, Bokora County*, Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, June 2007.

- the current security environment in central Karamoja, including disarmament initiatives, regional weapons flows, and the role of raiding (both traditional and commercial)
- key human security issues, including physical safety, access to education, health (including reproductive health), social networks, and kinship networks
- threats including natural (e.g., drought) and human threats (e.g., raiding) and protective strategies
- protective strategies and decision-making processes around protective strategies
- the role of culture, tradition, and modernity on the livelihoods and human security of the populations in central Karamoja
- the livelihood systems of the study populations, including the manyattas and satellite kraals, food security, household economies, intra-household relations, traditional coping mechanisms, access to assets, trade networks, transhumance, and the role of armed raiding
- access to and control of assets and decision-making processes around the use of assets

Within all of these analyses, we paid close attention to issues of gender and generation. ‘Gender’ refers to the socially-constructed roles ascribed to women and men on the basis of sex, whereas ‘sex’ refers to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles depend on a particular socio-economic, political and cultural context, and are affected by other factors including age, race, class and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned and vary widely within and between cultures.<sup>5</sup> ‘Generation’ refers to an age group within human populations, and a generational analysis seeks to include the roles, experiences and priorities of young children through the elderly in its scope. Practically, this means that in the current study we ensured that we gathered comparative information from males and females of different generations. We also sought to learn more about the gender and generational aspects that shape and influence people’s access to resources, systems, decision-making, and other forms of power and control, ranging from launching armed raids to choices of what to do with one’s body. A gender and generational analysis is essential to enabling us to more accurately document and understand what is happening in a particular setting (in this case, manyattas and kraals) from a variety of perspectives and experiences.

5 *Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, 1996, A/51/322, paras. 7-14.

The study is intended to document and assess the current state of human security broadly defined at manyatta and kraal levels, taking into consideration how human security differs based on gender and generation. Human security analyses privilege individual or human security over a state-focused assessment of security. We focus on the following four key aspects:<sup>6</sup>

- human rights and personal security
- societal and community security
- economic and resource security
- governance and political security.

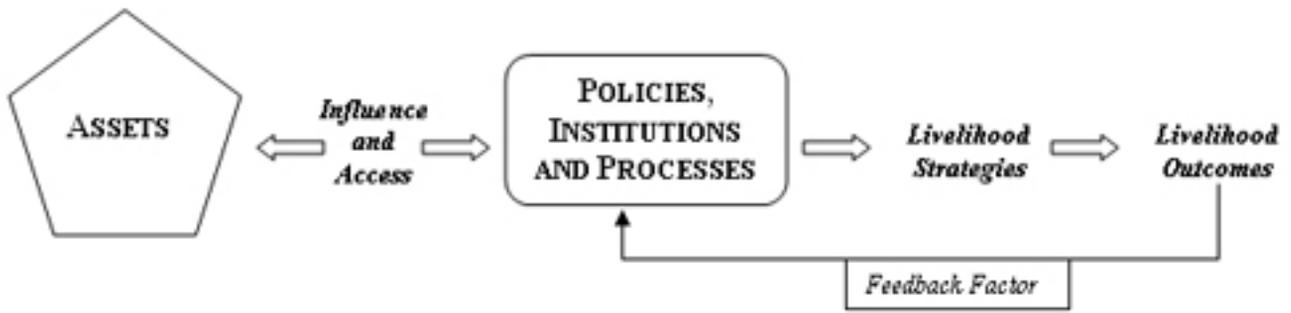
This report details and analyzes the links among these dimensions of human security, livelihoods, and perceptions and experiences of the Karamojong people.

We employed a livelihoods framework in the collection and analysis of the data. This means that we sought to understand the assets (financial, social, human, natural and physical assets or capital<sup>7</sup>) owned or controlled by households and individuals; the livelihood strategies employed through use of or access to these assets; the vulnerability, institutions, policies and processes that influence and determine the way in which households and individuals are able to proceed with their livelihood strategies; and the livelihood outcomes resulting from the livelihood strategies. This concept is best illustrated in a simplified version of the sustainable livelihoods framework developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), depicted below. These concepts are further explored in more detail in the chapter on livelihoods.

The team collected data through qualitative methods, including key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and direct and participant observation. Interviews were semi-structured and were conducted with manyatta leaders, kraal leaders, seers, male and female elders, warriors, women, and young people who play key roles in manyattas and kraals. Interviews took place in manyattas and kraals, as well as in market places, towns and trading centers. In addition, the team interviewed local administrators, security personnel in the grazing areas, weapons dealers and traders, and relevant staff members of non-gov-

6 Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond editors, *The United Nations and Human Security*, Palgrave, New York, 2001: 15-30.

7 Political capital is frequently listed as a separate asset or source of capital. For the purposes of this study, political capital is included within the concept of social capital due to the over-lapping nature of social and political connections and interactions.



environmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and international organizations.

Manyattas and kraals associated with each of the selected manyattas served as the study sites. Within Karamojong society, manyattas function as the social, cultural, political, and economic unit for an extended family or several families. The male leaders of the manyattas make decisions for the manyatta on use of resources, movement to grazing lands, food security (such as sale of animals in times of need), and protection. The study focused on specific households and demographic groups within the manyatta in order to understand intra-manyatta decision-making and relations.

The study looked comparatively at the human security and livelihood strategies of the four groups in Moroto (Matheniko, Bokora, Tepeth and Pokot), as well as the vulnerabilities and threats and ensuing protection strategies. The study examined the different relationships that these groups have with other tribes within Karamoja, residents of neighboring districts, and residents of neighboring countries. The study further examined the ways in which such relationships influence access to pasture and water, trade networks, physical threats, traditional and commercial raiding patterns, and access to services such as education and health facilities. Furthermore, the study analyzed the different strategies and vulnerabilities of more heavily-armed cattle-dependent groups in comparison to the strategies and vulnerabilities of groups that have fewer arms and are less dependent upon cattle.

The study examined manyattas and associated kraals in the dry season. These two entities—manyattas and kraals—maintain linkages throughout the dry season primarily to manage food security. The study documents the ways in which these links are maintained, the livelihood and protective strategies and coping mechanisms employed by the residents of the kraals and manyattas, and the different risks and vulnerabilities for these two populations. Again, specific attention was paid to differences based on gender and generation.

The Tufts team transcribed all interviews and managed all the data. Triangulation was used throughout the study to check data validity and consistency. Data analysis was conducted primarily using text analysis through deductive coding.

This study is intended to produce knowledge to better inform government, UN, donor, and international NGO policy and programming in the central Karamoja region, with particular attention to gender and generation dimensions.

## People and Land of the Karamoja Cluster

Life in the sparsely populated Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda is harsh and is defined by periodic and extended droughts, sporadic and often brutal violence, cyclical cattle raiding and chronic food insecurity.

Karamoja is home to just under a million people (2002 census). The three main ethnic groups in this region of 10,550 square miles are the Dodoth, the Jie and the Karimojong, and within these are main groups are nine different tribal groups.<sup>8</sup> Karamoja consists of five administrative districts (Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit) and is mostly semi-arid and characterized by low annual rainfall.

The Karamoja Cluster includes nine sub-groups of people who share the same ethnic origin (the Nilo-Hamites or Ateker group), pursue similar livelihood patterns and, to a certain extent, speak dialects of Ngakarimojong. The concept of the ‘Karamojong people’ is an externally-imposed invention for there is a cluster of tribes rather than consistent tribal or political unity. Roughly speaking, the Jie inhabit the central portion of the five-district area, the Dodoth are to the north,

<sup>8</sup> These ethnic groups are the Matheniko, the Tepeth and the Bokora of Moroto district, the Pian and Pokot of Nakapiripirit district, the Jie and Tobur (sometimes called the Acholi Labwor) of Kotido district, and the Dodoth, Nyangia (sometimes called the Napore) and Iik (sometimes called the Teuso, but not to be confused with the Teso of the Teso region) of Kaabong district. All these groups speak Ngakarimojong at school and in administrative offices. For more information on the different groups in the region, see, *inter alia*, Ben Knighton, *The Vitality of the Karamojong Religion: Dying Tradition or Living Faith?* Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005; Sandra Gray et al., “Cattle Raiding, Cultural Survival, and Adaptability of East African Pastoralists,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 44, December 2003.



and the Karimojong to the south. The Karimojong are themselves divided into three sub-groups (Matheniko, Bokora and Pian) who comprise 11 territorial or tribal sections which can ally for peace or war. Viewed along administrative lines, the Jie live in Kotido, bordered to the west by Abim which is largely inhabited by the Acholi Labwor (also known as the Tobur). The Ugandan Karamojong have a series of complex alliances and traditional enmities with Karamojong and non-Karamojong groups across the porous Sudanese, Kenyan and Ethiopian borders. Some non-Karamojong use Ngakaramojong as a *lingua franca*.

Settlements in rural Karamoja consist of manyattas and kraals.<sup>9</sup> The manyattas are semi-permanent homesteads inhabited by men, women, children and the elderly, and are usually near areas used for cultivation. The kraals are mobile or semi-mobile livestock camps, and are inhabited by a shifting population of adolescent males and females, women, men (including male elders) and children, including infants.

The rainfall is seasonal (April to August) and can be highly variable from one location and year to the next, making it impossible for the population to rely solely on agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Communities often have to contend with either too much rain or too little. In many areas, annual precipitation is insufficient for a plant to reach maturity. The region's characteristic black cotton soils become hopelessly sticky when wet and crack when dry. Soil erosion is a significant factor in environmental degradation. In response to these conditions, the people of the Karamoja Cluster have developed a livelihood system that balances limited wet-season cultivation with semi-nomadic pastoralism, with cattle as the preferred animal. The degree of emphasis on livestock versus cultivation varies from group to group. Seasonal grazing patterns and mobility of people and animals are central to the success of these livelihood systems and to the ecological management of the Karamoja region.<sup>11</sup> The extent of cultivation in Karamoja varies from one

9 The terms 'manyatta' and 'kraal' are widely used in English to refer to the settlements of the Karamojong, but are not local words. 'Manyatta' is originally a Maasai word, while 'kraal' has its roots in Afrikaans but has become widely used to describe cattle pens as well as fortified cattle enclosures. For the purpose of consistency, we use these two terms throughout this report. The correct Ngakaramojong terms are *ere* for manyatta (plural: *ngireria*) and *awi* for kraal (plural: *ngawujoi*).

10 Robert Walker, *Anti-pastoralism and the growth of poverty and insecurity in Karamoja: Disarmament and Development Dilemmas: A Report for DFID East Africa* (unpublished), March 2002.

11 For a discussion of the appropriateness of a balance of pastoral and agropastoral lifestyles to the ecological and climatic conditions, see James E. Ellis and David M. Swift, "Stability of African pastoral ecosystems: Alternate para-

location and group to the next, but most groups rely on own-production for at least a portion of their household food supply.

Karamoja, like other arid areas of Africa, is set to experience severe climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has noted the severe expected impact of climate change in Africa. In summarizing its findings on Africa, the IPCC predicts:

*By 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change. If coupled with increased demand, this will adversely affect livelihoods and exacerbate water-related problems. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries and regions is projected to be severely compromised by climate variability and change. The area suitable for agriculture, the length of growing seasons and yield potential, particularly along the margins of semi-arid and arid areas, are expected to decrease. This would further adversely affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition in the continent. In some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50% by 2020... New studies confirm that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. Some adaptation to current climate variability is taking place, however, this may be insufficient for future changes in climate.*<sup>12</sup>

Since 1974, the Karamoja region (and Uganda as a whole) has seen a 0.2 to 1.0 centigrade increase in surface temperatures.<sup>13</sup> As nearly all agricultural production in Karamoja is rain-fed, increased droughts are likely to detrimentally affect agricultural production in an area that already sees drought and accompanying poor harvest approximately every three to four years.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the IPCC concludes that the length of the growing season and yield potential is likely to decrease in semi-arid and arid areas, directly affecting the ability of people in Karamoja to cultivate through traditional methods.<sup>15</sup>

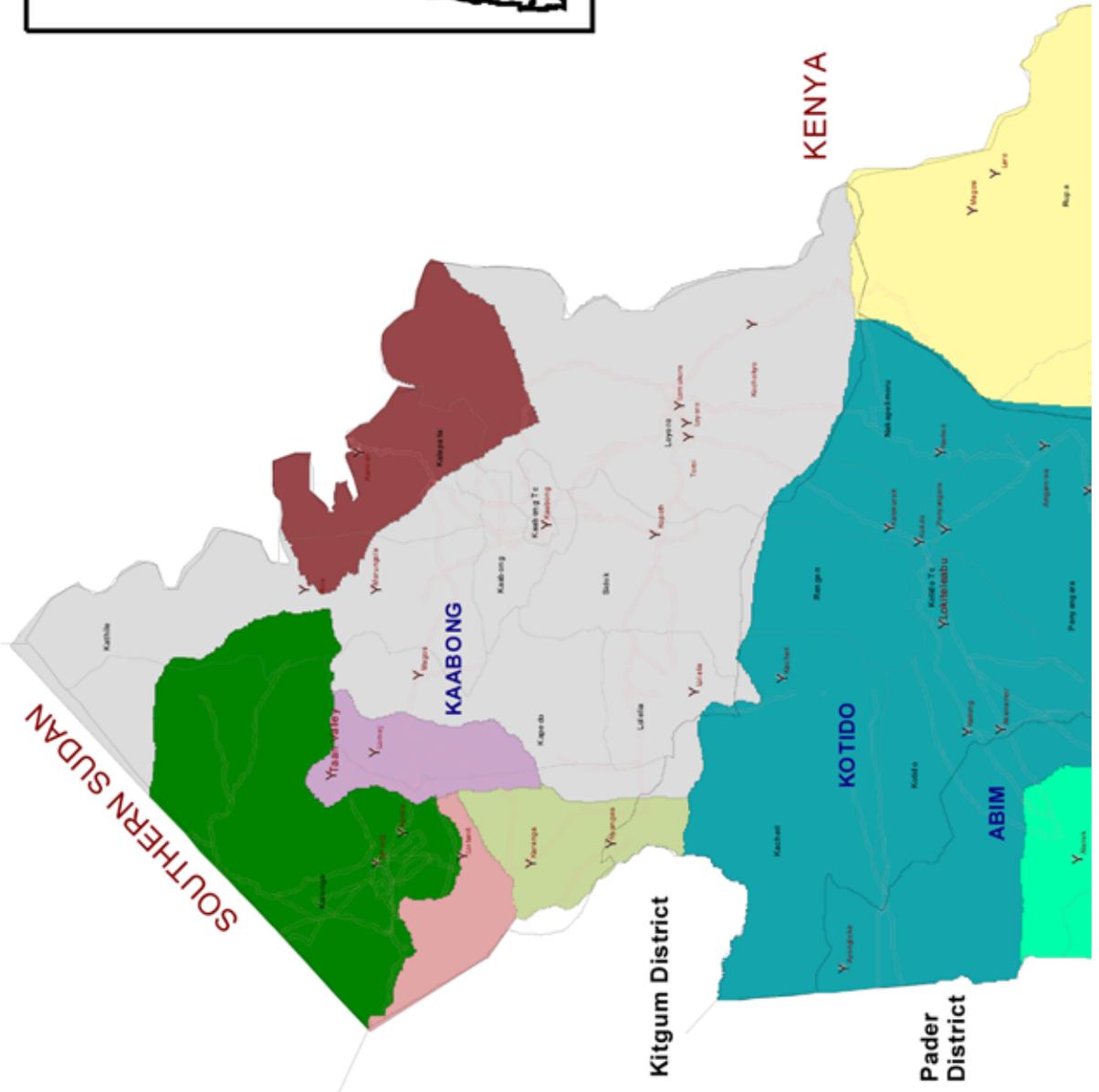
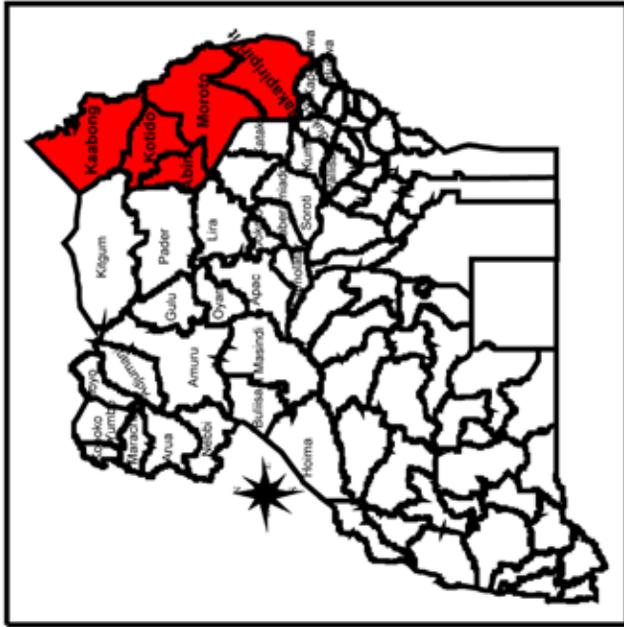
digms and implications for development," *Journal of Range Management* 41, no. 6 (November 1988).

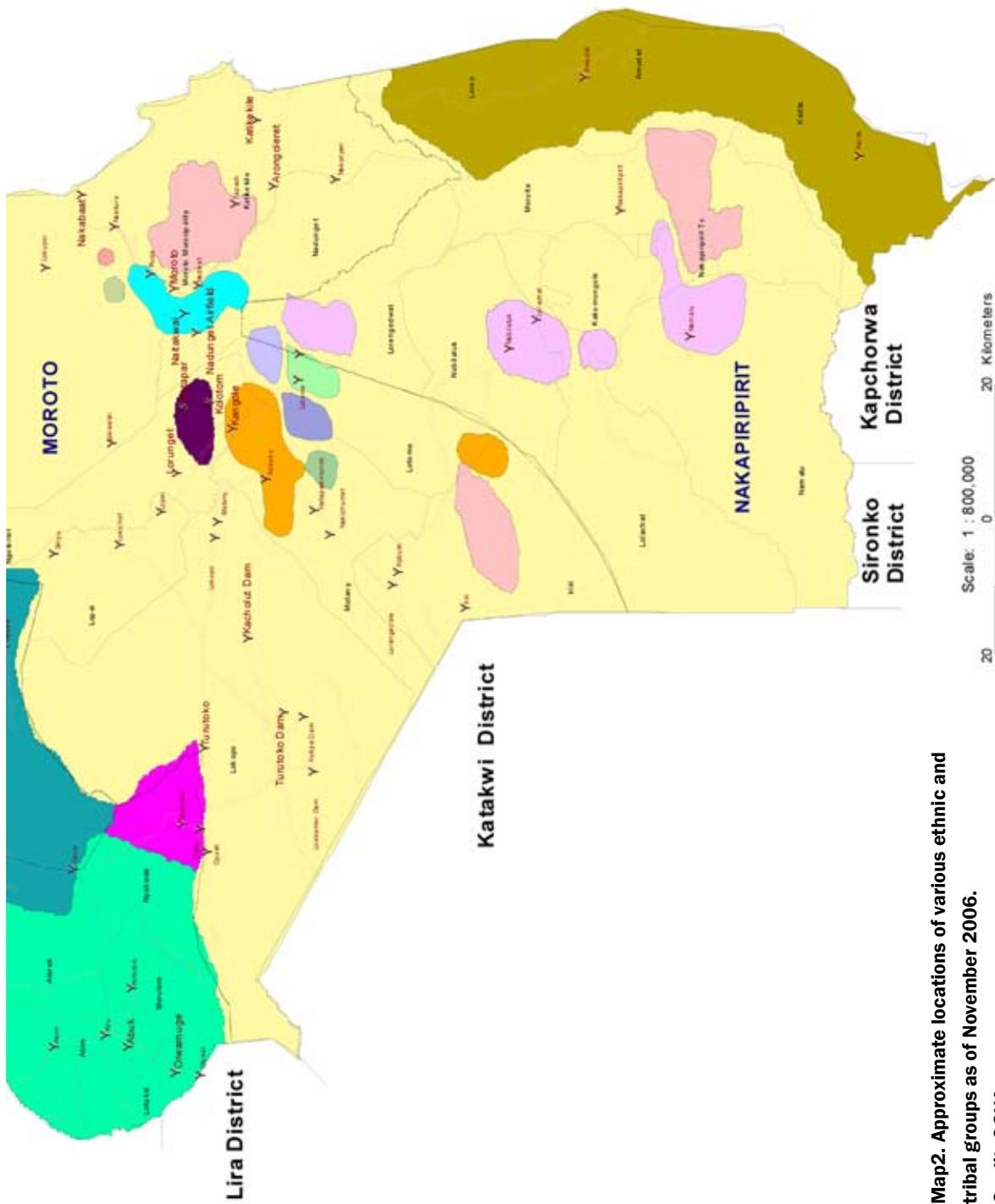
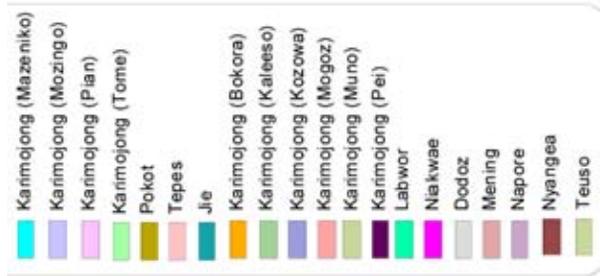
12 Working Group II Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report Climate Change 2007: Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Summary for Policymakers, available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/>, p. 10.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

14 James E. Ellis and David M. Swift, *op. cit.* p. 453.

15 Working Group II Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report Climate Change 2007: Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Summary for Policymakers.





**SOURCE(s)**  
 District Authorities  
 NUDC  
 OCHA

**Map2. Approximate locations of various ethnic and tribal groups as of November 2006.**  
 Credit: OCHA.

Researchers are beginning to discuss the ways in which climate change in Africa will have gendered effects on social, cultural and labor relations, including among pastoralists and nomadic or semi-nomadic people.<sup>16</sup> Given the highly gendered divisions of labor and decision-making among the Karamojong, we can anticipate that a gendered understanding of the effects of climate change will be essential. The changes in gender relations will likely be apparent from gendered shifts in adaptations to increased drought and harvest failure to shifts in livelihoods and protective strategies.

Climate change is a stress factor upon the livelihood systems of people in Karamoja. Importantly, however, climate change, livelihood transformations and the tensions associated with seasonal migrations to access natural resources (pasture and water) do not on their own account for the violence and armed conflict present in Karamoja.<sup>17</sup> Drought and environmental degradation cause shifts in livelihoods patterns and migration that at times act as catalysts for conflict among groups.

An important factor in the violence is the failure of the state of Uganda to provide adequate security for the populations of Karamoja. Coupled with the lack of law and order and an entirely insufficient judicial system in the region, the resulting culture of impunity allows raiders and criminals to engage in violent livelihood strategies without fear of official reprisal or prosecution.<sup>18</sup> Another important factor underpinning instability and tension is the government's failure to date to develop pro-pastoral policies that support the pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods of people in the region.

Increased insecurity and violent conflict have worsened Karamoja's ecological crises, particularly in regard to deforestation and increased soil erosion. Shifts in livelihood strategies in response to the loss of animals

16 Valerie Nelson, Kate Meadows, Terry Cannon, John Morton, and Adrienne Martin, "Uncertain Predictions, Uncertain Impacts, and the Need to Mainstream Gender in Climate Change Adaptations", *Gender and Development*, volume 10, number 2 (2002): 51-59.

17 Alex de Waal makes a similar argument for the factor of climate change in causing or underpinning the violent conflict now sweeping Darfur, see *Making Sense of Darfur: Is Climate Change the Culprit for Darfur?* posted on the discussion board of the Social Science Research Council on June 25, 2007.

18 There were a mere 137 police officers of the central Uganda Police Force in the entire five district region as of August 2006, translating to one central police officer to 7,300 civilians, about one-quarter of the national ratio for Uganda and one-sixteenth of the UN standard of 1:450. There is no high court presence in the region, and the districts of Kaabong, Abim and Nakapiripirit have no judicial system whatsoever. Human Rights Watch, "Get the gun!" *Human rights violations by Uganda's National Army in law enforcement operations in Karamoja region* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2007), p. 18.

through raids usually entail a move into greater exploitation of natural resources (primarily wood for sale as firewood or charcoal), which in turn contributes to erosion and deforestation. Traditional migratory routes have been curtailed, further stressing the natural resources within the borders of Karamoja. Actions by Karamojong groups in the neighboring areas—including raiding, destruction of property and killing and injuring unarmed civilians—resulted in access to these areas being cut off. In many instances, local politicians in neighboring districts have pushed for the development of national policies enforced by the army to prevent Karamojong herders from moving into traditional dry season grazing lands. Addressing these interlinked aspects of environmental degradation, livelihood stress and violence will require peace-building measures, pro-pastoral government policies, and economic development programs that take into account the numerous challenges facing the Karamojong in the coming century, including the repercussions of climate change.

The Karamoja region is the poorest in Uganda as defined by key human development indicators,<sup>19</sup> but receives significantly less humanitarian assistance than the war-affected central north.<sup>20</sup> Interest and attention from international donors is gradually increasing, and the 2007 United Nations Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Uganda includes "improving protection, access to services and emergency preparedness and response in Karamoja" as one of five key fund-raising and programmatic areas. UNICEF will be opening a permanent sub-office in Moroto in early 2008 and a growing number of international NGOs are seeking to join the handful of international and national organizations that have long been working in the region.

19 UN figure published in 2007 show Karamoja with the highest maternal and infant mortality in the country (750/100,000 live births and 178/1,000 live births respectively), the lowest primary school enrollment (35%) and the lowest life expectancy (given by Walker in 2002 at 39.7 years for men and 44.9 for women). Walker lists adult literacy in Moroto district at an estimated at 18.2% for men and 6.1% for women (Walker, op. cit. p. 7). A recent region-wide assessment by WFP found that 29% of "heads of household" and 12% of the "spouses of head of household" could read a simple message, but these rates varied widely within Karamoja. World Food Program, Emergency Food Security Assessment, Karamoja Region, Kampala: World Food Program, July 2007), p. 4," 13. For UN figures see, World Food Program, Emergency Food Security Assessment, Karamoja Region, Kampala: World Food Program, July 2007), p. 4," 13.

20 OCHA, "Uganda 2007, Table A: List of all commitments/contributions and pledges as of 27 September 2007," available at [http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/OCHA\\_R10\\_E15192.XLS](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/OCHA_R10_E15192.XLS) or [www.reliefweb.int/fts](http://www.reliefweb.int/fts) (Table ref: R10).

### III. Generation-Sets, Age-Classes and Passage of Power

The name for the Karimojong's and Jie's sacred assembly is *akiriket* and is closely associated with *Akujū*, their God.<sup>1</sup> The *akiriket* assemblies represent the active political, social and religious organization of the groups. As Ben Knighton, a widely-published scholar of the Karamojong, explains:

*Akiriket provides a living record. First its full members are men. They are not there merely to exclude women from power in a society, nor even as representatives of their families or clans. They are there as a summation of society before Akujū [their God] and, under His guidance, to take responsibility for that society and act on its behalf for its common welfare. Secondly, the men are strictly ranked in order of seniority. Uninitiated men have no proper voice in the assembly and have a status relative to it similar to that of women, as ngikaracuna (they of the apron) or boys (ngidyain). The initiates are divided twice, into generation-sets and into age-sets contained within the generation-sets, but all initiates have an equal right to speak in the assembly, even if different voices carry different weight... Initiations are only held in good years, and any planned for years that turn out to be bad are stopped.*<sup>2</sup>

The *akiriket* are formal and ritualized meetings and cover a range of ritual activities of communities in relation with *Akujū*. The *akiriket* are held in particular

shrines set aside for this purpose, and only certain elders are qualified to handle matters of the *akiriket*.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to the formal *akiriket*, *ekokwa* gatherings are informal and held daily by male elders at the man-yattas and kraals.<sup>4</sup> *Ekokwa* are much less reverent than *akiriket*, and deal with issues of daily management. News and information are shared, disputes are brought forward (and potentially settled), and day-to-day affairs of the group and conditions in the area are discussed. These gatherings are ideally held in the shade of a large acacia tree. Any respected elder can officiate at *ekokwa*, and this is the forum where most decisions are made. The *ekokwa* consist of male elders, but women may present their problems or requests at these fora as well.

Power is invested in an age-class, never in an individual. And, while one man may hold sway one day in an *akiriket* or an *ekokwa*, decisions are made collectively and a different man may have influence at the next gathering. When initiated, the members of an age-class are given a specific name by the elders that will identify the age-class for the collective life of its members. The elders select the name of an animal or, less commonly, a plant or geological feature, to give to the age-class when the group is roughly 18 years of age. However, elders will often wait to initiate a group until they are significantly older, as discussed below.<sup>5</sup>

Each generation-set is compromised of up to five age-classes. Only two generation-sets can exist simultaneously—the senior generation-set, which consists of the elders in power at a given time, and the junior generation-set, which will eventually assume power. A man cannot be in the same generation-set as his father. At present, the senior generation-set in Karamoja is known as the Mountains (*Ngimoru*) and the junior generation-set is the Gazelles (*Ngigetei*). The current age-classes for the Karimojong males (Matheniko, Bokora and Pian)

1 *Akujū* is the supreme deity of the groups in the Karamojong cluster, although the exact name for the deity differs in the Tepeth, Pokot and Teso groups. (The word *akuj* refers to a god or spirit.) He resides above the earth and is invisible but is known to the elders and they can communicate with him. If he wishes, *Akujū* can answer the prayers of the elders. *Akujū* has the ability to bless the people in all aspects of their lives—social, political, economic, cultural—and can intervene to protect people or remove any threats. The will of *Akujū* often presents itself in the intestines of sacrificed animals to the diviners or seeks (male seers are *emuron*; female seers are *amuron*), as well as to some elders, Knighton, op. cit.

2 Ibid. pp. 134-135.

3 Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

4 The word *ekokwa* was borrowed by the Karamojong from the Pokot and these meetings are also known as *ekitongikiliok*.

5 See P.H. Gulliver, "The Age Set Organization of the Jie Tribe", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 83, No. 2, (July-Dec. 1953), pp. 147-168; Ben Knighton, op. cit., p. 136

**Table 1. Karimojong Age-Classes**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Names for Age-Classes</b>	<b>Metal (body ornamentation)</b>
<b>1897</b>	<b>Moru III (mountains), Kokoi (grey monkeys, grivets)</b>	<b>Copper</b>
a. 1898	Taaba (rocks)	
b. 1898	Putiro (wart-hogs)	
c. 1913	Cubae (blue monkeys), Rengelen (red ostrich feathers)	
d. 1942-43	Baanga (ducks)	
<b>1956</b>	<b>Gete IV (Grant's gazelles)</b>	<b>Brass</b>
a. 1956	Meguro (bat-eared foxes) there were initiations in 1957, 1959, 1964, 1966	
b. 1975	Owa (bees) now closed – many initiates	
c. 1999	Wapeto (eland)	
d. Forthcoming	Ru (small plant with green leaves and yellow fruit)	
<b>Forthcoming</b>	<b>Moru (mountains) and Mirio (field-mice)</b>	<b>Copper</b>

Table reproduced from Knighton, *ibid.*, p. 139.

are laid out below, with the generation-set name in bold followed by the names of the age-classes (Table 1).

Generation-sets and age-classes are identified by their name and chosen form of metal and body ornamentation, with the generation-set identification passing from grandfather to grandson. Age-classes may choose their own physical identification, such as a specific tattoo pattern, type of earrings, or scarification pattern, and they maintain these for life.<sup>6</sup>

There is disagreement in the literature on the current structure and relevance of the age-class system for women. The system of age-classes for women traditionally mirrored that of the men, but Sandra Gray's research shows that the last women's age-class was initiated in the 1940s and that this system has since fallen into disuse.<sup>7</sup> This was also the impression of three of our key informants, both male and female. Ben Knighton, on the other hand, says that the female age-class system is still functioning. Clearly, even if the female age-class system is continuing the system of hierarchy has much less weight or meaning for women than it does for men. It is known that the structure of female age-classes was traditionally parallel to that of the males. When a male age-class opened and was formally named, parallel age-classes also opened for women. Like men, the age-classes of women had distinct names. However, while the initiation for men requires the spearing of oxen, for women, a marriage with cattle was the central facet of initiation. Women's generation-sets and age-classes tra-

6 Interview with key informant #1 and #2, March 14, 2007.

7 Sandra Gray, "A Memory of Loss: Ecological Politics, Local History, and the Evolution of Karimojong Violence" *Human Organization* 59 (4) Winter 2000: 401-418. Interview with key informants #1, #2 and #3, March 14, 2007.

ditionally mirrored those of their husbands, and women wear the same metal or marking emblem as their men, thus making it very clear which generation-set the sons should join.<sup>8</sup>

The symbolic, ritual and real passing of power occurs when the senior generation-set of male elders promotes the junior generation-set in a succession ceremony. There are no set formulae or timeframes for this process. The promotion is meant to occur when all age-classes within a generation-set have been "open" for a number of years, meaning that all males within that generation-set who are of an appropriate age will have had an opportunity to be initiated into an age-class within that generation-set.<sup>9</sup> The junior generation-set will perform certain acts to show allegiance and respect for the senior generation-set, and will tell them they are receiving pressure from their own sons to be initiated and begin making requests for the transfer of power. The senior generation-set, however, may refuse to relinquish power, for, once they promote the junior generation-set, the elders will no longer be the decision-makers for politico-religious affairs.<sup>10</sup> This may continue even when there are not enough elders living to perform the rituals. As Knighton explains:

8 See Knighton *op. cit.*, pp. 252-253 for a detailed discussion on the ceremonies for the initiation of women.

9 Those on the cusp may then fall into the following generation-set and age-set. See Gulliver, *op. cit.*

10 For a complete discussion of age-classes and generation-sets within the Karimojong see Knighton *op. cit.*, especially chapter six. Also see Neville Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966.

*The uninitiated are always keen for their turn, but the elders say “No!” because problems will be inherited, not blessings. Initiations are continuing now, but, because there is no peace, no new age-set will be initiated, for the problems must remain with the old names. Thus, Karamojong ritualism holds together the real and the nominal, the political and the symbolic, power and convention, causation and time.*<sup>11</sup>

The last time power passed from one generation-set to the next was in 1956-1958.<sup>12</sup> The Mountains generation-set took the position of the senior generation-set and became the official elders and leaders of the Karamojong, opening up a new generation-set (called the Gazelles) and a new series of age-classes. These generation-sets have occupied the senior and junior position for the intervening fifty years, with no hand-over of power in the interim. This delay in handing over power from one generation-set to the next is unprecedented. There is, however, always reluctance on the part of the senior male generation-set to relinquish control. This failure to cede power can cause crises among the groups and tensions between the generations, resulting in a pattern that appears to closely replicate the situation of today:

*When the senior generation-set becomes few in number and incapacitated, owing to the natural death of their peers, the culture regularly enters a period of crisis. Older uninitiated men drift into raiding, as the only means whereby they can increase their standing in the community. The junior generation of initiated men, which itself contains men older than the most junior age-set of the senior generation, is itching for power. They will show, short of revolution, various displays indicating that power should now be handed over to them, while some rituals fall into abeyance for lack of elders, and men move their herds totally independently.*<sup>13</sup>

The failure to hand over power to the next generation-set results in a large number of men who cannot be initiated, as a man cannot belong to the same generation-set as his father. This is best illustrated with an example: say a man was born in 1940 and initiated into the Gazelle generation in the late 1950s, and shortly thereafter began a family. Today the man is approaching 70 years of age and has many children, including male

11 Knighton, op. cit. p. 136.

12 There is debate over the precise date—usually given as 1957—because the Pian carried out a separate ceremony, breaking from the rest of the Karamojong groups. Sandra Gray, “A Memory of Loss: Ecological Politics, Local History, and the Evolution of Karimojong Violence” *Human Organization* 59 (4) Winter 2000: 401-418.

13 Knighton, op. cit. p. 114.

children in their 30s and 40s, and many grandchildren. The old man, however, is still in the junior generation-set, as there has not been a succession ceremony since the Mountains took power. Because men cannot be in the same generation-set as their father, none of his children has been initiated into an age-class, and these individuals have no official standing or power. As Sandra Gray notes:

*A number of male informants, who were in their late middle age in 1998-1999, complained that they were nothing more than “rats” (ngidoi), or uninitiated men, without a formal identity in the traditional power structure of Karimojong society.*<sup>14</sup>

Knighton, referencing Dyson-Hudson, is careful to point out that reluctance to hand over power, delayed succession ceremonies, and resulting tensions between generations—all culminating in a ‘period of crisis’—is an historical pattern, not a once-off occurrence. The junior age-class is eventually promoted and a new generation-set opens up into which their sons can be initiated. When this happens, the former ‘trouble-makers’ conform to the established patterns of allocated roles and re-emphasize the hierarchy of the age-class system.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, the groups in Karamoja are experiencing the ‘crises’ that Knighton discusses, as the junior generation-set yearns to take power and the senior generation-set refuses to relinquish its hold on control. The senior generation-set is now very old, and many of its members have died, while others are infirm. However, the lack of clear leadership combined with failed harvests, droughts, and increasingly violent military confrontations with the Ugandan security forces means that very few ceremonies and initiations have taken place, as major ceremonies should occur in times of peace and prosperity. The frustration of the uninitiated continues as this group advances in age and their own sons reach adulthood. The events described by Knighton—an upsurge in raiding by the uninitiated and heightened tensions among the generations—have contributed to the instability that has been occurring in the region for the past two decades.

The causes for the delay in succession are multifaceted. On the one hand—as discussed by Knighton—there is always a period of tension as the power of the senior generation-set begins to wane and the juniors push to take control. Those in power are reluctant to let go, and the younger generation experiences increased pressure from their sons and begins to lose faith in the leadership abilities of their elders. Looking beyond standard inter-generational power struggles, the ceremonies for succession are meant to take place

14 Gray, *A Memory of Loss*, 408. See also Walker, op. cit., p. 20.

15 N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics*, 199.

in times of prosperity—such as a year or series of years with good harvests—and peace. These two aspects have not occurred simultaneously in many years. All groups are meant to hand over power simultaneously, but the present cleavages among these groups make this almost impossible.

The final factor in the succession delay relates to ceremonial site where the hand-over from one generation-set to the next is meant to occur. The succession ceremony traditionally occurs at Nakadanya, between Koten Hill and the Apule River, a location considered the heartland of Karamoja. The Karamojong believe that Nakadanya is the sacred site from which the Karimojong tribes dispersed, and thus this is the location reserved for the most important and reverent of events.<sup>16</sup> Many of our informants believe that *Akujû* has cursed the Karimojong (Bokora, Matheniko and Pian), as evident by the bloodshed and violence that has spread across the land. This curse originated from an unsanctioned raid and the resulting death of the most respected elder's son.<sup>17</sup> The sacred site of Nakadanya must be cleansed in order for this curse to be lifted and for the handover of power to occur. Some efforts were made by a civil society organization to cleanse Nakadanya several years ago, but it is the view of many people that short-cuts were taken and the rituals were not followed properly. As a result, efforts to restore the power of Nakadanya and reverse the curse failed.<sup>18</sup> A number of elders from various Karamojong tribes are reportedly aware of the problems, and are seeking to find ways to resume the cleansing and process towards succession at Nakadanya.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Knighton, op. cit. p. 59 and p. 134. It should be noted that in the past both the GoU and traders have tried to use Nakadanya as a site to further their own objectives with the Karimojong, but the Karimojong refuse to show up, not wanting to be manipulated.

17 Oxfam Conflict Study: A Report, *no date*, p 31.

18 Author (ES and DA) discussions in Moroto upon presenting preliminary findings, November 8, 2007.

19 Correspondence with key informant #1, July 10, 2007.

## IV. Livelihood Systems and Strategies

### Establishing Context: Policies, Institutions, Processes and Vulnerability

Most of this chapter is devoted to livelihood strategies within Moroto district of Karamoja. It is necessary to discuss in brief some of the factors that shape the larger environment in which these strategies take place. National policy toward Karamoja can be summed up broadly as one of overall neglect punctuated by occasional ill-conceived attempts at disarmament. Karamoja has experienced decades of underdevelopment under colonial and post-colonial regimes, and policies aimed specifically at the region have mostly been restrictive in nature, focusing either on prohibiting the movement of pastoralists or seeking to remove weapons.<sup>1</sup> The lack of social services and state-funded or supported infrastructure (schools, clinics, roads, police posts, courts) has resulted in a weak social contract between the populace and the state, illustrated in part by the extremely low rate of voter turn-out.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the lack of protection provided by the state and the lack of an adequate law enforcement presence in the region have resulted in a security vacuum in which civilians have armed themselves for both defensive and opportunistic purposes. Likewise, the court system is insufficient to handle cases brought forward, and there is no judicial presence at all in Abim, Kaabong and Nakapiripirit districts.<sup>3</sup>

An understanding of the stratified nature of local governance structures in Karamoja helps reveal the important institutions and processes that shape the lives and influence the livelihood strategies of households and individuals in the study population. Discussions with members of civil society in Karamoja indicated a perceived problem created by the existence of two par-

allel local governing institutions and processes.<sup>4</sup> As we have seen above, customary and local processes and institutions have the greatest impact on and relevance for people's daily lives. Male elders are the traditional bearers of authority and respect, and their input is sought on day-to-day livelihood issues such as migratory routes of animals, school attendance, inter-family disputes and food management in times of scarcity. However, a parallel authority structure exists in the function and office of the local council (LC) system, a five-tier administrative structure introduced in 1986 to promote decentralized democracy. A village council (LC I) is at the base of the system, and consists of nine committee members elected by village residents. In rural areas, this hierarchy continues to the parish (LC II), the sub-county (LC III), county (LC IV) and district level (LC V), but only the LC I councilors are directly elected.<sup>5</sup> In the view of some members of civil society, Karamojong communities are not comfortable with the LC system. This is due, in part, to the fact that the LC 'leaders' are often community members who have had some education and are comfortable interacting with district officials. These elected individuals may be respected for their more educated or visible status, but they often lack standing with ritualized community hierarchies. For instance, someone in an LC III position may be uninitiated and of a different generation-set or age-class than those he is purporting to represent. Tensions arise when an official in this position finds he is not afforded respect or authority by the traditional leadership structures.

A simple lack of understanding by communities as to the role of the LCs is also reportedly a problem. As one representative from a civil society organization explained, "The local communities see these LCs as the links to the local government. They are 'reporters' of what the government says is going on—nothing

1 See Walker, op. cit. for analysis of the anti-pastoral nature of the federal government's policies towards Karamoja.

2 See Tonny Oyana, *A Preliminary Report on Uganda's 2006 Elections*, Southern Illinois University, accessed at [www.geog.siu.edu/people/oyana/Examples/GIS\\_Analysis\\_Visualization\\_Uganda's\\_2006\\_Election.pdf](http://www.geog.siu.edu/people/oyana/Examples/GIS_Analysis_Visualization_Uganda's_2006_Election.pdf)

3 Human Rights Watch, op. cit. p. 18.

4 This paragraph is drawn from discussions in Moroto town in early November 2007.

5 Sylvia Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), p 69. Only the members of the LC I are directly elected by local residents; LC II-V members are appointed by an electoral college comprised of councilors from the level immediately below.

more!”<sup>6</sup> The result is the development of a fragmented and inefficient system of power. The LCs are thought to disrespect the authority of the elders; the elders do not afford the LCs the authority that they feel is their due. While clearly there are variations based on personality and group relations from one area to the next, respondents in Moroto spoke of an underlying tension that exacerbates conflict and hinders peace efforts.

The economic environment is also a determinant in the nature and success of livelihood strategies. The economy in Moroto district has little diversification, with few economic opportunities beyond animal husbandry and a limited number of small business in the district headquarters and trading centers.<sup>7</sup> Financial services are limited, unskilled labor is mostly casually employed as manual workers (unloading lorries, for instance), and the exploitation and sale of natural resources (firewood, charcoal, and wooden crafts) is the main form of petty employment, particularly for women. There is virtually no industry or manufacturing in the five districts of the region. Most raw commodities (such as quarried stone) are transported to other regions of Uganda for processing. Outside observers point to the absence of a “pro-investment or pro-business” environment, and informants within the district speak of the pervasive problem of corruption, graft and nepotism that hamper free market exchange and discourage outsider investors. Local politicians and district officials are alleged to demand kick-backs.<sup>8</sup> The lack of infrastructure, problems of physical access, low levels of human capital, and relative lack of financial services stand as further obstacles to investment and economic development in Karamoja.

Vulnerability in Karamoja is largely a function of climate, violence, animal health and demographics. There are variations in climate and levels of violence from one year to the next, and the experiences of groups change relative to each other based on cattle wealth, animal health, political alliances and defensive strength (i.e., if a group has the ability to prevent attack). Susceptibility to communal violence in the form of raids is a key factor in determining vulnerability, and the degree of risk may rise or fall depending on the size of livestock herds, number of armed males, relations with neighbors, and interaction with the security forces. Animal health has a pronounced effect on vulnerability, and the spread of livestock disease can bring rapid impoverishment and

6 Discussant in meetings at Mount Moroto Hotel, November 8, 2007.

7 Moroto is used as a specific example here, but these observations hold true in large part for all of the other districts in Karamoja.

8 Interviews with UN officials, Kampala, November 2007; interviews with local officials, December 2006 and March 2007; interviews with key informants throughout the course of the study.

a sharp decline in food security. Age and gender affect the vulnerability of individuals, with some groups more vulnerable to death from preventable illness (children under five and pregnant women), some more likely to die in armed cattle raiding or theft (male youth), and some exposed to greater risks when moving through the bush to collect natural resources or traveling to and from manyattas and kraals (young women).

## Manyattas, Kraals and Population Shifts

The size and demographic composition of a kraal population differs by group, season and climatic conditions. According to Matheniko and Bokora elders, the population of manyattas may decrease by as much as one-third in a regular dry season when people move to kraals.<sup>9</sup> Some kraals, however, exist on a more permanent basis. The Pokot have retained their pastoral lifestyle to a greater degree than the neighboring groups, and most Pokot move with their cattle throughout the year, settling to plant in manyattas along the Kenya-Uganda border only when the conditions appear favorable.<sup>10</sup> Pokot women who move back to the border area to cultivate stay in small makeshift huts near the fields, and the average area for cultivation is reportedly smaller than for other groups, at an average of only 0.5 acres/household.<sup>11</sup>

Pokot women explained that the majority of their community was with the kraal, with only those who were too elderly to make the trip—and a few adolescents as care-givers—remaining at the manyattas. In the case of harvest failure early in the wet season, or in cases of erratic rainfall or severe drought, everyone, including the Pokot elderly, will move to the kraals. In such cases, youth carry the elderly on stretchers made of wood and hides.<sup>12</sup> According to the Tepeth, the ma-

9 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2-3, 2006; interview with Bokora elders, Lopei sub-county, December 9-10, 2006.

10 “The Pokot are the least differentiated group in Karamoja and their pastoral practices are still close to nomadic patterns with whole families moving with herds in search of newer pastures.” Charles Emunyu Ocan, *Pastoral Crisis in North-Eastern Uganda: The Changing Significance of Cattle Raids*, Kampala, Centre for Basic Research, Working Paper 21, June 1992, p.7.

11 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), *Agropastoral Livelihood in the Greater Horn of Africa: Assessment of the Food Security in Karamoja*, a report organized and funded by the World Food Program Kampala, Uganda, IPRA, January 2006, p.3.

12 Interview with Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

jority of adolescent and adult males stay year-round at kraals, coming to bring goods or visit relatives in the manyattas for a night or so before heading back out to kraals. Like the Pokot, if the harvest fails early, the entire population of Tepeth manyattas may come to live with the kraal, including the elderly who are carried there by the youth.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the popular discussion on kraals assumes that these settlements are inhabited only by men,<sup>14</sup> in particular young men often referred to as *karacuna* ('warriors').<sup>15</sup> While the male-to-female ratio is usually higher in kraals than in manyattas, children and women are present in kraals at all times. Kraals hold at any time roughly equal numbers of boys and girls.<sup>16</sup> Women have clearly defined labor roles in kraals, and may live in kraals with their husbands for an extended period of time. Other women are sent to kraals with their children after being identified by elders or family members as particularly vulnerable or malnourished. These vulnerable women and their young children remain in the kraal in order to have more regular access to milk and blood (blood is drawn from live animals and cooked or mixed with milk to make a nutritious food source).<sup>17</sup>

The population of a kraal is in regular flux, with women and girls carrying food, water and firewood between manyattas and kraals, men returning to manyat-

13 Interview with Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

14 For instance, the belief that the kraals were inhabited exclusively by men was raised in several Tufts team interviews with key informants in Kampala, as well as with the UPDF commander charged with guarding Bokora cattle at the Lopei barracks.

15 The term *karacuna* is widely used by English speakers to refer to male youth and, in particular, to male youth assumed to take part in armed cattle raiding. The word *ngikaracuna* (sing: *ekaracuna*) translates as 'they of the apron' and refers to young men who have not been initiated and thus have the same relative status as women. The Ngakaramojong word has no connotation of warrior. Knighton, op. cit., p.135.

16 Interviews with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2-3, 2006 and March 11, 2007; Interview with Matheniko girl shepherd, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007; Interview with 4 Matheniko girls, Rupa sub-county March 10, 2007; Interview with 14 Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with six Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with 4 Tepeth women, Rupa sub-county, December 6, 2006; Interview with five Tepeth women, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2007. Interview with two Matheniko women and one Matheniko girl, at kraal, Rupa sub-county, December 8, 2007.

17 Interview, Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2-3, 2006; interview with Bokora youth, Lopei sub-county, December 10, 2006.

tas to check on their families, young shepherds (mostly males, though with a few females from households that lack males) rotating between kraals and manyattas, and men, women and girls moving to the market centers to sell livestock and natural resources (mostly firewood and charcoal) and to buy food. Some men may opt to stay in the kraals for longer periods, and their wives may stay with them if they are married (though not always).<sup>18</sup> For example, among the Tepeth, it is considered inappropriate for a man from a family with animals at a kraal to spend more than one night in the manyatta at a time, and if he lingers there he could face jeering or punishment by the other males in the kraal. Hence, Tepeth girls and women most often must travel to the kraals if they wish to be near their husbands.<sup>19</sup>

Residents of several different manyattas often populate one kraal. The sending manyattas are usually near to each other, of the same ethnic group, and closely tied through marriage and clan systems. However, where ethnic groups have formed alliances, such as among the Tepeth and Pokot, they may join together in large 'mixed' kraals (*arigan*) or in kraals in close proximity to each other, discussed in more detail below.<sup>20</sup>

Activity levels and the number of inhabitants in many manyattas increase during rainy seasons, as people return to manyattas for cultivation and harvest. However, the actual pattern of migration and habitation differs from one group to the next and from one location to another. For instance, Tepeth communities of Kakingol on Mount Moroto keep their animals in kraals on the plains during the rainy season, as the cool moisture in the mountains is not thought to be good for the hearts and lungs of the animals. During the dry seasons, they move animals up into the mountains and closer to the manyattas. Other kraals, such as the *arigan* near Nakonyen in Katikekile sub-county, remain in the area all year due to the good water and pastures, and any migration takes place in the extended vicinity.

## Rising Internal Insecurity

Although livestock raids have always been a facet of societies in the Karamoja Cluster, a shift occurred in Karamoja in the 1970s. Occasional large-scale livestock raiding among Karamojong groups developed into more widespread raids—as well as frequent smaller

18 Interview with four Tepeth youth, Rupa sub-county, December 6, 2006.

19 Interview with five Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

20 Interview with five Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, December 11, 2006.

scale thefts—and these raids were more violent, less ritualized, and less likely to be sanctioned by the elders.<sup>21</sup> Cross-border and ethnic tensions also began to increase in the 1970s, with Karamojong groups increasingly conducting raids into Teso, Lango and Acholi territories. In response, the government introduced restrictions on cross-border cattle herding in the 1970s, and any Karamojong that were found grazing in Teso risked having their animals confiscated by soldiers.<sup>22</sup>

Cross-border and internal raiding intensified further following the Matheniko's seizure of weapons from the Moroto barracks in 1979, and tensions within and beyond the district worsened. Shared access to key grasslands and watering holes decreased as security worsened, making it difficult for groups to rotate their animals to fresh pasture. Groups such as the Bokora and the Matheniko, who often clash, are today separated by swaths of no-man's land. These border areas are apparent through their abundant vegetation and tree life, as they are too insecure for regular grazing or collection of natural resources. As of late 2005, grazing areas such as Kodonyo (Katikikile sub-county), Moru Ariwon (Rupa sub-county), Nomuriangalepan (Iriiri sub-county) and Kochulut (Lokopo sub-county) were inaccessible as 'no-go areas,' as was the Locagar dam in Nabilatuk in Nakapiripirit district.<sup>23</sup>

Karamojong attacks on neighboring districts also increased starting in the late 1970s, and Karamojong herders and their animals are thus no longer welcome in many areas. This animosity differs from one area to the next and some groups may have maintained positive relations, but local politicians in neighboring areas have encouraged the introduction of national policies limiting Karamojong seasonal migrations. The extent of government enforcement of restrictions on cross-border migration has been inconsistent over the years, but in 2006 the GoU warned the Karamojong to stay within their regional borders, and reportedly threatened to bomb any herders attempting to cross over. This policy was tested by the Jie who attempted to enter Pader district to graze, and were bombed and driven back by the UPDF.<sup>24</sup> Even without the threat of government intervention, the Karamojong themselves are reluctant to cross to Teso or Acholi without their weapons, fearing that their cattle might be seized by their neighbors in revenge for past raids.

21 The section on Armed Raiding discusses shifts in raiding practices over time in more detail.

22 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis, op. cit., 14.

23 *ibid.*, 13.

24 The aerial attacks against the Jie occurred in early December 2006.

## Changes in Manyattas and Kraals over Time

### Manyattas

In the past, the manyattas of the Karamojong were smaller and more scattered. A patriarch lived in a manyatta with his wives and possibly a few other close male kin, such as brothers or cousins, or close friends who had chosen to ally with him. Changes in raiding patterns brought widespread insecurity, the abandonment of large tracts of land, and the development of larger and more concentrated settlements.<sup>25</sup> The distance separating manyattas has also decreased, as has the proximity of manyattas to towns or trading centers, in part because this is where the military detachments are usually located.<sup>26</sup> Of the groups studied, these shifts were particularly apparent among the Bokora and Matheniko. Matheniko elders explained that manyattas are designed to be permanent, but that if the security of an isolated manyatta is compromised, the residents will break down the settlement and move it closer to other manyattas or even amalgamate it with others.<sup>27</sup> In an example of this trend, an isolated Bokora manyatta in Lopei sub-county had merged with another manyatta following an attack by Jie warriors in recent years.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the Matheniko and the Bokora, the Tepeth have made fewer adaptations to their manyatta structure due to the natural protection afforded by their mountain location. The Tepeth manyattas on Mount Moroto we visited were smaller and more likely to be structured around several patriarchs in the traditional fashion. These smaller manyattas are better suited to a mountain landscape, and, in some areas, are built along steep-edged ridges, thereby making human or animal incursion difficult.

Migration and insecurity have brought demographic shifts to manyattas. Elders at a Bokora manyatta reported that the number of women and adolescent girls in the manyatta had decreased due to out-migration in search of economic opportunities, resulting in a population that was more male than female, although this

25 Ocan, op. cit., p. 31; Darlington Akabwai and Priscillar Ateyo, *The Scramble for Cattle, Power and Guns in Karamoja*, Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2007); Interview with Bokora livestock traders, March 7, 2007. The large manyattas of today are often referred to as 'villages' by local people, and we visited manyattas in both Bokora and Matheniko areas with 700 - 1,000 people and more.

26 Interview with key informant #1, March 14, 2007.

27 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2-3, 2006.

28 Interview with Bokora elders, Lopei sub-county, December 9-10, 2006.

may fluctuate on a seasonal or temporal basis.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, elders at a Tepeth manyatta explained that, overall, there are more adult women than adult men in Tepeth society due to the death of young men in raiding.<sup>30</sup>

Not all changes in settlement patterns are a result of insecurity. Most manyattas remain in one location for an extended period, though may be shifted and rebuilt to access new grass within the central enclosure. An elderly Bokora woman explained that her manyatta had been in the same general area for many years, but was shifted occasionally:

*There is a traditional belief that if one stays in one place for too long the ground becomes 'hot' because there are too many graves. People start becoming sick and [the manyatta] must move.<sup>31</sup>*

A Tepeth woman explained that her manyatta had been on the same hilltop for many years, although was occasionally rebuilt when it became too old, and could be rotated to a different location on the hill.<sup>32</sup>

Manyattas may replace kraals in some areas with enhanced access to natural resources. For example, a group of Matheniko women explained that six years ago they moved their manyatta to a new location that had good water and grass and had previously been used as a kraal. Four years later they again moved the manyatta across the river bed to be better situated in relation to natural resources.<sup>33</sup>

## Kraals

The kraal system has also changed over time, with people creating larger kraals for the purpose of increased protection. This trend has occurred throughout the Karamoja Cluster in response to insecurity. These larger kraals, called *arigan* by the Karamojong, are common in the Nakonyen area of eastern Moroto, which has long been a place for dry season grazing.<sup>34</sup> Tepeth and Pokot are most commonly found in this area, but

groups of Matheniko, Pian and Bokora may also be present at the *arigan*. The co-existence and sharing of natural resources among these large kraals of different groups in the Nakonyen area is an indication of a time of peace among specific groups and may follow a negotiated peace agreement among the elders.<sup>35</sup> Of course, alliances among some groups may bode poorly for others, who may end up being the object of joint attacks.<sup>36</sup>

The *arigan* are likely to be smaller in times of drought or extreme hunger, as cattle are dispersed into smaller groups in such periods and leaders make efforts to keep kraals closer to the manyattas if possible to better monitor the situation of their families at home.<sup>37</sup> An *arigan* had formed at Nakonyen by late 2006, signaling that the groups in the area were at peace, but dispersed into smaller kraals in early December following rumors that the UPDF were advancing on the area to conduct disarmament exercises.<sup>38</sup>

The livelihood system of the large kraals at Nakonyen differs somewhat from the smaller and more mobile kraals found in other areas. The kraals at Nakonyen may be influenced by the more strictly pastoral livelihood system of the Pokot.<sup>39</sup> At Nakonyen, kraals remain in the same extended area throughout the year due to consistent access to water and pasture. In the rainy season the kraals are moved farther from the cool river, and in the dry season are re-established along the shady river banks. These large kraals are made up of people from multiple manyattas, but are usually composed predominantly of one ethnic group. Kraals of the various groups are close together at Nakonyen, and there is visiting and sharing between the different groups.

Youth at one large Tepeth kraal explained that the kraals were in the same locations when their fathers were young, and even “in the time of the whites’ protectorate.”<sup>40</sup> The male population of the *arigan* is likely to be more stable than in the smaller kraals, as certain youth live at the kraals for the entire year, making only periodic visits to the manyatta to check on relatives and engage in some cultivation alongside their mothers, sisters or wives. The female population living in kraals fluctuates seasonally because women and girls leave to cultivate, but women and girls continue to come and go

29 Interview with Bokora elders, Lopei sub-county, December 9 and 10, 2006. A recent study by the Tufts team of population movement from Bokora to Kampala and other cities showed that those leaving are predominantly female. Elizabeth Stites, Dyan Mazurana and Darlington Akabwai, op. cit.

30 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

31 Interview with Bokora women, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

32 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

33 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

34 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007. The large kraals are also called *arigan* in northern Turkana, and *arumrum* in southern Turkana.

35 Interview with key informant #1, December 10, 2006; Interview with key informant #2, March 12, 2007.

36 Discussions at presentation of preliminary findings, Kampala, November 7, 2008.

37 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

38 Interview with Pokot elders, December 11, 2006; Interview with key informant #1, December 12, 2006.

39 Ocan, op. cit., p.7.

40 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikelile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

throughout the year with supplies from manyattas and to see their husbands or be courted by young men.<sup>41</sup>

Security modifications have also been made to grazing patterns in other traditional grazing areas. For example, kraals in the expanse of Rupa sub-county north of Moroto town remain at a distance from each other, but shepherds combine their herds while grazing during the day. This is done to improve protection by increasing the number of men and boys present to guard the animals. The animals from three Matheniko kraals in the Kokisile Dam area of Rupa sub-county were found grazing together in December 2006, and the elders explained that this was for security reasons.<sup>42</sup>

Traditionally, kraals would move throughout the dry season, reaching the furthest point away from the home manyattas when the dry season peaked in February or March. The distance from the manyatta varied greatly depending on the particular group and the conditions in a given dry season, but could be as far as forty to eighty kilometers or sometimes farther.<sup>43</sup> In the past, Karamojong kraals moved into neighboring districts where they had established long-term (even multi-generational) relationships with the more sedentary agro-pastoral people. These long-standing contacts are referred to as 'stock associates,' and the stock associates gave their Karamojong friends access to grazing land, traded food for animal products, and would even watch over herds for extended periods.<sup>44</sup> According to key informants, this system of exchange existed throughout northeastern Uganda and into Kenya and Sudan.

The greatest shift over time in the kraal system relates to movement patterns. In previous generations, a group would follow the same approximate migration pattern each year, with variations based on water and pasture conditions. The system of stock associates provided a network of destinations guaranteeing a friendly welcome and access to natural resources, and a kraal would visit the same stock associates from one year to the next.

Regular movement patterns became increasingly curtailed with the increase of cross-border and internal raids in the 1970s. Insecurity brought tighter borders and strained relationships among groups within and adjacent to Karamoja. Although individuals did not raid their stock associates directly, stock associates of a

certain group might be affected by indiscriminate large scale raids. According to a key informant, individuals would always "remember their stock associates" in areas affected by raids "by coming back to them and loaning them a bull for plowing or some milking to cows to keep when things calmed down."<sup>45</sup>

Insecurity also brought shifts in alliances across national borders. For example, the Matheniko have had strong relations with the Turkana in Kenya since establishing peace in the late 1970s,<sup>46</sup> but it has become more difficult to move large numbers of cattle across the Uganda-Kenya border.<sup>47</sup> Traditionally, the Turkana would move into Karamoja, as conditions are more arid on the Kenyan side of the border. They still graze their cattle in Karamoja when possible or near to the border, despite the risks posed by the on-going disarmament. Informants explain that the Matheniko move into Turkana less commonly than the other way around, and usually only to store weapons during disarmament campaigns.<sup>48</sup>

Of the groups covered in this report, the kraal system of the Bokora has undergone the most extensive transformation in recent generations. Adaptations to the kraal system of the Bokora have occurred for a variety of inter-related reasons, including increased insecurity and raids, loss of livestock, widespread disarmament, and increased sedentarization accompanied by a shift to trade- and agrarian-based livelihoods. The increasingly sedentary lifestyles of stock associates in neighboring Teso and government efforts to modernize agriculture have also somewhat decreased the mobility of the Bokora. Loss of livestock through cattle raids became pronounced for the Bokora in the early 1970s with the collapse of the Bokora-Pian-Matheniko (Karamojong) alliance,<sup>49</sup> and further intensified after the looting of the Moroto barracks by the Matheniko in 1979.

45 Written correspondence with key informant #1, August 4, 2007.

46 In 1978, the Matheniko and Turkana concluded peace talks that are still ongoing. The implications of this is discussed more in the section on Raiding. See Sandra Gray, op. cit.

47 Interview with Matheniko elders, December 7, 2006. The alliance between the Matheniko and the Turkana has proved problematic for some of the other Karamojong groups, as the Matheniko armed the Turkana following the 1979 raid on the Moroto barracks, and the Turkana advanced in relative military standing and raiding abilities.

48 Written correspondence from key informant #1, August 4, 2007.

49 Gray, op. cit., Interview with Bokora livestock traders, March 7, 2007. Gray explains that the Bokora, Pian and Matheniko once shared tribal unity as the 'Karimojong', but that "[r]elations among these three units are at worst hostile and at best aloof. Their collective identification as 'Karimojong' no longer appears to be a meaningful classification."

41 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikelile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

42 Interview with Matheniko elders, December 7, 2006.

43 Written correspondence with key informant #1, August 4, 2007. An FAO report states that this distance can be up to 100 kilometers. See Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), "Karamoja Participatory Livestock Needs Assessment," November 2006, p 18.

44 Interview with key informant #1, June 18, 2006. In the Turkana and Karamojong languages, an individual's stock associate is called *lopaika*.

(The Matheniko then used the looted weapons to attack neighboring groups, particularly the Bokora.<sup>50</sup>) Disarmament operations by the government in 2000/2001 disproportionately affected the Bokora, who surrendered large amounts of weapons. Stronger groups such as the Jie and Matheniko (which had not disarmed to the same extent) took advantage of the Bokora's lack of protection and stepped up their raids, resulting in further depletion of herds, loss of human life, and destruction of property. Other groups such as the Dodoth also turned over a large number of firearms, but the Bokora were hampered in their efforts to rearm due to the lack of proximity to an international border that allowed for ease of weapons trade.<sup>51</sup>

The reduction in access to grazing lands has hastened the shift away from pastoral livelihoods for the Bokora. This reduction is due, in part, to the negative experiences of Karamoja's neighbors after suffering repeated raids and destruction of property. Hostility towards Karamojong from local political figures in neighboring Teso and official directives from Kampala have prevented the Bokora from accessing traditional pasture in Lango and Teso.<sup>52</sup> Other important areas of pasture for the Bokora are in Abim and Kotido, but these areas have been unsafe for Bokora cattle due to the presence of the Jie and the inability of Bokora to adequately protect themselves against this strong and well-armed group.<sup>53</sup>

During the 2006-2007 dry season Bokora who still had cattle placed their animals at the UPDF barracks.<sup>54</sup> These animals were guarded by UPDF and militia soldiers, including while grazing around the barracks. Some shepherds from the manyattas would sleep at the barracks, spending the night in the open near to the stock pens in the same manner as in the traditional kraals. We spoke with a commander of a barracks in Bokora charged with guarding 5,000 cattle, who stated that he and his men had no plan regarding the movement of animals to areas of water and pasture if and when the dry season intensified. He was also unaware that women and children would usually accompany

50 This history is well-known within Karamoja and was referenced by all male Bokora respondents, many Matheniko respondents, and numerous key informants of various ethnicities.

51 Darlington Akabwai and Priscillar Ateyo, *The Scramble for Cattle, Power and Guns in Karamoja*, Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2007.

52 See Walker, op. cit.

53 Interview with key informant #1, December 10, 2006. Institute of Policy Research and Analysis, op. cit., 12-13.

54 Some respondents say that they were ordered to do so. Regardless, as long as neighboring groups remain heavily armed the Bokora are unable to protect their animals without external assistance. Protected kraals were also established in Kaabong among the Dodoth.

the cattle. Migration did not prove necessary in the 2006/2007 dry season due to unusual sporadic rains, but the involvement of security forces in the protection and movement of cattle signals a marked shift in the kraal system for the Bokora.

Animal health and environmental issues are also significant concerns regarding the protected kraals. The high concentration of animals has resulted in a higher prevalence and more rapid spread of disease, including foot rot and Contagious Bovine Pluero Pneumonia (CBPP). Furthermore, the animals are causing environmental damage as they are grazing in limited areas.<sup>55</sup>

The protected kraals were reported dismantled on the initiative of the UPDF in early – mid November 2007. Although it is too early at the time of writing to know the extent of the consequences, reports from the field indicate raids of the unprotected groups (mainly the Bokora and the Dodoth) has increased dramatically in the following weeks.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to the Bokora, the Tepeth have seen relatively little change to their grazing patterns. A Tepeth elder explained that the Tepeth sought to negotiate for peace with their neighbors in order not to be cut off from traditional pasturelands.<sup>57</sup> Even so, these agreements are broken from time to time due to cattle thefts, revenge attacks or flare-ups in violence. Today, some Tepeth kraals are located close to army barracks for added security, such as those in the Nakiloro area on the border of Rupa and Katikekile sub-counties.

## Linkages between Manyattas and Kraals

The dual settlement system of manyattas and kraals allows for the mitigation of vulnerability through the movement of people and their animals. As explained in more detail in the section on food security, this occurs through exchanges of food between the two types of settlement and shifting patterns of residence based on need and vulnerability. Food such as grains, wild fruits and vegetables, and relief items are carried to the kraals, and animal products such as meat (from deceased animals), milk, blood and ghee are brought to the manyattas. Elders at the manyatta call a meeting (*ekokwa*) to identify those who are the most vulnerable, and these individuals or households may be sent to the kraal in order to increase access to animal protein.

Decisions regarding the seasonal movement of animals out from manyattas to kraals are made by elders at

55 Personal communication with Ochieng Charles Wilfred, October 23, 2007.

56 Personal communication with Jeremy England (UNICEF) and Elizabeth Evenson (HRW), November 2007.

57 Interview with Tepeth elder, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

a meeting convened by the manyatta leader. The status of water and pasture is considered, and possible locations for migration are identified. An advance team is sent out to survey the area and to report back regarding security, likelihood of animal diseases, and the availability of water and pasture. The elders discuss the feedback and then decide upon the movement strategy.<sup>58</sup>

Information moves easily between manyattas and kraals due to the regular flow of people between these locations.<sup>59</sup> Anyone traveling from a manyatta to a kraal will relay information on the condition of those in the manyatta, and vice versa. News is brought regarding human and animal health, pastureland, water availability, security and the weather in different areas. This information is shared with specific families as well as by the elders at the *ekokwa*. Messages and reports are often carried by young girls making the trip to the kraal with food or to relieve a sister of her duties, young women coming to see their husbands or potential suitors, male youth returning from or going to visit their family in the manyatta, or elders coming to check on the status of their animals at the kraals. Traders and hunters passing through the area also relay information from areas farther afield.<sup>60</sup>

## Livelihood Systems in Manyattas and Kraals

Labor is differentiated by gender, age and status at both manyattas and kraals. Young children begin to work alongside their parents at a very young age (around three to four years). Young girls assist their mothers or other female relatives with domestic duties, including caring for younger children. At several manyattas and kraals we saw miniature huts and animal enclosures built by young children. Girls begin building these miniature huts at about seven years of age as training for constructing full-size huts, which is the work of older girls (beginning at about age 14) and women.

Within both manyattas and kraals, girls are also responsible for most domestic duties, including gathering wild greens and fruits, collecting firewood, preparing the fire for cooking, cooking food, fetching water, and caring for younger children (including feeding and soothing them if their mothers are away). Among the Bokora and Matheniko, girls also help prepare charcoal and take charcoal and firewood into town for sale or

58 Interview, Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2 - 3, 2006; Interview with Bokora elders, Lopei sub-county, December 9-10, 2006.

59 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

60 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

exchange for residue (the dregs from traditional beer-brewing).<sup>61</sup>

In the manyattas, girls participate in clearing the land, planting, weeding and cultivating and watering or milking any animals not in the kraals. If there is a harvest, girls participate in bringing in the harvest, threshing, winnowing and storing the grains. Indeed, the favorite activity of a group of young Matheniko girls was threshing and winnowing, as it indicated a successful harvest, up-coming ceremonies and the availability of food.<sup>62</sup>

At the kraals, girls take part in preparing food and watering and milking animals. Girls also help to cook blood, although only males bleed animals. Girls said that working in the kraals was much easier than and preferable to working in the manyattas, as the work load is lighter and they are usually guaranteed access to blood and milk.<sup>63</sup> In addition, pre-pubescent and teenage girls bear the primary responsibility for carrying food back and forth between manyattas and kraals, and may stay in the kraals for anywhere from a few days to several months at a time. The girls take blood from the kraal to their family back in the manyatta, and carry any items from the harvest, food purchased in town and/or relief items to the kraals. Young girls also make the trips from kraals to the towns in order to sell firewood and charcoal and buy food.<sup>64</sup>

Just as young girls build miniature huts, boys of a similar age begin to construct small-scale barriers as practice for their adult roles of building and maintaining the enclosures around the manyattas and kraals. Young boys acquire a high degree of responsibility at a very early age through shepherding goats, a duty which begins at roughly four or five years of age.<sup>65</sup> The young boys keep their herds close to settlements.<sup>66</sup> Responsibilities increase as boys grow older, and boys graduate from shepherding goats on to calves and eventually to cattle.

61 This was reported by all Matheniko and Bokora women and girls that we interviewed in Rupa sub-county and Lokopo sub-county in December 2006 and in Matany sub-county, Iriiri town and Rupa sub-county in March 2007.

62 Interview with four Matheniko girls, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

63 Interviews with Matheniko, Tepeth and Pokot girls in Rupa sub-county and Katikekile sub-county in December 2006 and March 2007.

64 Interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

65 Very few respondents knew their exact age, but from our own observations and conversations with key informants we can ascertain that boys start herding at age four or five.

66 Rada Dyson-Hudson, "Pastoralism: Self Image and Behavioral Reality," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 7 (1972): 38.

We observed some very young boys (age three to five years) present in the kraals. These boys are responsible for watching the kid goats that remain at the kraal while the herd goes out to graze. The older youth assist and supervise the young boys in their shepherding duties. For instance, male youth at a Tepeth kraal explained the daily system of animal management, which involved labor roles assigned carefully based on age, ability and responsibility. Younger boys are sent in from the fields first with smaller animals, while older boys and men round up stray animals and do a final security check.<sup>67</sup> Young boys are more likely to assist in traditionally female labor roles when at the kraals (as opposed to at the manyattas), including fetching water, collecting fuel, and watering the animals.<sup>68</sup> Young boys also hunt small game around both the manyattas and kraals, usually with bows and arrows that they have crafted themselves.

There is not a set numerical age at which a boy becomes a youth or at which a youth becomes a man. These transitions are marked instead by gradations in responsibilities and roles within the community. Young boys care for small animals, adolescent boys care for larger animals, and the young men are responsible for the large herds as well as the protection of the community. Young men are expected to prove their worth by committing acts of bravery. In the past this might entail killing a large animal in a hunt, such as a rhino, elephant, leopard or lion. Large game is no longer abundant in northeastern Uganda, leading some to posit that young men have few options other than raiding through which to prove their courage and worth.<sup>69</sup>

Women at the kraals are responsible for preparing food, watering animals, collecting firewood, fetching drinking water, tying young animals, collecting wild foods and milking any animals that have milk (many animals stop producing milk in the dry season).<sup>70</sup> The women at the kraals are in charge of food preparation, including overseeing girls preparing food, and food is eaten communally. (In contrast, at the manyattas food is not usually shared among households.) Male youth and elders reported that men will cook for themselves at the kraals in periods when women are not present.<sup>71</sup>

67 Interview with Tepeth youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

68 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

69 Written correspondence with key informant #1, December 11, 2007.

70 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; interview with Matheniko elders, December 7, 2006; interview with Tepeth youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

71 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006; interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

It is the work of the younger able-bodied women to collect and prepare food for the older women and men in manyattas or kraals who are no longer able to do these tasks themselves.

The building of huts (at both kraals and manyattas) is the duty of older girls and women, as is building and maintaining the fences immediately around the homesteads, and building the enclosures for the goats and calves inside the fences. Young men are primarily responsible for the outer fence of the manyatta or kraal, but may receive help from women to collect and carry the branches and thorn bushes.<sup>72</sup> When a kraal moves to a new location, women pack up the households and load the supplies onto donkeys or, more rarely, camels for the journey.<sup>73</sup>

One of the main livelihood activities for Bokora and Matheniko women and older girls is the collection and sale of firewood and charcoal.<sup>74</sup> Charcoal is more commonly made in areas that are close to towns than in more outlying areas. Men often take the lead in burning charcoal, but it is the job of women and girls to carry charcoal into town for sale. The Tepeth and the Pokot reportedly do not burn charcoal. Respondents claim that the Tepeth do not know how to make charcoal and, more importantly, that there is a cultural taboo on cutting live trees if dead ones can be found. A Tepeth elder explained that the male elders of his community had decided at an *ekokwa* meeting to issue an order not to cut trees, as “the thick forests protect us from enemy attack and produce food for us and our animals.”<sup>75</sup> Tepeth and Pokot women and girls pointed out that because they still have animals (often in greater numbers than the Bokora or Matheniko), there is no need to engage in natural resource exploitation.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, even to the casual observer, the natural environment of the Tepeth

72 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

73 *ibid.*; interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

74 The IPRA assessment from 2006 reports that the sale of charcoal and firewood contribute up to 50% of household income in Matheniko and Bokora and accounts for 25% of household labor use. A thorough explanation of methods is not provided in the assessment and these numbers do not appear to be representative, meaning that we cannot assume that these percentages accurately represent trends beyond the (undefined) study population. However, these figures can be taken to demonstrate the importance of this livelihood activity for income generation and use of resources (labor). Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), *op. cit.*, 23.

75 Interview with Tepeth elder, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

76 Interview with five Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, December 11, 2006.

and Pokot is much more intact than that of the Bokora and Matheniko, who rely more heavily on sale or exchange of firewood and charcoal for survival.

Women and girls generally leave the kraals earlier in the year than the men and boys in order to prepare gardens at the manyattas for the next season's planting.<sup>77</sup> In cases when most of the family is at the kraal, as with many Tepeth and Pokot, better-off families who have been able to sell some animals and purchase food will leave kraals earlier to begin preparing for the planting if the rainy season looks to begin well. Those who do not have the cushion of purchased food remain behind in kraals and wait until the rainy season has nearly begun before they leave the better pasture.<sup>78</sup>

Agriculture is traditionally, but not exclusively, the domain of women. Data show that many young men participate in agriculture at some or all stages of cultivation, although the nature of participation differs from one group to the next. Data collected by the Dyson-Hudsons in the mid-1950s (1954-1958) on Karimojong (Bokora, Matheniko and Pian) agricultural patterns also indicate that farming practices are shared between the sexes. Women were found to be responsible for all agricultural activity conducted inside the settlement (such as drying, threshing and preparing grains and vegetables), but men and women shared agriculture tasks that took place in the fields, with men contributing substantial labor for planting sorghum and millet, weeding, and harvesting. Both male and female children helped in the fields, although this task fell more heavily upon girls due to the boys' role in shepherding.<sup>79</sup>

Although the Dyson-Hudson data are fifty years old, many of the findings hold true today. Male youth in all groups we studied discussed participation in agriculture, and reported performing such tasks as cultivation, weeding, harvesting, clearing the gardens and fencing the gardens (men only). Men do not appear to take agricultural goods to town to sell; this is the job of the women and girls. Women in all communities where we worked stressed that decisions regarding farming were taken by women, not men. One Tepeth woman expressed shock when asked if men or women decided what should be planted: "How can a man make decisions about the crops that I am going to put in my garden? It is for me to decide!"<sup>80</sup>

77 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

78 Interview with five Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, December 11, 2006.

79 Rada Dyson-Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-43.

80 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006.

Bokora men are more actively engaged in agriculture than their Matheniko, Tepeth or Pokot counterparts. For example, Bokora male youth described sharing tasks with women and girls in the fields, including cultivating and weeding. Bokora male youth work communally to harvest, moving from one garden to the next. The owner of the garden provides a good meal and some traditional brew in exchange.<sup>81</sup> The practice of communal harvesting in rotating work groups has been adopted from the Teso people, and is less common elsewhere in Karamoja; for example, our informants said that it is not practiced by the Matheniko.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Bokora men are frequently found working alongside their wives in the gardens, also believed to be a pattern picked up from long-standing interaction with the Teso. These adaptations are indicative of a shift in livelihoods in accordance with the loss of livestock and decrease in viable pastoral livelihoods, as well as a shift in the female-to-male ratio as more women and girls out-migrate in search of economic opportunities.

Male youth are primarily responsible for livestock care and for the security of settlements. Livestock are moved to grazing and watering areas during the day, and young men often must dig wells in dry river beds during the dry season. Male youth are constantly on the lookout for raiders or thieves while grazing their animals, and conduct regular patrols around the grazing areas. Patrol teams venture out from the kraal each morning to look for footprints that might signal an impending enemy raid or thieves scouting the area. These groups also go on missions to check the water levels in a particular dam or the pasture conditions in a given area.<sup>83</sup> Grazing animals are kept close together, as thefts are most common when an animal strays from the herd.<sup>84</sup> Most raids occur at night, and all youth in an area will respond in a collective defense if a manyatta or kraal in their immediate area is attacked.<sup>85</sup> Although the majority of young men move to the kraals with the animals, in periods of heightened threats a portion will stay behind to protect the manyattas.<sup>86</sup>

At the manyatta, security is maintained through multiple layers of fencing. Doors are closed off at night

81 Interview with Bokora youth, Lopei sub-county, December 10, 2006.

82 Interview with key informant #1, December 10, 2006; Interview with five Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 12, 2006; Interview with four Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 12, 2006.

83 Interview, Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2 and 3, 2006, December 7, 2006.

84 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

85 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006

86 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikele sub-county, December 6, 2006.

with metal sheets and/or large acacia branches. Young men maintain the outer fences of the kraals and manyattas, and both young men and women gather the firewood for the men's sentry fires at night at the kraals.<sup>87</sup> (The women complained about the back-breaking work required to haul the large logs to keep the sentry fires burning through the night.<sup>88</sup>) At a Tepeth manyatta, young men explained that they check the perimeter fence for any problems before going to sleep. They wake at least once in the night to check for any possible intruders or signs of hyenas and other wild animals.<sup>89</sup>

The kraals are usually in less secure areas than the manyattas and have less substantial fencing due to their mobile nature. Young unmarried men at the kraals sleep out in the open near to the animals to monitor for problems.<sup>90</sup> Those who are married and have wives present at the kraal may go to the huts of their wives for intimate and sexual contact, but will then return to sleep in the open with the other men. Wild animals are also a threat to livestock in some areas. In Matheniko and Tepeth kraals we visited, the young men keep large fires burning just inside the kraal fences all night to ward off hyenas, lions and other animals, and sleep beside these fires.<sup>91</sup>

Although women and girls do most of the trading in town, the sale or trade of livestock is handled exclusively by men. Men at Tepeth and Matheniko kraals explained that women accompany them when they take the animals to the trading center to sell, and the women then carry home the food purchased through the sale of the animal.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, some male youth may engage in trade in other items. For example, Matheniko male youth are engaged in trading in Turkana, Kenya, and carry sandals made from tires, sisal leaves, and jerry cans of alcohol (*waragi*) to Lokiriyama to trade. Women

sometimes go with the men to help carry the jerry cans of liquor. The youth trade the alcohol and sandals for goats, which are then brought back to Uganda and kept or sold in Moroto town.<sup>93</sup>

Most hunting is performed by young boys, but a group of Tepeth men at one of the large *arigan* explained that they also hunt in order to survive the hungry periods.

*We also hunt. This is the way we survive here. We hunt dikdik, guinea fowl, wild pigs and even bigger animals that we might find, like water buck and antelope.*<sup>94</sup>

The responsibilities of the male elders center around decision making, mediation and negotiation with other groups for peace, access to particular watering or pastures areas. *Ekokwa* meetings occur daily to discuss basic management issues, while more formal and ritualized *akiriket* meetings cover aspects of ritual and ceremony. Male elders within a community are in charge of sanctioning, orchestrating and overseeing rituals, such as initiation (*asupan*) and marriage. Elders also play an important supervisory role in daily events. For instance, elders at a kraal will oversee the watering of animals and make certain that the young shepherd boys are correctly managing the animals.<sup>95</sup> Elders also manage the other members of the community: they call people together for meetings, instruct shepherds when to take their cattle out or hold the animals back, and make decisions regarding the use and storage of food.

Mediation is one of the central tasks of the male elders, and they hear and settle disputes among neighbors, within households, and among age-classes. Elders also mete out punishments, including fines (usually livestock for men and local brew for women) and corporal punishment such as canings.<sup>96</sup> Meetings between elders of different groups may lead to temporary or extended peace agreements. Some elders are considered to be particularly skillful in negotiations, and are characterized as "the sort of elder who will talk peace even if his son has just been killed by the enemy side." These elders are respected as local "pillars of peace" and can be highly influential within their communities. According to key informants, these elders often prefer the quiet of the remote grazing areas, and are thus sometimes overlooked by civil society organizations working on

87 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006; interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

88 Interview with five Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot girls, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, December 11, 2006; Interview with one Matheniko women and one Matheniko girl, Rupa sub-county, December 8, 2006.

89 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006.

90 Interview with Tepeth youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006; interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

91 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006; interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

92 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

93 Interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006.

94 Interview with Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

95 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

96 Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

peace mobilization.<sup>97</sup> Successful peace agreements are critically important in order to maintain the mobility of animals, to decrease the mortality rates of youth frequently involved in or victimized by raids, and to allow for trade and commerce between different groups.<sup>98</sup>

Seers, or *emuron/amuron* (male and female terms), play a special role within the social, economic and political systems of Karamojong communities. Seers are critically important for information at the kraals and the manyattas. At the kraals a seer will read intestines of a slaughtered animal to forecast the weather and to identify and attempt to mitigate any potential imminent security threats.<sup>99</sup> For example, Matheniko elders explained that the kraal leader works closely with a seer to manage the affairs of the kraal.<sup>100</sup> In response to a question on information regarding potential security threats, male youth at a Tepeth kraal said:

*Seers look at intestines and they can see if the raiders are coming. Most of the information [that we get] is from understanding the intestines and then making the appropriate mechanisms for defense.<sup>101</sup>*

Seers play similar roles providing guidance and communing with higher powers in kraals throughout the Karamoja Cluster.

In recent years, the security forces have come to play an increasingly visible—if controversial and sometimes highly problematic—role in the livelihood systems of communities in Karamoja. Disarmament and the associated problems are discussed elsewhere in this report, but security forces also play a more positive role in the everyday lives of many of the people we interviewed. For instance, the Tepeth from the Kakingol side of Mount Moroto have located their kraals near to the army barracks at Nakiloro because of the protection provided by the soldiers. According to male youth at two kraals in this area, it is the soldiers (mixed UPDF and local defense unit forces) who provide daytime security for the livestock. The soldiers mount patrols along the roads and the shepherds graze nearby, and armed soldiers ac-

97 Written correspondence from key informant #1, August 4, 2007.

98 Interview with Pokot elders, Katikekile sub-county, December 11 and 20, 2006.

99 Interviews, Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2 and 3, 2006, March 7, 2007. To illustrate, on the day prior to a visit by the Tufts team, a seer at a Matheniko kraal had predicted an imminent enemy attack. All the women had left the kraal and the men were on high alert, resulting in a security scare when the Tufts team vehicle came through the bush.

100 Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

101 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

company groups of grazing animals in some areas or mix their animals with the animals from the kraals and graze together. The Tepeth kraals also benefit economically from their proximity to the soldiers, and will sell the occasional goat to the families in the barracks and exchange milk for *posho* (a staple starch usually made from maize) on a regular basis. The men from the kraals sometimes socialize with the soldiers in the evenings, and the wives of the soldiers provide food for the children in the kraal if there is a food shortage.<sup>102</sup>

Interactions with the security forces are also a facet of daily life for Bokora communities, as most Bokora animals were housed in UPDF barracks at the time of our fieldwork. The relations with the soldiers at the barracks in Lopei county were reported as entirely positive, and Bokora men interviewed in Lopei stressed that there are no problems with their women and the soldiers and no issues with young shepherds spending the night at the barracks with the animals.<sup>103</sup> In contrast, Bokora youth reported that they are routinely beaten and arbitrarily detained by soldiers from the UPDF detach in Matany town. The critical difference appears to be the mandate of the security forces—the protection of cattle versus disarmament at Lopei and Matany respectively.

## Links to Towns and Trading Centers

Links to trading centers form an important aspect of the livelihood systems for all communities within our study population. The relevance of the connections to towns and trading centers are not static but differ from one community to the next, shift over time, and fluctuate based on season and the particular shocks or stresses that may be affecting a given area. The nature of interaction with towns also varies based on gender and generation for women do very different things in town than do men, young girls and young boys. Towns and trading centers also provide services and opportunities not related to income or market transactions. They are the location of health centers, schools (both day and boarding) and transportation.

The most visible aspects of the linkages between towns and the manyattas and kraals are through the sale of firewood and charcoal. In Matheniko and Bokora counties, women and girls stream into towns early each morning with bundles of firewood or bags or basins of charcoal on their heads. These are sold to merchants, restaurants or individuals. Some women have a destination of a specific buyer, while others sell at the first

102 Interviews with Tepeth male youth, Rupa sub-county, December 6 and 7, 2006.

103 Interviews with Bokora male youth, Lopei sub-county, December 10, 2006.

opportunity. Prices vary by season, with a large sack of charcoal selling (at the time of fieldwork) at a high of 4,000 Uganda shillings (equal to about US\$2.30) in the wet season and 2,000 UGS (US\$1.15) in the dry season (Moroto town), and firewood bundles at 1,000 UGS (US\$ 0.60) and 500 UGS (US\$.30) in the wet and dry seasons. As a last resort, firewood may also be traded for residue from traditional beer making at local breweries, and the residue is taken home and consumed or mixed with posho and cooked (see section on food security). People who reside close to trading centers have an advantage in the sale of firewood because they are able to reach town early in the morning, as explained by a woman who lived in a manyatta approximately three hours by foot from town:

*I sell wood in town, but when I get to town late I find that people have already purchased the wood they want and no one will buy your wood for cash. The only thing you can get in exchange for your wood is residue.*<sup>104</sup>

A woman from an even more distant manyatta explained that there is additional pressure to sell the wood or charcoal because of the distance traveled and the need to unload the goods and hurry home. The need to make a sale reduces bargaining power, as she explained:

*The people in town laugh at you because you are bargaining charcoal for only 500 UGS. But you don't care because at the end, after traveling so far, you must just sell, even at a loss.*<sup>105</sup>

Women use the cash from the sale of firewood for food, traditional alcoholic brew and, less often, clothes or non-food items for the household. Purchases of food—the most popular commodity—are usually in the form of *posho*, grains or beans, although the purchase (as opposed to trade) of residue is also common due to its low price. Brew is either sold back in the manyattas for a small profit,<sup>106</sup> is shared as refreshment with family members, or exchanged for help with cultivation. (Women would normally make their own brew in their homesteads, but this was uncommon in the areas we visited due to the poor harvest and lack of surplus grains for brewing. Purchased brew is not used for cer-

emonies, only for consumption.) Women reported buying clothing and non-food items only occasionally.

Young men who trade or work in town are most likely to use the cash they earn to purchase food for their families, medicines for their animals, or alcohol (in small quantities) and occasionally clothing for themselves. Matheniko men in manyattas around Moroto town also purchased liquor (*waragi*) and sandals, some of which is carried to Kenya for trade. As discussed above, men bring livestock into towns to sell at livestock markets. Money from livestock sales is most commonly used to buy food.<sup>107</sup>

Members of the study population engage in a variety of income-generating activities in towns and trading centers. Casual labor is most common for residents of manyattas located relatively near town, as most people go into town only for the day, returning home each night. Men report finding casual employment off-loading lorries, delivering items for merchants, and working on building projects. Young men can also find work pumping water in town for establishments with hand-pumped wells. Women and older girls sell water, work as domestic servants, wash plates in restaurants, and work in the breweries ('squeezing' grain, fetching water, frying grain, or grinding millet or sorghum). Men unloading trucks can make about 200-500 UGS (US\$ 0.12 to 0.30) per load, depending on the distance the goods are carried. Women fetching water earn 200 UGS a day while those working in the breweries earn approximately 500-1000 UGS/day (US\$ 0.30 to 0.60).<sup>108</sup>

Young boys in Moroto town were selling eggs, sticks for brushing teeth, and carved wooden stools. An adolescent selling stools explained that he learned how to make them from older boys and sells his products to people in town or those traveling on buses for 1,000-2000 UGS (US\$ 0.60-1.20) per stool. He gives the money to his family, uses it to buy eggs (which he re-sells), or buys brew and food with which to hire people to help cut wood for the stools.<sup>109</sup> Two brothers in their late teens who sell stools buy food to take home to their family, including sorghum, *posho*, and beans. They explained that if they had extra money they might buy shoes, clothes or alcohol for themselves. A girl of the same age was selling stools made by her brother, and her brother decides how the money should be spent.<sup>110</sup>

107 All men questioned regarding the sale of livestock explained that livestock was sold only in order to acquire food or sometimes medicine for their families.

108 These figures are rough estimates as provided by people doing casual work in town.

109 Interview with Matheniko boy, Moroto town, December 5, 2006. The traditional wooden stools are carved from one piece of wood cut from the trunk of a large tree, hence the need for help in cutting the wood.

110 Interview with two young Matheniko men and one young Matheniko woman, Moroto town, December 5, 2006.

104 Interview with Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

105 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

106 An adolescent girl who sold charcoal and bought brew in Moroto town explained that she could make a profit of 500 UGS on a 10 liter jerry can of brew and 1,000 UGS on a 20 liter can. Interview with Matheniko girl, Moroto town, December 5, 2006.

Selling goods in town is frequently seasonal: the young boy selling stools and eggs, for instance, only sells in town in the dry season and helped his family in the garden during the growing months. The two older boys sell stools “when they have is hunger.”

Young children also come to trading centers in search of economic opportunities. Children who work in town use their small daily pay to purchase food each evening to take back to their families in the manyattas. The majority of Matheniko children we spoke with returned home every evening after their work in towns, which consisted of begging, selling small goods they have made from natural resources (such as stools from tree trunks or tooth brushes from twigs), doing petty labor for town residents, or helping to unload lorries arriving in Moroto town. In Moroto town a brick-making enterprise employs a large number of young girls, including some under seven years of age. The majority of children we talked with that were working on the streets of Iriiri and Moroto said they did not have any animals in their families and this contributed to their poverty and the reasons why they went into town. As one young boy who sold natural toothbrushes (sticks) succinctly put it when asked if his family had animals “I have come here to look for survival. Do you think if my family had any animals I would be here?”<sup>111</sup>

Of the groups we worked with, Bokora children were much more likely to spend the night in town or to travel beyond the district borders to find work.<sup>112</sup> These children who leave Karamoja consolidate their money and return home only when they have saved enough money and food to bring to their families.

Respondents in communities located farther from towns express difficulty in regular access to the services and economic opportunities available in these locations. For example, a woman living in the western part of Rupa sub-county explained:

*You can't manage to walk from here to town [in one day]. You take [the charcoal] part of the way one day and sleep in middle. Then the next day you take it into town. If you are lucky someone will buy it. Then you rush home because the children are starving.*<sup>113</sup>

Women from this manyatta spent the nights in manyattas along the way, sleeping on the exposed ground within the manyatta walls. They take their nursing children with them, as if the river floods or there is a problem they might be away for several nights. Only those with relatives in Moroto stay overnight in town;

111 Interview with five young boys, Moroto town, December 4, 2006.

112 This is discussed in more depth in Stites, Mazurana, Akabwai, op. cit.

113 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007

otherwise they return home immediately after selling their goods. They are able to move more rapidly without the burden of the firewood or charcoal and can usually make it back to their manyatta the same evening.

Dependency on towns differs between ethnic groups and has changed over time.<sup>114</sup> Members of Matheniko and Bokora communities, many of whom are situated relatively near to trading centers, are much more likely to travel to town to sell natural resources and buy goods. In contrast, the Tepeth and Pokot groups we visited have much less regular interaction with towns. Women in a Tepeth manyatta explained that some men and women stay with relatives in Moroto town in order to harvest wood from the hillsides for sale in town, but the other residents of the manyatta made the trip much less frequently.<sup>115</sup> Tepeth respondents knew of very few people who engaged in casual labor in towns. Notably, respondents in Bokora and Matheniko communities said that links to towns have increased in importance over time and are more important in bad years than in good. For example, a woman from a distant manyatta in Rupa sub-county said, “No one would even go to town in a good year. You just stay here!”<sup>116</sup> When harvests are good there is no need to purchase food in town, and thus no reason to make regular trips with resources for sale. Similarly, women at several locations said that their mothers and grandmothers would rarely have gone to town, and that the sale of wood and charcoal in previous generations was extremely rare. One of the only consumable items purchased in town in good years is salt, as explained by a Tepeth woman, “In a good year we don't even go to Moroto at all except to sell some greens to buy salt.”<sup>117</sup>

114 Urbanization is increasing in Karamoja, with district capitals as well as smaller trading centers experiencing significant growth. While this report focuses on rural livelihoods and security issues, further study exploring the relationship between town dwellers and rural populations would be extremely useful in understanding the factors of economic migration and urbanization. Personal communication with Fraser Bell, October 30, 2007.

115 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 7, 2006. Those who went to stay in Moroto town usually took their young children with them and left the older children behind to be cared for by relatives. The adults returned once they had made enough money to buy food for their families.

116 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

117 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006.

## Debate on the Sustainability of Pastoralism

A question of sustainability and the appropriateness of pastoralism as a way of life in the modern era lies behind much of the discussion at the national level in Uganda regarding Karamoja. Indeed, a series of colonial and post-colonial policies have sought to change the pastoral lifestyle by curtailing migration routes, forcing children into schools, mandating western-style dress, and promoting the adoption of settled agrarian livelihoods. The stress upon pastoral livelihoods is plainly visible in Karamoja, with the deterioration of pastoral traditions apparent in migration to urban areas, the loss of animals for economic groups, a high rate of out-migration, and the decline in traditional dress and adornment as people assimilate with non-Karamojong communities or sell their beadwork for cash. As discussed throughout this report, however, these shifts vary between groups and areas and are affected by a variety of underlying causes.

The changes that are visible in the pastoral livelihoods of Karamojong groups do not necessarily imply that pastoralism is disappearing or should disappear as a viable economic system. A number of studies highlight the appropriateness of a balance of pastoralism and agro-pastoralism for the fragile ecosystem of regions that make up the Karamoja Cluster. Simply put, pastoralists did not decide to practice seasonal migration and raise animals because they were not in the mood to settle down and farm. Instead, pastoralism has evolved as the most appropriate and sustainable livelihood system based on the ecological conditions and climate. Although pastoralism in Uganda has undergone stress as a result of conflict, anti-pastoral policies, climate change, environmental degradation and population growth, the World Food Program's recent Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) report on Karamoja finds a positive correlation between food security and livelihoods strategies that balance agro-pastoral with pastoral activities. In other words, groups that are able to continue to hold animals are usually better off than neighbors who have moved away (by force or design) from livestock-based systems.<sup>118</sup>

The debate on the future of pastoralism is extensive and academic, and is largely beyond the scope of this report. In brief, one side, led by Stephen Sandford, argues that the ratio of animals to humans in pastoral areas is not sustainable given ecological carrying capacity and the rate of human population growth.<sup>119</sup> Other

118 World Food Program, *Emergency Food Security Assessment*, pp. 17-19. Approximately 70% of households in the "food secure" category owned livestock or poultry, as opposed to less than 60% of "food insecure" households.

119 One of the main theorists arguing that pastoralism in the Greater Horn of Africa is not sustainable given popula-

tion growth is Stephen Sandford. See *Too many people, too few livestock: the crisis affected pastoralists in the Greater Horn of Africa*, posted at Future Agriculture, [http://www.future-agricultures.org/pastoralism\\_debate.html](http://www.future-agricultures.org/pastoralism_debate.html), accessed November 2, 2007.

*We should be wary of using figures for the 'viable' people: livestock ratio derived from settings and times which bear little relation to today's situation. While it may be true in some 'pure' pastoral systems based simply on consumption/sale there may be some ideal minimum herd/flock size, this forgets that what is viable is dependent on the wider economic and livelihood system, as well as patterns of mobility. These classic earlier studies were based on relatively closed pastoral systems, where the opportunities for trade, exchange and adding value to livestock production were limited. They did not account for increasingly important close interactions with cropping, including the adaptive behaviour of pastoralists who engage increasingly in opportunistic farming or agro-pastoralism as a risk-spreading strategy.*

*Contemporary livelihoods in pastoral areas are also more diversified and more integrated with the cash economy than ever before, with most households having access to one or more sources of income that are not derived from livestock production and marketing. An important source of counter-cyclical income, for instance, is remittances from relatives living abroad, which supplements household income, sustains families through periods of crisis, and finances both livelihood diversification and the rebuilding of herds and flocks (through purchase rather than natural growth) after a drought or disease outbreak. In short, there are very few 'pure' pastoral settings today, and given the need to sustain more people on less land with fewer animals per capita, this is probably a good thing. Simple notions of 'viability' or 'carrying capacity' therefore are inappropriate.<sup>121</sup>*

120 Personal communication with Andy Catley, October 29, 2007.

121 Stephen Devereux and Ian Scoones, *The Response: The Crises of Pastoralism?* paper posted on Future Agriculture,

Following the logic of Devereux and Scoones, we see that the fate of pastoralism in Karamoja is not yet sealed, and that a continuing balance between pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods, ideally with increased diversification and economic opportunities for those not willing or able to pursue these livelihood options, may be sustainable into the future. This will only be possible, however, with the development of pro-pastoral policies and concentrated state investment.

## V. Food Security

*In the past, we had days of much sorghum, we had peace, we could move around in this area, we had animals at home. The insecurity now is spoiling everything. We could deal with the famine if it weren't for the insecurity.*

-Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006.

For most populations in Karamoja, food security is determined by access to and availability of animal protein and grains. Cultivated vegetables, wild fruits and wild greens supplement the diet, but with a high degree of variation by season and location. Animal protein is available from own-herds, and access is determined by gender, generation and location (i.e., at the manyatta or the kraal). Wealth in the form of animal ownership also influences access to animal products. Grains are available either from own-production or from the markets, and access is determined by harvest yields, access to market centers, and access to goods—derived primarily through natural resource exploitation—that can be transported to markets and sold or exchanged in order to acquire grains. Access to cash (through, for instance, casual labor, remittances and seasonal out-migration for labor) also affects the level of food security within a household.

This section begins with a discussion of food security at the community and household level, with comparative analysis of the different groups studied provided where relevant. Food security at the household level includes information on access to food by gender and generation. Lastly, the links between manyattas and kraals in regard to food security are discussed in detail, including how these links serve to mitigate vulnerability within communities.

### Food Security: Communities

A variety of factors affect food security at the community level<sup>1</sup> within Karamoja, including seasonal-

<sup>1</sup> Households are the most common unit of analysis when discussing food security. However, the mobility of groups and individuals within agro-pastoral populations in Karamoja makes a discussion of 'community'-level food security rel-

ity, rainfall patterns, insecurity, micro-climates, animal health, herd size, location, access to markets, market prices and availability of goods on the market. Many of these factors influence each other, and all are prone to fluctuation over time.

One of the most important factors in food security in Karamoja is the viability and size of animal herds.<sup>2</sup> Communities that have fewer animals, are prone to animal diseases, or are susceptible to regular raids are likely to be more food insecure than those with larger, healthier and better protected herds. The dual system of manyattas and kraals starts to break down when the total number of animals within a community declines to a certain point, as there are not enough animals and associated herders to maintain the cattle camps. The dual system helps to smooth consumption among the population and across the seasons, and the disruption of this system has negative consequences on food security.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, rotation in the kraal system provides animals with access to fresh pasture and water, and without this mobility they are less likely to produce milk and to be in good health. The lack of rotation to different grazing areas also contributes to overgrazing

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evant, with the understanding that these communities are in flux in regards to make-up and location. The kraals form a sort of mobile community—operating almost like a large household—and food is much more communal in the kraals, which gives further import to understanding community-level factors. Furthermore, we observed important differences in food security status at the community level in our work. A variety of important external and internal factors shape these differences—including interaction with other groups, experiences of violence and insecurity, extent of disarmament, and access to education. We feel that it is illustrative to show how these community-level factors relate to food security.

<sup>2</sup> Although animal ownership is by specific individual, the presence of healthy animals within a community allows for consumption-smoothing for community members beyond the immediate household that owns the animals.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007. The ways in which the dual system helps to smooth food security among inhabitants is discussed in more detail later in this section.

and erosion, which can lead to longer-term problems for communities.<sup>4</sup>

Drought is the major stress for the ecosystems and residents across the Karamoja Cluster. Single year droughts occur every three to four years, and multi-year droughts occur approximately every ten years.<sup>5</sup> Erratic weather patterns are common: the 2006/2007 dry season, for instance, was characterized by irregular rains, while other years might have nearly continuous rains, as occurred in 1961.<sup>6</sup> The effects of droughts can be severe, but research in Turkana in the 1980s indicates that human and animal populations are relatively stable over time. Livestock numbers recovered relatively quickly even in the face of severe losses, such as the 50-70% decrease in livestock numbers in parts of Turkana during the severe drought and famine of 1979-80.<sup>7</sup>

Differences in rainfall patterns result in variations in crops planted, with decreased crop diversity in areas with less consistent rainfall. In Rupa sub-county in Matheniko county, for example, the main crops are maize and sorghum. Much greater diversity exists in parts of Iriiri sub-county in neighboring Bokora, where maize and sorghum are supplemented by millet, beans, groundnuts, simsim (sesame), sunflower, vegetables, yams, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, rice, and cassava, among others.<sup>8</sup> This diversity in Bokora also relates to the proximity to Teso and the resulting greater availability of seeds and cuttings, as well as the experience and influence brought to the area by Teso traders and Bokora who have worked in Teso and returned to Karamoja.

4 See the discussion in Walker, *op. cit.* on the effects of permanent water points – designed to stop migration—on overgrazing.

5 Ellis and Swift, *op. cit.* p. 453.

6 The year 1961 is called *Ekarukaiputipu* or *Lolibakipi* in Karamoja, referring respectively to the immense amount of mud and the green color of the landscape. In neighboring Turkana, 1961 is referred to as “the year in which God forgot where he placed the key for locking up the rains.” Elders remember the prolonged rains of 1961 as bringing an abundance of milk and plenty of sorghum that grew in successive harvests. 1978 and 1988 were also years of heavy rains. Interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007; interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007; interview with male Bokora elders, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

7 Ellis and Swift, *op. cit.*, 455. The rapid recovery was influenced, in part, by the fast reproduction rates of small ruminants and the fact that many people took their animals out of the district during the drought and brought the animals back after the situation had improved.

8 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis *op. cit.* p.4.

## Physical Insecurity and Food Security

Insecurity is a major stress on the food security of communities within Karamoja.<sup>9</sup> Insecurity in Karamoja is manifest in armed livestock raids and smaller scale livestock thefts, resulting in asset loss, destruction of property, personal injury, death, sexual assault, and cyclical revenge attacks.<sup>10</sup> Ambushes on vehicles affect trade, access to trading centers, market prices and diversity of available goods. Wealth in Karamoja is synonymous with animal ownership and the loss of animals in raids has a significant impact upon the ability of households and communities to cope with stress. Direct impacts upon productive capacity occur through loss of oxen as draft power (for communities which use ox plows), destruction of granaries, and uprooting of crops and trampling of fields during raids. Insecurity may also hinder the movement of food and animal products between manyattas and kraals.

Cattle raids and thefts are the primary and most protracted sources of insecurity in Karamoja. However, disarmament campaigns undertaken by the GoU and UPDF also cause insecurity which can disrupt livelihood systems and affect food security. Some of these effects may be short term, such as the reported movement of 3,000 Pokot from Karita sub-county (Nakapiripirit district) into Kenya in August 2007 in the wake of disarmament exercises. This particular incident resulted in at least one death and several injuries, as well as the alleged killing of over 170 cattle.<sup>11</sup> The sudden displacement would have disrupted the kraal systems, interrupted livestock rotations, and halted any cultivation that may have been underway in the 2007 season, but was unlikely to have long-lasting detrimental effects on the livelihood system of the highly mobile Pokot. In contrast, the 2000/2001 disarmament of the Bokora paved the way for substantial loss of livestock because inadequate external protection left the Bokora open to repeated attacks by other armed groups.<sup>12</sup>

Prolonged periods of heightened insecurity often result in the displacement and reconfiguration of settlements. People relocate their manyattas for improved protection, move into towns, or leave for a new area. Research in Iriiri town showed that people shift their garden plots closer to the manyattas in response to insecurity, but these areas are often less fertile and repeated farming in one area leads to the degradation of soils, increased risk of pests and diseases and reductions in crop yields.<sup>13</sup> Conflict between groups also reduces ac-

9 *Ibid.* viii.

10 The difference between raids and thefts is discussed in more detail in the section on raiding.

11 Yasiin Mugerwa, “Disarmament: 3000 K’jong flee to Kenya,” *Daily Monitor* (Kampala), August 13, 2007.

12 See Stites, Mazurana, and Akabwai, *op. cit.*

13 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), *op. cit.*, 6.

cess to pasture and grazing lands, leading to reduced milk yield and a decline in livestock production over time.

Insecurity and poor road infrastructure in Karamoja affects the availability of grains and other essential items on the market, access to these markets, and the price of commodities.<sup>14</sup> Produce from outside Karamoja dominates local markets. Traders bring most food products and consumer goods into Moroto district from Teso, and the greatest diversity of goods exists in trading centers near to Teso such as Irirri and Matany. Local communities rely on access to markets to sell natural resources or animals, purchase food, acquire inputs for agricultural production (such as seeds and tools), acquire veterinary medicines, and to access basic services such as health centers. Access is hampered by raiding, theft and road ambushes. Wet weather compounds the problems by making many roads impassable.

Traders in Irirri report that they transport goods up to Moroto town, but do not proceed into Kotido or Kaabong districts due to the risk of ambush on the roads. Similarly, traders from Kotido and Kaabong districts reportedly do not pass through Moroto district, but instead travel to the Acholi region for goods.<sup>15</sup> The source markets in Acholiland are less diverse than those in Teso, resulting in higher prices and more limited availability in Kotido and Kaabong. Insecurity on the routes constrains supply, and high demand pushes up prices of basic commodities and foodstuffs. Years of insecurity in northern Uganda have had a significant impact on the food supply to northern Karamoja districts.<sup>16</sup>

Insecurity combined with irregular weather patterns can be particularly difficult for communities. The balance between animals and production is critical to maintaining food security, and a poor harvest can be offset through the sale or slaughter of an animal when livestock are plentiful. But reliance on cultivation increases when animals are lost through raids, and men are increasingly reluctant to sell or slaughter animals when herds are small. Food security declines when a poor harvest coincides with a high rate of animal losses, and households and communities must shift their livelihood strategies accordingly.

### Authority of the Elders

Authority systems within a given community also influence food security. A key informant posited that communities in which the male elders command respect and authority have more centralized and communal management of food supplies. To illustrate, although women make most decisions regarding household food consumption, male elders may intervene on behalf of

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Bokora livestock traders, March 7, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication with Ochieng Charles Wilfred, October 23, 2007.

the entire community in periods of pronounced hardship. The local elders will inspect household granaries and instruct the women of the house to 'seal' one or more of the granaries until a later date. The granaries are opened only when the elders give the go-ahead. Temporary sealing of granaries is most common when the elders are prepared to balance the short-term shortage of grain with the sale or slaughter of animals.<sup>17</sup> Interventions by the elders in food management are only possible if the elders are able to wield their authority and if they themselves are closely involved in the day-to-day aspects of community life and are aware of food needs and specific vulnerabilities.

Discussions with a group of Bokora male elders highlighted some of the complex aspects regarding inter-generational relations. When asked, "When [the young people] were going away to Kampala and other destinations, did you as their parents [or elders] give them permission to travel?" the elders replied:

*The children just walked away. We as parents were not able any more to prevent them because we could not give them any food. Our wives [women of the community] could just walk away for the same reason.<sup>18</sup>*

This anecdote illustrates the linkages between respect for the older generations and the ability of those generations to provide for their dependents. Later in the same interview, a respondent explained that disarmament had led to the loss of cattle for the Bokora. As a result:

*We watch our daughters or even wives disperse without saying 'No!' because we cannot afford to retain them! In fact, at times we even encourage our daughters to leave for down-country destinations to improve their chances of getting food.*

We hypothesize that the authority of the elders diminishes as livelihoods are lost and impoverishment increases. Elders are less able to manage food security, which leads to further destitution, out-migration, and the eventual increase in illicit livelihood strategies such as cattle theft and banditry.

## Food Security: Households

As illustrated in the recent WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA), households within Karamoja pursue a range of livelihood strategies, broad categories and combinations of which include agriculture,

<sup>17</sup> Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with male Bokora elders, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

gathering, causal labor, agro-pastoralism, professional activities/civil service and various other less prevalent activities such as skilled labor and trade.<sup>19</sup> Variations in access to assets (or capital) at the household level determine the exact nature of these strategies, as does the vulnerability context and the policies, institutions and processes that shape the overall environment.<sup>20</sup> The WFP EFSA provides a quantitative analysis of the links between livelihood strategies and food security. This section addresses some of the most relevant aspects of

elders in each community visited delineated wealth groups based on livestock holdings and granaries, assets which relate directly to the management of food security. Discrepancies in the characteristics of wealth groups were present from one study site to the next, but the trends apparent in one Tepeth community illustrate the wide gap between the rich and the poor within Karamojong society. As defined by the male elders, the characterization by wealth group in one Tepeth community is as follows:<sup>22</sup>

	Head of cattle	Goats or Sheep	Donkeys	Granaries
Wealthy HH	> 100	>200	20 or more	4-10
Average HH	15	20-50	5	2-3
Poor HH	0	10	0	1, "often empty"

household food security based on an analysis of qualitative data from Matheniko, Bokora, Tepeth and Pokot study sites.

### Inequity in Livestock Holdings

One of the important changes in Karamojong society over the past several decades has been the increase of inequity in livestock ownership and, by proxy, in household wealth. Livestock wealth was traditionally largely communal, but there has been a gradual shift to a much more individualized form of livestock ownership. Ocan argues that the "number of people owning large herds of cattle in Karamoja is growing smaller and smaller while [sic] of those having no animals are becoming more."<sup>21</sup> In most instances, this does not mean that the entire community is without livestock, but that livestock ownership is stratified by family. Interestingly, protection of animal assets does remain communal, as evident in the larger and closer manyattas and the joining together of large kraals.

The existence of wealth disparity was confirmed in our research, as numerous respondents explained that their households no longer had any livestock or had lost their cattle and were maintaining only a few goats. Male

Access to agricultural land also varies considerably by wealth group. Tepeth male elders in the same community reported that a wealthy household would have multiple terraced gardens, a middle-household would have a few terraced gardens, and a poor household would most likely have a small garden (described as "unkempt") closer to the homestead.<sup>23</sup> These stark differences among wealth groups are also apparent in the data from Matheniko communities. Disparity between wealth groups exists among the Bokora as well, but with the important difference that even those households considered 'wealthy' are reportedly struggling to meet basic needs and are sending their children out of the region in search of economic opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

The World Food Program's 2007 EFSA indicates a correlation between food security and animal hold-

19 World Food Program, *Emergency Food Security Assessment Karamoja Region*, Kampala: World Food Program, July 2007, pp. 20-21.

20 Within the livelihoods framework, assets include natural resources, the nature and availability of human capital, the strength of social and political connections, and the presence of physical capital (including livestock), and any financial capital, which can include savings, access to credit and the viability of income streams. This section does not offer an exhaustive analysis of all forms of capital available to households in Karamoja, but rather highlights those found to be most relevant to food security in the course of our research.

21 Ocan, op. cit., 22.

22 The assessment for WFP conducted by IPRA in 2005 includes a classification of households on the basis of their food security. Data came from focus groups and key informants, and show that households considered to be the most food insecure had no livestock; those considered vulnerable to food insecurity had 5-10 goats, 2-4 heads of cattle and an unspecified number of chickens; the best-off group had more than 10 cows and more than 15 goats or sheep. Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), op. cit., 29-30.

23 Interview with Tepeth male elders, Katikikile sub-county, March 12, 2007. These figures reflect only the numbers from one community and from the perspective of the male elders and should not be taken to reflect differences in wealth groups beyond this area. The interesting reference to the gardens of the poor as "unkempt" may indicate that lack of adequate labor is a common characteristic among poor households in this community.

24 Interview with Bokora male elders, Lopei sub-county, December 9 -10, 2007.

ings,<sup>25</sup> and our data confirm that households with better food security are, for the most part, those with more livestock. These households are in better positions for other reasons as well, as wealthier households are better able to diversify income, reduce seasonal income variability and smooth consumption.<sup>26</sup> This likely allows for more rapid recovery from shock and better weathering of stresses. However, diversification *beyond* animal ownership is also particularly important for household food security. Households that are invested solely in livestock are more susceptible to a complete loss of assets in a raid, and may be impoverished overnight. This illustrates how an asset can also be a liability that heightens vulnerability, and may in fact undermine economic stability.<sup>27</sup>

The WFP 2007 data on livestock holdings also validate our findings in an earlier report on the relative impoverishment of the Bokora.<sup>28</sup> The EFSA found that of the eight strata sampled (by administrative county, correlating approximately to tribal group), Bokora county has by far the lowest percentage of households owning livestock or poultry (less than 30%). In particular, only 10% of Bokora households own cattle, as compared to 25% of Matheniko households and 71% of Pokot households.<sup>29</sup> The connection between livestock holdings and food security supports our findings of the Bokora being the most livestock-poor and food-insecure. Other sections of this report and earlier work<sup>30</sup> discuss in more detail some of the main factors contributing to the uneven livestock holding among ethnic groups, as well as the repercussions of these imbalances.

## Food Storage

The availability and condition of household storage facilities have an impact upon food security from one season to the next. In a period of successive good harvests a household is likely to have several traditional granaries made from large woven baskets raised off the ground, but a series of poor harvests and subsequent disuse of the granaries leads to the deterioration of their condition. New granaries are likely to be smaller

to coincide with reduced harvest size.<sup>31</sup> In the course of our fieldwork we came across numerous granaries in varying states of decay, as well as granaries that were being used for non-food storage.<sup>32</sup> The deterioration of granaries and reduction in their storage capacity is likely to be a problem when a larger harvest does occur, but more thorough research on issues of food storage in Karamoja is needed in order to understand the longer-term implications.

## Human Capital

The availability of human capital at the household level is an important factor in livelihood strategies and resulting food security. For example, households with a skewed gender ratio among adolescents and adults were found either to be adjusting their livelihood strategies or moving away from traditional divisions of labor. This latter pattern appeared particularly prevalent in Bokora, where young men were taking a much more active role in the cultivation of gardens, a form of labor usually relegated to women. We hypothesize that this gender-based shift is influenced by two factors: i) the decrease in cattle held by the Bokora has left men with fewer tasks, and ii) the out-migration of a large number of young females in search of work has left a gap in the agricultural workforce at the household and community level.

Smaller households and households with only young children may be at a disadvantage in regard to own production, casual labor and the sale of natural resources or other goods. The gender ratio of children may affect the livelihood strategies of households in regard to food security (in addition to school enrollment). Traditionally, boys begin shepherd duties at a young age and the care of animals is their primary role within a household livelihood system. Families without boys of the appropriate age either hire shepherds or send their animals out with those from other households. We did meet a young female shepherd at a Matheniko kraal: from a family of mostly girls, her father decided that she should care for the household's animals. She stressed that she enjoyed the work and said she had a positive relationship with the male shepherds. Many of her male counterparts had expressed interest in marrying her once she stopped being a shepherd, which would happen when one of her nephews was old enough to take over the responsibility.<sup>33</sup>

Levels of education also influence the livelihood and food security strategies of a given household, in both the present time and in planning for the future.

25 World Food Program, *Emergency Food Security Assessment*, pp. 17-19. Approximately 70% of households in the "food secure" category owned livestock or poultry, as opposed to less than 60% of "food insecure" households.

26 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), op. cit., p.1.

27 See, for instance, Ocan, op. cit., p.19.

28 See Stites, Mazurana and Akabwai, op. cit.

29 The EFSA does not include the Tepeth as a distinct group, as they fall within Matheniko county. Labwor county has a lower rate of cattle ownership than Bokora, with only 3% of households owning cattle, but this is due to the predominately agriculturally-based livelihoods of Labwor households.

30 Stites, Mazurana and Akabwai, op. cit.

31 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), op. cit., pp. 28-29.

32 Some large raised granaries were being used as sleeping huts in Tepeth areas.

33 Interview with Matheniko female shepherd, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

Interestingly, many respondents, particularly in Bokora, discussed the expected future benefits of educating their children who they expect to have the skills, jobs and money to care for their parents in later life.

Cultural differences influence access to assets and capital at the household level, with potential effects on food security. Certain tribes in the Karamoja region practice female circumcision, which affects the availability of labor at the household level. A study for WFP found that girls in Tepeth and Pokot communities did not contribute to household labor for three months following circumcision ceremonies.<sup>34</sup> As women are primarily responsible for agriculture, this can be a significant loss of labor for households. Culture also dictates the use of certain inputs that may contribute to food security. The Pokot, for instance, do not believe in harnessing animals (as they view it as a form of slavery) and thus do not use ox plows in cultivation.<sup>35</sup>

### Access to Markets

Proximity to markets is important to the food security of many households in Karamoja. All respondents reported that their households were buying a portion of their food from markets at the time of our research. Transactions were usually cash based, with cash acquired through the sale of natural resources or casual labor. Some transactions were in-kind, particularly in the case of firewood traded for residue. Households that face greater risks in accessing markets are likely to have less stability in their food security. These risks include having to walk through hostile territory or travel by vehicle in areas prone to ambush. In contrast, those households able to easily access commercial centers are able to make frequent trips with minimal risk and buy small amounts of food with the cash available on a daily basis. Proximity to markets also decreases the lost opportunity cost in human capital when individuals make the trip into town. Being near to town does not, however, necessarily mean that these households and communities have better overall food security (as is evident, for instance, in the differences between the Bokora and the Tepeth), but rather that communities under stress do have more options when they are closer to towns. As discussed in the section on livelihoods, respondents in the study population explained that previous generations were more self-reliant and had less need to travel to markets to purchase food or sell goods or labor.

34 Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), op. cit., p. 8.

35 Interview with WFP personnel, Moroto, December 4, 2006; interview with key informant #2, December 5, 2006; written correspondence from key informant #1, July 10, 2007; Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (IPRA), op. cit., p. 8.

## Food Security within Households

As in all societies, intra-household dynamics influence the ways in which food is accessed, distributed and utilized at the individual level. An individual's personal food security is a factor of his or her health, status and position within the household, care received from other household members, and gender and generational specific livelihood tasks. Individual food security in Karamoja is closely related to access to animal proteins (milk, blood, meat and ghee). Shepherds and those who spend significant portions of time at the kraals have more ready access to animal products. In general, domesticated meat is consumed only in the context of ceremonies or if an animal has died from natural causes. Animals may also be given to the male elders in return for a blessing, such as when the warriors return from a raid. The male elders have preferential access to meat at all times, regardless of the source, which they then share with other men who take a portion home for their families.

Women reported relatively rare consumption of meat. Women and children eat meat only when the men in the household or the community elders agree that an animal can be slaughtered or when an animal has died of natural causes. (As discussed in more detail below, a woman may decide to sell or slaughter a goat to feed her family in cases of extreme hunger, but would need to send news immediately to the husband to inform him of the decision.) Elders will decide the type of animal to be ritually slaughtered, and women and children will eat some of the meat on these occasions.

When meat is available (either through ritual slaughter or natural death) the animal is divided in half, with equal halves going to the men and the women and children (as women are responsible for the feeding of children). Organs are reserved for particular gender and age groups. For example, the heart is given to male warriors, since it is they who guard the animals and who must be strong and courageous.<sup>36</sup>

According to Tepeth and Pokot women, healthy animals are only slaughtered for ritual purposes, not for food. In times of hunger, weaker animals are chosen for slaughter, and this meat is usually sold or exchanged (at times with other families in the kraal) for grains, especially sorghum. If the harvest has failed and an exchange for grain is not possible, then the family will eat the meat.

Respondents in all study locations reported eating one to two meals per day, with a majority reporting only

36 Interview with Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county March 13, 2007; interview with key informant #1, March 14, 2007; interview with key informant #2, March 14, 2007.

one meal per day at both the manyattas and kraals.<sup>37</sup> Women explained that they try to feed their children two meals per day, often with porridge in the morning, although a portion of residue is very common as the second meal. Women in several locations discussed the importance of “hurrying home” after selling natural resources in town in order to give “the children who have been waiting” something to eat as soon as possible.<sup>38</sup> We also observed men ensuring that older children had preferential access to food, including in the kraals.<sup>39</sup>

## Diet

Food consumption at the household level fluctuates by season, the success of harvests, and the household's access to cash, markets and livestock. We conducted our field work in the middle and end of the dry season (December and March), and dry season livelihood strategies were in place.<sup>40</sup> All households in the study population reported acquiring some portion of their food from markets, with *posho*, sorghum, other grains and beans the most commonly purchased items. In most areas, wild fruits and vegetables make up some part of the household diet every year, regardless of the success or failure of the harvest. Some of the less desirable varieties of gathered fruits and vegetables are considered to be famine foods. Wild vegetables are most commonly in the form of greens, which grow in riverine areas or when there is sufficient rainfall. Greens usually last only until October or November in a normal year, but were still available in March (2007) due to sporadic rainfall

throughout the dry season.<sup>41</sup> Another popular wild vegetable is a type of tuber, called *Ngigilai*.

Wild fruits ripen during the hot dry season at which time they are an important part of the household diet and are consumed in both drought and non-drought years. These fruits are either sweet or bitter, with the former growing in thickets in forests or hilly areas and the latter on large trees. The sweet wild fruits can be eaten directly off the bush and are said to be a favorite of shepherds, who often experience constipation as a side effect of over-consumption. The bitter fruits are bean-shaped and must be peeled and boiled for a long period in changes of water to remove the bitterness.<sup>42</sup> Wild figs, called *imongoi* and similar to cultivated figs, are also gathered.

The consumption of residue is widespread in Bokora and Matheniko areas, and all household members (i.e., men, women and children) will consume residue in homes where this is a staple part of the diet.<sup>43</sup> Tepeth respondents also reported all household members eating residue, but residue was not as central to household diets as in Bokora and Matheniko communities, although this may be a factor of distance from trading centers.<sup>44</sup> Residue is widely recognized as a famine food, with respondents explaining that residue is fed to the animals or discarded in years with a good harvest. Women frequently barter firewood for residue when there are no other buyers for their natural resources. As one woman explained, the amount of residue given in exchange for a bundle of firewood in Moroto town was gradually decreasing late in 2006, signifying worsening terms of trade for those bartering natural resources.<sup>45</sup> Children may be given residue as a quick meal to temporarily assuage hunger or before another meal to reduce the amount of grains or beans needed. This strategy was ex-

37 The World Food Program's 2007 EFSA found an average of 1.3 meals/day consumed by adults and children ages 7-12 throughout Karamoja. Children under 6 years of age consumed 1.5 meals/day. World Food Program, “Emergency Food Security Assessment,” p. 19.

38 Interview with four Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007; interview with two Bokora women, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

39 During an interview with male youth at a kraal, a man in his 20s sent away younger boys (early teens) “to eat before they go out and herd the goats.” When queried, the man explained that he only eats once a day, but that the younger boys need more food to keep up their strength. Interview with Tepeth male youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

40 To note, sporadic rains characterized the 2006-2007 dry season, resulting in increased pasture for livestock and more readily available wild greens for human consumption. The unseasonable rains did not help with crop production, as in many areas the crops had already died by this time. Although we conducted our fieldwork in the dry season, the most pronounced period of food insecurity occurs during the ‘hunger gap’ in May, June and July when households are waiting for the harvest.

41 Interview with four Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007. Local names for the three most common types of wild greens in the dry season are Ekamongo, Ekorete, Ekadolia, with the last being the most preferred variety. (Other types of readily available wild greens in Moroto district include Asuguru, Alilot, Eome, Akoli, Akulea, Akeo, Aboiekiny, Ekeru, and Aliaro, none of which is a famine food). Interview with elderly Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

42 Common varieties of the sweet wild fruits include Engomo (*Grewia fenax*), Edome (*Cordia sinansis*), Esokon (*Salvadora persca*), and Ebei (*Balanites orbicularis*). The bitter fruits include Eedung (*Boscia coreancea*), Edapal (*Dobera blabra*), Elamach (*Acacia sp.*) and Eerut, also from a type of acacia, as well as many other varieties. Written correspondence from key informant #1, July 23, 2007.

43 Interview with Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006. This was mentioned in many interviews.

44 Residue was not mentioned as part of the diet on the Tapac side of Mount Moroto, which is further from Moroto town and other large trading centers than the manyattas and kraals on the Kakingol side of the mountain.

45 Interview with Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

plained by a mother who often sold some of her wood to buy *posho* and exchanged the rest for residue:

*You get residue because it is a very quick meal to feed to the children. You give it to them as soon as you come home while preparing the posho. Then you can give them a little bit of posho mixed with more residue. You don't have to cook the residue; you can just serve it right away. Then by the time the little bit of posho is ready the children are already partially satisfied.*<sup>46</sup>

In the Bokora and Matheniko areas we visited, households were without food stores and were seeking to meet their food needs on a day-to-day basis. Women, who are primarily responsible for the household food needs, reported carrying wood or charcoal to town to sell every day, except when the process of cutting wood or making charcoal prevented a trip to town. Wild greens formed the basis of the daily meals on these days. Men and boys supplement household diets by hunting, and may bring in small bucks, birds, rabbits, rats and lizards, but numerous respondents (male and female) explained that wildlife has become more scarce and hunting more difficult.

Respondents and key informants explained that household food consumption has changed over time, with people today eating significantly more purchased items, wild foods and residue than was consumed in years past or in their parents' generation. One of the underlying factors in these changes is the disruption of the balance between crops and livestock. A group of young Matheniko women attributed the changes in crop production to worsening weather patterns and blamed the increased number of raids in recent decades for more limited access to meat, milk and blood.<sup>47</sup> They explained that when their mothers were children they were able to rely on both their harvests and their livestock:

If they didn't have corn, they still had cows. They had meat, blood, milk and plenty of ghee...Now we don't have milk like we used to and instead of meat we eat beans, and we need cash to buy that so we have to sell charcoal.<sup>48</sup>

## Food Security Linkages: Manyattas and Kraals

The management of food security is one of the most important ways in which the kraals and manyattas are

46 Interview with four Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

47 Interview with five young Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

48 *ibid.*

linked. Food is shared between the two settlements, with grains (including, in some cases, residue from beer making), vegetables and relief foods carried to the kraal. Animal products (blood, meat from dead animals, and milk if available) are carried to the manyatta. A certain number of animals remain at the manyatta, including some ruminants and milking animals, although most animals cease to give milk in the dry season.<sup>49</sup>

The communication system between the manyattas and kraals is central to maintaining food security. Men in the kraals explained that they regularly receive updates on the status of family members at the manyatta, including reports of illness or requests for help with food. In these instances a man may opt to sell one of his animals from the kraal, and will then take the food from the sale to the manyatta. He may initially take blood to his family to lessen their immediate need, and then proceed to town for additional food, as explained by a Matheniko youth:

*If you hear that hunger has stricken your family, you draw blood and take one cow back to town to sell it. You drop off the blood for them on the way to town, and then buy food after you have sold the cow and you take the food back to them.*<sup>50</sup>

Among the Matheniko, Bokora, Pokot and Tepeth, only men may decide to bleed, sell or kill an animal. Women are not allowed to make these decisions except on rare occasions. An exception is if the woman is widowed and left animals by her deceased husband. If these animals have not passed to her sons, the woman has the authority to make decisions regarding sale or slaughter of an animal.<sup>51</sup> Also, a woman receives a gift of cattle from her father when she marries and leaves her parents' home. According to a key informant,

*These cattle generally belong to the husband by name but they belong to the woman by usage and she can request her husband to sell such an animal for food. The husband would not be able to refuse except to offer an alternative animal to be sold.*<sup>52</sup>

A group of Matheniko youth explained that a woman had the right to sell a goat (but not a cow) without notifying her husband if the husband was away and the family was very hungry. (This might be a goat from the

49 Interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

50 Interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006.

51 This was widely reported by Bokora, Matheniko, Pokot and Tepeth women we interviewed in our fieldwork in 2006 and 2007.

52 Written correspondence from key informant #1, August 4, 2007.

smaller number of animals remaining at the manyatta.) She would have to explain why she had done this when her husband returned, but it would be understood.<sup>53</sup>

Animals that die from natural causes at the kraal will often be shared with the manyatta, with donkeys used to carry the meat.<sup>54</sup> If an animal dies in the manyatta while the male owner is at the kraal, a runner, usually a young boy, will be immediately sent to tell his father or uncle precisely which animal died and how it died. The male owner will then decide what to do with the animal, i.e., if it should be sold or eaten. Until the runner has returned to relay the owner's response, the women are not allowed to make any decisions regarding the animal and await instruction from the male.<sup>55</sup>

The dual settlement system (manyattas and kraals) allows for the mitigation of vulnerability through the movement of people, livestock and consumable goods. The animals in the kraals provide access to protein (particularly blood) that is rarely available during the dry season in the manyattas, making the kraals the best location for members of the community suffering from poor nutrition. Elders at the manyatta call a meeting (*ekokwa*) to identify those who are not coping well or are suffering. Various actions are taken by the elders to help such households, including giving extra milk (if milking animals are present at the manyatta) to the children of struggling families and sorghum to the families (if available). Older children of particularly vulnerable households may be distributed to other better-off households where they will be fed in exchange for helping with domestic duties, child care and cooking (for girls) or for helping with the animals (boys).<sup>56</sup> The elders will also send poor women and children to the kraal in order to increase access to animal protein. As a youth explained, "It is the most vulnerable and weak [women and children] who go to the kraal."<sup>57</sup> To note, this is in direct contradiction to the general view that the kraals are populated entirely by armed male youth.

As discussed above, wealth within Karamojong communities has become increasingly stratified based on livestock ownership. The neediest households are usually those with few to no animals. The mechanism of sending vulnerable individuals to the kraals is a top-down method of managing this vulnerability. Young

men in the kraals explained that they might also be approached directly by women from families without livestock who have come to the kraal to beg for help. These women "come to a specific person to beg for assistance until he accepts." They added, however, that

*When a woman comes to a young man to beg he must consult his father. He cannot give a goat without the consent of his father or an elder. If the young man has accepted [the request of the woman for help] then he just tries to convince his father to help...If the father is away, we can just take the decision and then explain when he is back. We will not quarrel. He will understand that it was because people were starving.<sup>58</sup>*

This anecdote indicates that although the dual system of kraals and manyattas does mitigate food insecurity to some extent, need persists at the household level in the manyattas, particularly in the dry seasons.

*Life at the kraals is more communal than in the manyattas. Food is cooked and eaten communally by gender, as opposed to the system in the manyattas whereby the women cook specifically for the men in their household.<sup>59</sup>*

53 Interview with eight Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006.

54 Interview with Tepeth elders, March 13, 2007; interview with Matheniko elders, December 7, 2006.

55 Interview with Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

56 Interview, key informant #1, December 2, 2006; interview with Matheniko elders, Rupa sub-county, December 2 and 3, 2006; interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

57 Interview with Bokora youth, Lopei sub-county, December 10, 2006.

58 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Rupa sub-county, December 7, 2006.

59 Interview with Matheniko elders, December 7, 2006.

## VI. Education and Health

### Education

*Even the cows that their fathers left us, the enemies have taken. So I said [to the children], you just go to school and let the government feed you. You can't stay here and just eat greens.*

-Bokora woman, Matany sub-country, March 9, 2007

Education has been a contentious and complex issue in Karamoja for decades. Colonial and post-colonial governments imposed various policies that sought to change or constrain the pastoral way of life, and many people within Karamoja saw education as one such policy with little or no relevance for the local populations. This attitude appears to have shifted somewhat over the past generation, but levels of enrollment, access to schools, and the quality of education remain low in Karamoja. A recent report submitted to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights found:

*Despite significant intervention in improvement of education in Karamoja by government through the Universal Primary Education (UPE), classroom construction under the School Facilitation Grant (SFG) and teacher training as well as development partners such as World Food Programme (WFP) which has continued to support the school feeding Program, Karamoja has remained by far the least literate region in the country with literacy rate at six percent compared to the national average standing at over 70 percent currently.<sup>1</sup> This is mainly because of the irrelevance of current formal syllabus to the pastoral children.<sup>2</sup>*

School facilities are poor and incentives for quality teachers largely non-existent. The majority of primary schools have no clean water, and most schools lack ade-

quate housing for teachers and students, many of whom are miles away from other forms of accommodation.<sup>3</sup>

Aware of these and other problems, the government and donors created the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) program. This initiative seeks to provide elementary level education with relevant course content for the largely agro-pastoral population in the region. A module system is designed to better accommodate the semi-nomadic lifestyles and heavy reliance of households on children's labor, which makes consistent attendance throughout the year difficult. The ABEK schools are not set up to replace the mainstream education system, but to transition children into these schools.

There have been some successes to date in improving access to education in Karamoja. Enrollment in ABEK schools has steadily increased (from 5,500 students in 1997 to 23,262 in 2002), and although the program targets children 6-18 years of age, it has attracted adult learners as well.<sup>4</sup> Some ABEK instructors are receiving extra training to provide services in formal education within Karamoja. To date ABEK is functioning in Kotido, Kaabong, Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts.<sup>5</sup> Other key challenges include supporting Karamojong children to attend secondary, post-secondary tertiary, and institutes of higher learning.<sup>6</sup>

ABEK has potential as an alternate educational program for the region, and is one of the few social services that takes into account the specific needs and context of the pastoral population. Interest in ABEK among the respondents in our study was generally high, but this was tempered by a sense of unmet expectation in

3 *ibid.*

4 <http://www.karamojadata.org/webdocs/abek%20supplement3.doc>

5 The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs op. cit.; personal communication to authors, Ochieng Charles Wilfred, October 23, 2007.

6 Office of the Prime Minister, Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Program, 2007, accessed September 10, 2007, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/35BCF528E11C9735C1257279004E0484/\\$file/2+JANUARY+2007+REVISED+KIDDP+DOCUMENT.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/35BCF528E11C9735C1257279004E0484/$file/2+JANUARY+2007+REVISED+KIDDP+DOCUMENT.pdf)

1 <http://www.karamojadata.org/kwgintrouction.htm>

2 The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, *Supplemental Report on the Inaugural Report of the Republic of Uganda to the African Commission on Humans and Peoples Rights*, Nairobi. May 2006, p. 14.

the areas where we worked. In a number of our study sites, people reported that they had been promised that ABEK was coming to their area, but that either this had not yet happened or, in one instance, the teacher quit after just a few weeks and was never replaced. In another instance, a group of Matheniko youth in Rupa sub-county had constructed a shelter for the lessons they anticipated after being told that ABEK would be in their area shortly. Months had passed since they had finished the shelter with no follow-up, and they were growing increasingly disillusioned.<sup>7</sup>

Some stakeholders have voiced concerns regarding the creation of a two-tiered education system in the region. They would prefer to see efforts and resources go toward making the standard country-wide UPE system more accessible and appropriate for children within Karamoja.<sup>8</sup> It is acknowledged, however, that ABEK does provide good lessons regarding the possible transformation of UPE, including mobile classrooms, greater interaction with communities, and a relevant thematic curriculum. To be successful, the longer-term goals of the ABEK system need clarification. Is this a temporary bridging program for children in remote and marginalized communities, or is this the alternate model of education for Karamoja? In the short to medium term, ABEK requires better supervision, regular monitoring, and a clear understanding on the part of parents, local officials and policy makers as to the relationship between ABEK and the mainstream schools and how children will make this transition.

### Access to Education by Study Group<sup>9</sup>

Many of the families we interviewed in Karamoja were not sending their children to either ABEK facilities or formal schools. Lack of participation in education was particularly widespread in the Matheniko communities, even though many households had access to Moroto town. In contrast, Tepeth and Bokora communities had children in school in greater numbers. The range of responses from these communities illustrates

7 Interview with Matheniko youth, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

8 Meeting with United Nations officials, Kampala, November 9, 2007.

9 The recent EFSA survey by WFP/Uganda includes findings on the correlation between education and food security and is disaggregated by group. The data show a positive correlation between adult literary and levels of food security, but no correlation between children's enrollment in school and food security. Households that are food security or moderately food secure are more likely to have their children enrolled in secondary school. Although data are not provided for the Tepeth (included in the Matheniko sample), the levels of education, enrollment and literary are all higher for the Bokora than for the Matheniko. WFP, "Emergency Food Security Assessment, Karamoja Region," 2007.

the underlying factors in deciding to send children to school. For example, we worked in two Tepeth communities on Mount Moroto. In the first location, the leaders of the community had encouraged parents to send their children to school. A number of families in the extended area (a series of manyattas) had sent both their boys and girls to the local formal school. Respondents explained that their leaders felt that schooling was important because it would help produce people with knowledge about animal medicines and health, as well as health care for people. It was noteworthy that these same leaders also reject raiding and are encouraging people to increase herds through animal husbandry and marriage of daughters.<sup>10</sup>

The second Tepeth community also appeared to have relatively high school attendance, and there was an ABEK program less than ten minutes from the manyatta. Mothers in this second location place little value on education itself, but like the program because the children are being fed. However, school feeding alone is not enough to keep children in school if the family's food situation becomes dire, as discussed in more detail below.

The findings from the Tepeth communities could be said to indicate that groups with stronger pastoral livelihoods are better able to send their children to school, as they are able to sell animals to cover expenses.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, we could argue that it is the influence of the elders that matters the most, and that the Tepeth had children in school because the elders saw a value in education. While there is merit and certainly some truth in both of these arguments, the increased emphasis on education among the Bokora population would appear to contradict both these points, as the pastoral livelihoods of the Bokora are in disarray and their elders are considered to have little authority. Hence it is useful to examine the Bokora's relationship with education, and in the process examine the role of WFP school feeding.

Attitudes towards education among the Bokora people are said to have shifted following the increase in violence in the region in the 1970s and 1980s. A key informant referred to the "hammering of the Bokora by the Matheniko and Jie" as "grace in disguise," as the loss of cattle and associated way of life encouraged Bokora communities to turn to other livelihood options.<sup>12</sup> As discussed elsewhere, one of the main aspects of this has been out-migration, which has brought both positive

10 Interview with Tepeth female youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007; Interview with Tepeth elders, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

11 Although UPE did away with school fees for primary school, families still must cover the cost of books, uniforms (in some locations), and to do without the wages or labor lost in sending their children to school.

12 Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

(increased wealth for some, access to higher education, knowledge of drought-resistance crops from neighboring districts) and negative impacts (including the disintegration of families, child out-migration, exposure to crime, and experiences of abuse and discrimination by both the state and civilians). Another aspect has been a marked growth of entrepreneurial skills and activity among Bokora populations and in the Bokora region as individuals turned from livestock to trade and enterprise.<sup>13</sup> This growth in entrepreneurial attitudes appears to have led to—or perhaps been led by—an increased interest in education among Bokora communities. The process of increased emphasis on education has been gradual and is still uneven from one community to the next and even within a community, but does appear to be underway.

Of the Bokora women we interviewed, roughly half were sending (or had sent) their children to school, with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls attending school. The role of school feeding (through WFP donations) is a major pull factor during primary years, as indicated by the quote at the start of this section: “Let the government feed you!” There were no school-age children visible in one Tepeth location we visited, and, when asked why, the adults explained that all the children were in school “where they receive porridge and lunch.”<sup>14</sup> Families who have many children are happy to have fewer mouths to feed when the children are in school. One woman said that her husband was happy that the children were receiving school feeding through government programs, but that he “laments during the holidays because they are hard to feed when they are home!”<sup>15</sup>

Some evidence exists for a snowball effect of education within communities, whereby the positive experience of one child, generation or family encourages more people to send their children to school, or for the children themselves to lobby to go to school. For example, a woman in Matany who had four daughters in school

13 Bokora culture also changed over time due to an increased focus on education, brought about in part by the extreme livestock losses in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, a majority of Karimojong with jobs with government offices and non-governmental agencies in Karamoja are Bokora. Gray, *op. cit.*, p.409.

14 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikékile sub-country, December 6, 2007. Half-way through this interview a young child of approximately three years entered the hut with an empty plastic bowl and a dejected face. Her mother explained that the girl had gone down to the school in hopes of being included in the lunch-time feeding, but had been turned away because she was not yet a pupil at the school.

15 Interview with four Bokora women, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007. Much of this interview was spent talking about education and the experiences of the different women, hence its heavy citation in this section.

explained that the eldest daughter “decided by herself to go to school!” The father of the household came to recognize this as positive, and “seeing the problems [poverty] in the family, he decided that all the girls should go to school.”<sup>16</sup> Another woman in the same manyatta explained that the experience of her generation was influencing parents’ decisions regarding the education of their children today:

*This matter of education is now understood by the parents because they see that those whose parents forced them to go to school in the past now have jobs and are helping their families and are thanking them [for sending them to school]. They learned from other parents and friends that putting children in school brings future benefits.*<sup>17</sup>

If school feeding is the motivating factor for young children to be in school, then the potential for future benefits coming back to the family is a driving force behind the continuation of education past the secondary years. (To note, many fewer children are in secondary than in primary school across all locations visited.) As one woman succinctly put it, “The most precious reason to be educated is to get a job.”<sup>18</sup> The parents see these jobs as directly beneficial to them—this is mentioned much more often than any benefits to the children—as they expect to be helped and supported through the salaries of their education children. This recognition of potential future benefits was not raised in all interviews, but was a common response among parents who did have children in secondary school.

We see that school feeding, influential elders, and the prospects of future earnings are key determinants as to why children are in school. Understanding the reasons why children are *not* in school is equally important to policy makers. As mentioned above, lack of access to schools (no schools in the area, no teachers) and poor quality of the facilities (no running water, no accommodation) are important factors. Another factor is a lack of understanding of the value of education on the part of both parents and children. The vast majority of people we interviewed, both adults and youth, did not know what actually occurred in a school. Likewise, while some had heard of ABEK, most did not know what happened in ABEK schools. Undoubtedly, this lack of basic information on schools and education contributes to the low level of enrollment. Interesting, young women in particular believed that girls who had an opportunity to go to school would be able to make better choices about their own lives, as well as to help their communities.

16 *ibid.*

17 *ibid.*

18 *ibid.*

One of the main factors keeping children out of school is the important contribution made by children to household livelihoods. In particular, the importance of having male shepherds *may* skew enrollment rates in favor of girls (more data would be needed to say this conclusively). The loss of cattle in Bokora has resulted in a generation of idle young men without an education:

*When there were cattle here, it was often the boys who were kept [out of school] to herd the cattle. Now all the cattle are gone, but those boys are still not in school.*<sup>19</sup>

A second woman in the same group explained the bitterness of her son:

*The boy lives here, he is now grown. The boy did not go to school. It was the decision of the mzee [patriarch]. He wanted him to be a shepherd. Now it is a shame, because there are no cattle. We told him that he should go learn now, but he said 'You delayed me, and now I am too big.'*<sup>20</sup>

Another factor preventing people from going to school is the perceived lack of relevance of formal education to pastoral livelihoods. Male youth in a Tepeth community explained that some of their age cohorts had attended school, but they mocked these youth for their lack of knowledge about cattle and the pastoral way of life. When asked if those who had gone to school would ever go the kraals, one youth replied:

*They will go for one to two nights if they want. But they don't know how to take care of animals! They even fear the sunshine!*<sup>21</sup>

Poverty either keeps children from starting school (because the family cannot afford to lose their labor or does not have the funds to purchase supplies) or pushes children out of school early. Likewise, school feeding may encourage families to send their children to school, but the labor of the children becomes increasingly valuable to the family when food security drops below a certain point, and children are then withdrawn from school.<sup>22</sup> One woman had sent all of her boys and one of her girls to school, but then "poverty and the family" forced the second girl to drop out of school and

get married.<sup>23</sup> Bride price brings valuable assets to poor families, but more research is needed on the linkages among marriage, socio-economic status and school retention rates of girls.

## Priorities of Youth

In trying to better understand the views on education within communities, we sought to learn more about the priorities of the youth. We asked Bokora, Matheniko, Pokot and Tepeth youth a series of questions regarding what made a 'good Karamojong boy' or a 'good Karamojong girl.' In all the areas where we worked, the top answer for these questions related to the ability of the youth to help his or her family. In particular, it was important to the youth to be known as a 'hard worker'; for girls this meant being a 'diligent worker' and for boys 'a good shepherd' who did not lose any of the family animals. The work that children did all pertained to traditional pastoral livelihoods and associated domestic duties.

The second most common answer given across the four groups was that a good Karamojong boy or girl should 'look nice.' Further discussion revealed that this meant adhering to their cultural values through body ornamentation, including beaded necklaces, earrings made of sticks, small rocks or beads, strings of beads worn around the waist, and beads or feathers woven into the hair. However, Uganda maintains its colonial practice of requiring uniforms in schools, which means Karamojong children in most schools are expected to remove their body ornamentation and don uniforms, creating uniformity across all the children.<sup>24</sup> Given the high value placed on the visible cultural adornments, we hypothesize that school uniforms may have an adverse affect on children's willingness to attend schools. This is likely to make ABEK facilities more attractive, but may lead to higher drop-out rates when children are transition into mainstream classrooms.

Importantly, no youth we interviewed raised education as an indicator of being a good Karamojong boy or girl. The responses "going to school," "doing well in school," or "being educated" did not appear among the characteristics to which youth aspired. When asked their goals for the future, boys wanted to "have cattle," "take care of their herds" and "marry with cattle." Girls wanted to be "married with cattle" and "have children." Again, there was no reference to education, future earnings, or formal employment.

Though it was not a focus of our study, we did interview some teachers (who were themselves educated

19 *ibid.*

20 Interview with four Bokora woman, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

21 Interview with two Tepeth youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

22 Stites, Mazurana and Akabwai, "Out-migration," 2007.

23 Interview with four Bokora woman, Matany sub-county, March 9, 2007.

24 Many children in formal schools in Karamoja do not wear uniforms because their families are unable to afford the clothes. More research within schools is needed to better understand the issues facing such children.

Karamojong) regarding the education situation in Karamoja. We were surprised and disappointed to hear them respond with derogatory statements regarding the lifestyles, traditions and priorities of their fellow Karamojong. These comments were aimed at ‘traditional’ Karamojong, both adults and children. We witnessed teachers ridicule young children for not wearing clothes, which caused the children to leave our gatherings in shame. These same individuals described traditional pastoral Karamojong as “animals” and “backwards.” At the same time, the teachers explained that they had been educated because they were not loved by their parents; the parents sent the unloved children to school and kept the favorite children at home.<sup>25</sup> The women teachers recalled that they had been called ‘harlots’ by their own families and community members because they went to school. Today their families come to them for assistance when facing hard times, but have never apologized for their past hurtful behavior. Nonetheless, it appears that some families and communities have undergone a shift and now recognize that being educated can increase livelihood opportunities, including livelihoods other than pastoralism.<sup>26</sup>

## Health

This section focuses on some key aspects of sexual and reproductive health that surfaced during our fieldwork. Our team was not equipped to conduct a broader nutritional or health study, although we do see a need for such information to be collected. Notably, a thorough study of the health of Karamojong would have to include a careful study of the health of people’s animals, as animal health and human health are closely linked. An in-depth health assessment should also gather information on the ways in which individuals, households and communities interact with traditional versus modern medicine. An investigation of the use of traditional remedies within the home would also be illuminating.

A recent WFP study found a majority of households surveyed within the previous three months had a member afflicted with malaria or diarrhea, while a quarter reported problems with whooping cough. Others reported measles and meningitis.<sup>27</sup> In our discussions of health with members of the study population, the most common problem listed was “hunger,” followed by diarrhea and “fever.” We also heard concerns about HIV/Aids from male youth in areas of high out-migration. These young men understood how HIV is transmitted, and believed that women who left for temporary work

in other areas of Uganda were bringing HIV back home to their communities.<sup>28</sup>

### Birth practices

Children are highly valued within Karamojong cultures. Not surprisingly, the first birth from an approved union (regardless of marital status) is a cause for much celebration. According to Knighton:

*To become a father or a mother is to experience a significant rise in social status. The mother also is grateful for the additional security, that she is unlikely to be returned to her father for barrenness. So is her clan, who would have to return the bridewealth.<sup>29</sup>*

The majority of women give birth in their huts, with only those in town going to hospitals.<sup>30</sup> An old woman, usually a traditional birth assistant (TBA), is present to assist with a woman’s first birth. A woman remains alone in her hut for subsequent births and is only attended if she calls out for help. The sign of a successful birth is the cry of the infant and people come into the hut at this time to attend to the mother and to welcome the child. A TBA cuts the umbilical cord, which is then buried in a secret place near the mother’s hut. This is meant to ward off any witchcraft that might harm the child.<sup>31</sup> Knighton provides a description of the role of TBAs at births:

*Traditional midwives are very efficient in their task, receiving the baby in front of the mother, while she pushes in a kneeling position. They wash it with cold water, tie the umbilical cord with fibre, cut it with a knife for a girl, or an arrow for bleeding cattle if it is a boy. Any Western Program of primary health care needs to work with the highly influential traditional birth attendants to achieve their aims of health for the population.<sup>32</sup>*

Women reported that the child’s father is very happy when a healthy child is born. The father will go to the kraal and get milk for the mother and will buy clothes for the baby. There are prohibitions on sexual intercourse between the couple as long as the woman

25 Interview with key informant #3, December 6, 2006.

26 Personal communication, Simon Nangiro, October 25, 2007.

27 WFP, 2007, p. 16.

28 Interview with male Bokora youth, Lopei sub-county, December 10, 2006.

29 Knighton, op. cit., p. 90. The bridewealth would have to be returned only in the case of an official marriage, and not in all cases. Some respondents said that if a woman did not produce children, the husband would simply seek another wife more quickly.

30 The information presented in this section is compiled from interview data gathered in discussions with Bokora, Matheniko, Pokot and Tepeth women.

31 Interview with key informant #3, March 9, 2007.

32 Knighton, op. cit., p. 90.

is breastfeeding, and this may last up to two years or longer.<sup>33</sup>

Tepeth women explained that if the baby dies during or immediately after birth, it is possible that the woman will be thrown out of the house by the husband. This is reportedly more likely to happen in the case of the death of the first born. In such cases, the woman will return to the home of her parents. If the husband refuses to let the woman return to his homestead, the bride price paid for her will be returned and she will then be considered divorced.<sup>34</sup>

A marriage cannot be fulfilled until children are produced from the union. Women who are barren are seen as cursed by Ajukũ, stigmatized by their co-wives, and are denied the status of an adult.<sup>35</sup>

### Female Genital Cutting

Of the groups we worked with, female genital cutting (also referred to as female genital mutilation, or FGM, and sometimes as female circumcision), is practiced among the Tepeth and the Pokot that cross from Kenya into Uganda.<sup>36</sup> Both the Tepeth and the Pokot practice a form of genital cutting that excises the clitoris and the labia minora. According to the World Health Organization,

*The immediate and long-term health consequences of female genital mutilation vary according to the type and severity of the procedure performed. Immediate complications include severe pain, shock, haemorrhage, urine retention, ulceration of the genital region and injury to adjacent tissue. Haemorrhage and infection can cause death. More recently, concern has arisen about possible transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) due to the use of one instrument in multiple operations, but this has not been the subject of detailed research. Long-term consequences include cysts and abscesses, keloid scar formation, damage to the urethra resulting in urinary incontinence, dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse) and sexual dysfunction and difficulties with childbirth.<sup>37</sup>*

33 *ibid.*

34 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

35 Knighton, *op. cit.*

36 All information on the Tepeth and Pokot presented here was gathered during interviews and includes: interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007; interview with Pokot December 11, 2006; interview with key informant # 3, December 6, 2006.

37 World Health Organization, "Female Genital Mutilation," available at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>, accessed October 25, 2007.

According to women from both tribes, girls are considered ready for genital cutting after their first menstruation period. The ceremony (including the cutting) can only occur in years when there is a good harvest, meaning that there may be a delay of several years after a girl reaches puberty. Women and girls explained that a good harvest is necessary both because it is auspicious and also because girls fall sick after being cut and must be adequately fed. Elder women perform the ceremony with a special knife sharpened with a stone. The same knife is used on all the girls. Tepeth girls are excised but their vaginal openings are not sewn closed. Among the Pokot, however, the vaginal opening is sewn shut, leaving only a small opening remaining.

At the time of the ceremony, each girl is given a stone to sit on and stones are arranged in a line. The girls hold open their legs, or, if they "lack courage," will be held by other women. Female members of the community sing "vigorous songs" around the girls to give them strength, and the tops of soda bottles are hung from surrounding trees to make noise. The songs the women sing are "heroes' songs," and the words remind the girls that they are moving from childhood to womanhood. "I am now a woman. I am grown up now. I am ready for marriage."

After the cutting, the girls are taken to mats where they will rest. Other women have collected these mats over several days to make a comfortable spot for the girls. The girls will stay together in this area for up to a month until they are healed. If a girl's wounds become septic, the old woman who performed the ceremony will cut out the septic area and treat the infection with either natural remedies or, in serious cases, with purchased western medicines. The mothers of the girls bring food and milk to keep their daughters "fat and healthy looking." The girls do not bathe during this month.

After one month has passed the girls are taken to a river where rituals are performed. These rituals are meant to appease the river spirits in order to ensure that the wounds do not reopen. The girls bathe and are dressed in finery, and are then presented to the manyattas. Men will have gathered at the manyattas to see which girls/women are now officially available for marriage.

Some parents do not have their girls circumcised. In discussions with adult women, it appeared that the rationale for this was predominately economic as opposed to being based on health or rights. The family loses a month of labor after their daughter is circumcised and has to provide food during this time, which adds up to a significant expense. Any unexpected medical needs are a further burden. In addition, a girl's family is expected to host a party for relatives, friends and neighbors when their daughter has recovered and is presented as a 'woman' to the community.

Of note, based on information from the limited ethnographic sources and the recollection of key informants, the Tepeth did not practice female genital cutting as little as 40 years ago.<sup>38</sup> It is believed that they adopted this practice after greater exposure to and inter-marriage with the Pokot.

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<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, the discussion of Tepeth (also known as the So) marriage and sexuality in Charles D. Laughlin and Elizabeth R. Allgeier, *An Ethnography of the So of Northeastern Uganda*, New Haven, CT: HRAF Press, 1979.

## VII. Marriage in Karamoja

### “Marriage with Cattle”

Marriage in Karamoja involves the exchange of cattle as a bride price payment from the man to the family and clan of the woman. These marriages are considered official and a couple is “married with cattle” when the bride price has been paid in full, although payments may be spread over many years. Being married with cattle brings specific benefits to the man, woman and children. For a man, the rituals of initiation and marriage bestow full recognition as an adult member of his clan and bestow the ability to participate in decision making within the manyatta and kraal.<sup>1</sup> A man who has not married with cattle does not enjoy these benefits, and will hold a place of less importance within his age-class.<sup>2</sup>

A woman who is married with cattle becomes an official member of the man’s clan, and only then is she considered a full and active member of the community.<sup>3</sup> The rights and protections of the man’s clan are extended to a woman and her children following official marriage. This is particularly important if her husband dies, as a woman will have rights to her husband’s property—including his cattle—only if they were officially married. The man’s clan is also obligated to care for the woman upon her husband’s death, often in the form of remarriage within the clan (discussed below). Any children born to the couple after the bride price has been paid are automatically a part of the man’s clan. This clan is responsible for the children if something happens to the parents. Clan members are expected to help the parents if they cannot meet the needs of their children (for example, a clan might be asked to help pay medical bills). Importantly, the official clan will receive the bride price when a girl marries: if the parents of the girl were never married with cattle, the bride price goes to the natal clan of the mother and not to the father’s clan.<sup>4</sup> The ultimate receipt of bride price for their daughters is a further incentive for men to sanction their unions

1 Knighton, op. cit.

2 Interview with key informant #2, March 14, 2007.

3 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006;

4 Interview with Evelyn Ilukol, IRC Moroto, December 5, 2006.

through the exchange of cattle. Both male and female youth aspire to marry with cattle and see this as a critical rite of passage in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

Female virginity is not necessary for marriage (or even particularly prized) and many young women have several suitors that they may be sexually involved with prior to taking a husband. Males may also court and be sexually involved with a number of females at a time, and this continues after marriage in the form of polygamy.<sup>6</sup> (Women are expected to be faithful after marriage.) The ability of a suitor to pay bride price is an important aspect in selecting a husband, and the man who appears most likely to come up with the full payment in a timely fashion is most likely the man whom the young woman will marry.<sup>7</sup>

A young woman is expected to be monogamous after the first portion of bride price in cattle has been paid to the woman’s clan. At this point the suitor is accepted by the young woman’s family as a serious candidate.<sup>8</sup> Any children born from this relationship remain part of the woman’s clan until the complete bride price is paid, and the man must add an additional payment for each child (whom the woman’s clan is ‘losing’). However, the man has no official claim upon the woman or her children until bride price is paid in full, and a man’s role as prime suitor (and his claim to the children) can be forfeited if it does not appear that he will be able to come up with the full amount. Another man may offer the bride price for the woman and her children, and the woman and her family may decide that this is the better offer.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally, a young woman remains in the home of her mother until bride price has been paid in full,

5 To illustrate, in all our interviews with Matheniko, Pokot and Tepeth youth, one of the traits of a good Karamojong boy or girl was one who would eventually be married with cattle.

6 Knighton, op. cit.

7 Interview with key informant #1, March 14, 2007 and May 4, 2007; Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006; interview with Bokora youth, Matany sub-county, December 9, 2006.

8 Interview with Bokora woman, Lopei sub-county, December 9, 2006.

9 Interview with key informant #1 and #3, March 14-2007.

at which point she moves to the manyatta of her husband. In practice, many couples are cohabitating without being officially married through the exchange of cattle. Some respondents lamented this trend and felt that this was a notable and negative shift within society, whereas others accepted the situation as unavoidable due to the difficulties of raising bride price, the burden a woman with children places on her maternal clan, and the realities of modern life. Young women who are not married with cattle but who move to the man's manyatta (including those that have children born of these relations) have a low status within the clan of their *de facto* husband, and were described as 'concubines' in several interviews. In their low status position they are subject to the will and orders of women who are in official unions, even if they are older than these women. Women who are not married with cattle do not have as strong a voice in matters that pertain to women in the manyattas.<sup>10</sup> Of note, women who are not in official marriages are traditionally not buried when they die, and their surviving relatives do not perform ritual mourning or carry out other rituals for the dead.<sup>11</sup> The influence of the church has changed this in some areas, and members of a Christian congregation will usually be given a burial.<sup>12</sup>

## Bride Price

Over the course of our interviews, respondents reported a wide range in the number of cattle required for bride price, from 10 to 150 cattle.<sup>13</sup> There are a variety of reasons for this. Bride prices differ based on the size of the clan of the woman, with a larger clan requiring more cattle for marriage. (Cattle are distributed to members of the woman's immediate family as well as members

of the larger clan). These discrepancies mean that some respondents may have told us the number of cattle required by a specific clan as opposed to an average number. Variations in the size of bride price are also based on who is reporting: a youth eager to prove his manliness may report a higher bride price. Likewise, high bride prices might be reported by men and women who are not in official marriages so as to justify the existence of their unofficial union. In other instances, low bride prices might be reported by those placing the onus on the young men for failure to engage in official marriage. Key informants reported that the average bride price in Karamoja is between 40 and 50 head of cattle.<sup>14</sup>

On their own, most young men are not able (or expected) to raise the number of cattle required for bride price. The man's clan is expected to contribute the cattle required for his first wife; the bride price payments for any subsequent wives are his responsibility.<sup>15</sup> They therefore ask their fathers, male relatives and male friends for contributions of cattle and, in return, promise to repay this debt from their future herds. In particular, young men may ask their fathers for cattle given to the family as bride price for their sisters; this is an important source of cattle for young men hoping to marry.<sup>16</sup> However, some of our informants complained that their fathers are using cattle collected from their daughters' bride price to themselves marry additional (and younger) wives. The respondents said that this practice is more prevalent than in the past. Both men and women said that this pattern can create problems and tensions in the family, as the men have difficulty in supporting multiple wives and children, and the sons grow resentful that there are no cattle left for their own marriages.<sup>17</sup>

The role of raided cattle in bride price payment remains open to debate and requires more investigation. One hypothesis is that the pressure to marry with cattle in order to be recognized as an adult member of society pushes young men to raid cattle to meet bride price obligations. Key informants and several female respondents said that the pressure to acquire cattle quickly—if, for instance, a man had children with a woman and knew that other suitors may be near to raising the bride price—might prompt a man into raiding to secure the

10 Interview with Tepeth women, December 6, 2006; Interview with key informant #1, interview with Matheniko female youth and woman, Rupa sub-county, December 8, 2006;

11 Knighton, *op. cit.*; Interview with key informant #1, March 14, 2007; Interview with Matheniko women and female youth, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007. Burials and associated mourning rituals are reserved for young men who are distinguished in battle and for men and women who are married with cattle. Other corpses, including those of children, are left in the open for the animals and sun to dispose of.

12 Written correspondence with key informant #1, September 29, 2007.

13 Other animals, especially goats, may also be included in bride price. Cash is also becoming a more common element of bride price payments, particularly if the couple has links to towns through relatives or salaried jobs, and also if the couple is educated. The inclusion of cash is much less common in rural areas. Interview with Evelyn Ilukol, IRC Moroto, December 5, 2006.

14 Written correspondence with key informant #1, September 29, 2007.

15 *ibid.*

16 Interview with Tepeth women, December 6, 2006; Interview with Matheniko women and female youth, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007; Interview with Tepeth women, Katicekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

17 Interview with key informant #1, March 14, 2007; Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 6, 2006.

needed animals.<sup>18</sup> Young men agreed that raided cattle could be included in bride price payments, but explained that most of the cattle either came from a man's father or from the herd of the man himself.<sup>19</sup> According to men of various ages, raided cattle are usually (but not always) sold quickly in order to prevent discovery and revenge raids.

In some cases a woman may be able to reject a suitor whom she does not fancy, even one who has sufficient bride price. In other cases, however, the girl's parents may force her to marry against her will, particularly if the suitor is wealthy and has many cattle to offer. These forced marriages often involve a young woman being married to a much older man, as older men are more likely to have the cattle for the bride price payment.<sup>20</sup> Patterns of young women marrying older men are also thought to increase tensions between generations, as young men come to resent the loss of available women to their elders. We were told of a few cases of young women killing themselves (in these instances by ingesting poison) rather than face marriage against their will. In other instances the women simply run away to an urban center. The female respondents who reported these cases stressed that, after the suicides, other families in the manyattas were much more hesitant to force girls to marry without their consent.<sup>21</sup>

## Children

Children born prior to official marriage are considered a blessing to the eventual husband and his clan, even if the husband is not the father of the children. A man may claim the children from his wife's previous liaisons by paying an additional fee per each in the bride price payment. The husband is then entitled to the labor of the children and any cattle that are given as bride price for the daughters. Once the husband pays bride price and the fee for the children the biological father has no further claim to his offspring.<sup>22</sup> If the husband and the woman's family agree that he can pay off the cattle over time the man is allowed to take the woman as a wife and any children the woman has produced. However, as mentioned above, if the man fails to pay the balance of the cattle, any cattle coming from the fu-

ture marriages of the daughters will go to the maternal clan.<sup>23</sup>

Notably, throughout Karamoja, children of both genders are highly valued: boys for their roles in maintaining the family herds, girls for future bride price and return of cattle. Our team neither saw nor heard evidence to suggest that female children received less food, medical care, or access to education than their brothers. Likewise, we found no evidence to suggest that couples preferred to have male offspring over female offspring. We attribute the relatively high value given to girls to their ability to bring bride price to the family and clan. Families that were able to send children to school were sending roughly equal numbers of female and male children. Hence, on several levels, the role of bride price seems to have some positive affects on the treatment and valuing of girls within Karamoja.

Polygamy is widely practiced throughout Karamoja. When asked, a majority of women felt that polygamy was harmful because men often take more wives and have more children than they can support financially. Women said that men with multiple wives would often stay with the wife who could best provide him food, leaving the rest of the women and children hungry.<sup>24</sup> According to a key informant, in the past a man with many wives was known to be very rich in cattle and would not have had a problem supporting his family. Insecurity and cattle raids have resulted in impoverishment and difficulties in maintaining large families, even for those who were previously wealthy.<sup>25</sup>

Respondents said that in the rare cases of divorce, children will remain with their mothers, even if the children had been brought into the man's clan through a payment in cattle. Our informants had never heard of a man being able to take a woman's child(ren) away from her, however the woman's clan is supposed to repay the cattle paid by the man upon marriage.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, female respondents reported that a widow's children always belong to her, even if she has been inherited by a brother-in-law. The woman must always agree to claims made upon her children.<sup>27</sup>

18 Interview with key informant #1, May 3, 2007; Interview with key informant #2, December 6, 2006; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007;

19 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

20 Written correspondence with key informant #1, June 22, 2007.

21 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006.

22 Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006.

23 Interview with Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

24 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006; interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

25 Written correspondence with key informant #1, September 29, 2007.

26 Interview with Bokora woman, Lopei sub-county, December 9, 2006.

27 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006.

## Widowhood

Because Karamojong cultures have strong gender and generational divisions of labor, it is extremely difficult for traditional Karamojong women to live without a husband or male provider. Thus, most widows are inherited by a brother-in-law. This practice occurs for several reasons, including to keep the livestock assets within the family and clan, to provide an adult male to look after the herds (which the woman inherits from the deceased husband), and to provide the widow and children with access to food, particularly animal products. However, it was noted by a number of our informants that these altruistic aspects are usually not central in cases of wife-inheritance and that many women and their children are treated poorly or neglected. In some cases, women explained that their brothers-in-laws (now husbands) did not provide food, shelter or any assistance for the woman or her children. These women were left caring for their children without the help or assistance of a man, but were unable to seek another husband. As one widow put it, “It is a problem to be a widow. The other man comes to inherit you but gives you problems instead of giving you life.”<sup>28</sup> However, a widow may take her case to the elders at the *ekokwa* and seek arbitration, and may receive help from the elders for her needs and the needs of her children.<sup>29</sup>

Widows are entitled to the herds of their deceased husband under customary law.<sup>30</sup> However, the brothers-in-law of some widows took these cattle from them by force, and then used the animals for bride price to acquire a new and usually younger wife.<sup>31</sup> Widows who did inherit their husbands’ animals often sold off much of the herd shortly after their husband’s death in an effort to meet their survival needs.<sup>32</sup> This included widows who were inherited—and supposedly provided for—by brothers-in-law. Indeed, in our study of out-migration in Bokora, we found that widows who were inherited by brother-in-laws were among the most vulnerable populations and reported high levels of abuse and neglect of themselves and their children.<sup>33</sup>

Not all widows are inherited. In particular, a woman who was not married with cattle has no obligation to remain with the clan of her deceased husband. Wife-in-

heritance is possible in some of these cases, and it is up to the elders of the man’s clan to decide if a woman who was not officially married with cattle should have the option to be inherited and thereby remain part of the clan.<sup>34</sup> Some women, including those married with cattle, said that a woman with adult sons could sometimes reject being inherited, as the sons could maintain the herd and provide for their mother.<sup>35</sup> Overall, however, women who were married with cattle have few options upon the death of their husband, and several widows reported that they were unable to refuse to be inherited, even by men known to be abusive.<sup>36</sup> A few women recounted instances of rape by a brother-in-law after they protested the second marriage. After the rape they said they felt they had no choice but to remain with the brother-in-law.<sup>37</sup>

28 Interview with Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-country, December 2, 2006.

29 Written correspondence with key informant #1, September 29, 2007.

30 Interview with Evelyn Ilukol, IRC Moroto, December 5, 2006.

31 Interview with Matheniko woman, Rupa sub-country, December 2, 2006.

32 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

33 Stites, Mazurana and Akabwai, 2007.

34 Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

35 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2007.

36 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2006; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, December 6, 2006; Interview with Bokora youth, Matany sub-county December 9, 2006; Interview with Tepeth women, Katikekile sub-county, March 12, 2007.

37 Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, December 3, 2007;

## VIII. Armed Raiding

Armed cattle raiding and associated violence have a clear and pronounced impact upon the security and livelihoods of respondents in the study population. Even when incidents of raids are low, the fear of attack is pervasive and was discussed in all locations. This climate of danger and fear has a profound impact upon people's lives and livelihoods and is the most serious problem facing populations in Karamoja today. The data we present here does not attempt to quantify the violence or the experiences of the populations, but to examine and analyze several important shifts that are apparent in the nature and practice of armed raiding over time and the way in which these shifts have affected the livelihoods and human security of people within Karamoja.

Cattle rustling or raiding has gone on for generations among pastoral groups throughout the Karamoja Cluster. Traditionally, and to some extent today, raided cattle were used to redistribute wealth and food in times of scarcity, acquire bride price, and to form alliances with other families, manyattas and tribes.<sup>1</sup> Major shifts in power, governments and armies in Uganda, the relatively unimpeded acquisition of weapons and ammunition throughout Karamoja, periods of repeated and prolonged drought, the spread of livestock diseases—among other significant factors—have influenced and shaped practices of raiding and have been discussed in depth by a number of authors.<sup>2</sup> Historically and today, raiding has caused tensions between the Karamojong and their neighbors, as well as within Karamoja itself, and these tensions have a direct impact upon livelihood systems.

There was an important shift in the nature and impact of raiding in Karamoja in the 1970s. The traditional Karimojong alliance of the Pian, Moroto and Bokora collapsed in the first half of the decade. Several years of poor harvests exacerbated tensions over access to natural resources, and small scale thefts, retaliatory attacks and raids—never before sanctioned against other Karimojong groups—increased. The Matheniko cemented their friendship with the Turkana in the late 1970s, creating a formidable force in the eastern part of the region and across the border with Kenya.<sup>3</sup> These events set the stage for what many remember as a turning point in the violence in the region—the raiding of the Moroto barracks by the Matheniko (with help from the Turkana) after the fall of the Idi Amin in 1979. The raiders made off with an estimated 12,000 weapons (mostly automatic G3s) and large amounts of ammunition.<sup>4</sup> Jie in Kotido raided a smaller armory at roughly the same time.<sup>5</sup> In 1980, the Karamoja region was hit by a serious drought and famine, and the strong and newly-armed groups (namely the Matheniko and the Jie) turned on the Bokora and the Dodoth (who had not gained weapons from Amin's barracks) and stripped them of nearly all their cattle.<sup>6</sup> This widespread plunder spread throughout Karamoja and into neighboring districts, exacerbating the effects of the severe drought. The loss of livestock, out-migration of herds, inability to plant crops due to the drought and insecurity, and cessation of trade due to the threat of attack on vehicles resulted in rising food insecurity, and by early 1980 people began to run out of food. The Great Famine, called *Akoro*, had begun.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 50,000 people would die before the famine's end.<sup>8</sup>

1 Knighton op. cit.; Kennedy Agade Mkutu, "Small arms and light weapons among pastoral groups in the Kenya-Uganda Area," *African Affairs* 106, no. 102, 2006, pp. 47-70.

2 See Akabwai and Ateyo op. cit.; Knighton op. cit.; Mustafa Mirzeler and Crawford Young, "Pastoral Politics in the Northeast Periphery in Uganda: AK-47 as Change Agent" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 3 2000, p. 416; Gray op. cit.; Nene Mburu (2001) *The Proliferation of Guns and Rustling in Karamoja and Turkana Districts: the Case for Appropriate Disarmament Strategies*, Peace Studies Journal, available at [www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/docs/Guns.pdf](http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/docs/Guns.pdf); Mkutu op. cit.; Walker op. cit.

3 See Gray, op. cit.. The Matheniko-Turkana alliance was particularly notable because it was the first time that a tribal group had aligned with an external and traditional enemy against an internal neighbor.

4 Walker, op. cit., p.18.

5 Mirzeler and Young, op. cit. p. 416.

6 The Jie and the Dodoth were traditional enemies.

7 Gray, op. cit., p. 409; D.J. Alnwick, "The 1980 Famine in Karamoja," in *Crisis in Uganda: The Breakdown of Health Services*, ed. Cole P. Dodge and Paul D. Wiebe, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1985. p.133.

8 Walker, op. cit., p. 13.

Raids by Karamojong groups had devastating impacts in neighboring districts throughout the 1980s. To illustrate, prior to the mid-1980s, the rural agro-pastoral populations and economies of neighboring Lango and Acholiland were relatively strong. The Acholi and Langi people had approximately 685,000 head of cattle in 1980 according to statistics from the Ministry of Animal Industry.<sup>9</sup> Cattle were a form of savings, a means to send children to school, a way to offset crop failure or pay for medical costs, and were used as bride price. In 1986, the government of Milton Obote fell and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power. The Acholi troops loyal to Obote fled into Sudan, leaving the northern region largely undefended, while at the same time the NRM was consolidating power in the south and central regions of the country. Seeing that the NRM was making no moves to protect the Lango and Acholi regions, the Karamojong swept into the region with a large number of men and weapons, and repeatedly plundered the local communities throughout the latter half the 1980s. They stole nearly all the cattle, causing estimated herd sizes to drop to 72,000 by 1989 in Acholiland and Lango.<sup>10</sup> Neither the NRM nor its army intervened to stop the Karamojong raids.<sup>11</sup>

## Changes in Armed Raiding

While a number of authors have discussed the role of weapons in the practice of raiding, our report looks at several important shifts that have occurred in the practice of armed raiding among the Karamojong. The most notable shifts are the replacement of spears with firearms, the waning of the role of ‘family guns’ in the face of increased access to weapons and ammunition, changes in rules and practices of raiding, changes in the composition and timing of raiding parties, shifts in the role of elders in sanctioning raids, and the emergence of a crisis of authority with the lack of succession of power from the senior generation-set to the junior generation-set. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that al-

9 Ocan, op. cit., p. 23.

10 Ocan *ibid.*, p. 23. The estimates from 1989 are drawn from district veterinary officers. During the period 1980 to 1989, cattle numbers in Karamoja *increased* by an estimated 692,000 head of cattle. To note, however, the total numbers of cattle in the combined districts of northern, eastern and northeastern Uganda decreased by an estimated 356,000 over the decade. Ocan posits that this overall decline is due to animal diseases, trade and internal raids. In our analysis, herds were also likely to be moved across international border for protection.

11 Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda: Results of a field-based assessment of the civil conflicts in northern Uganda*, submitted to the USAID Mission, Kampala, August 1997, 32; Mkuu op. cit.; Mazurana et al. op. cit.

though peace agreements can last for decades, alliances among the Karamojong groups and with neighboring groups are in constant flux and no group remains permanently free of the threat of raids or attack.<sup>12</sup>

## Spears and “Family Guns”

Traditionally, the Karamojong used spears for hunting and raiding. Traders first introduced firearms into the area in the second half of the nineteenth century, and guns began to gradually replace spears as a more lethal weapon for hunting and raiding.<sup>13</sup> But guns were expensive and few families owned even a single firearm. Only wealthier families could afford a firearm for use by their elder sons to protect the livestock while herding. The weapon was referred to as a ‘family gun’ and no action could be taken with that weapon without the approval of the father and mother. Elders and seers were involved in decisions regarding raids on other groups.<sup>14</sup> Many Karamojong continued to use spears regularly until firearms became more widely available, beginning in the 1960s.

By the 1970s, automatic weapons began to flow into the region from traders in the extended Karamoja Cluster. The supply of firearms continued largely unabated and from different sources over the next three decades. The abandonment of Idi Amin’s armories in Moroto in 1979 and the subsequent looting in Moroto and Kotido by the Matheniko and Jie; lesser looting of barracks and police posts by the Sor, Jie, Pian and Bokora; attacks on military convoys by the Bokora; the war between the government of Sudan (GoS) and Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the arming of various pastoral groups by both sides; the provision of weapons to pastoral groups in Uganda in an effort to counter rebel uprisings in Teso and Acholi; and a growing regional weapons trade with markets in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia combined to result in a massive influx of weapons into the region.<sup>15</sup> The total number of firearms in Karamoja and in southern Sudan increased further with the cessation of overt hostilities in southern Sudan in 2005. There were an estimated 40,000 to 100,000 firearms in Karamoja at the start of the first major disarmament campaign in 2000,<sup>16</sup> and prior to the start of disarmament nearly every adult male carried a weapon in public. Guns were again widely visible throughout

12 Knighton, op. cit.

13 Mirzeler and Young, op. cit., p. 411.

14 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit. Many of these firearms were rifles (called *lomichir* (*ngamichira*; pl), meaning “one bullet”), as opposed to the automatic and more deadly G3s and AK-47s popular today.

15 Akabwai and Ateyo op. cit. ; Ochan op. cit. ; Mkuu op. cit.; Mirzeler and Young op. cit.

16 Walker, op. cit. , p.18.

Karamoja prior to the military offensive launched by the GoU in 2006. Given the amount of firepower in Karamoja prior to the disarmament campaigns, a single large raid could (and often did) result in the deaths of hundreds of people, with many of the casualties among unarmed women, children and the elderly.<sup>17</sup>

## The Transformation of Raiding

In the past, seers, elders, warriors and women all were consulted and had a voice (though not of equal weight) as to whether or not a raid would be carried out. This consultation process arose out of the important, and in some cases essential, roles played by different groups in the manyattas and kraals in the planning and implementation of the raid. Seers provided information on the best timing for the raid, the proper animals to be sacrificed to ensure a successful raid, the best routes to and from the raiding site, the kinds of animals to raid, and so on. Seers passed this information to the elders, who would hold ceremonies and plan the enactment of the raid with the warriors.<sup>18</sup> The women blessed the warriors and prepared meat in a special way for the men to take with them. Women also had the task of watching over the hide and wooden cup of the warrior (father, husband and/or son) while he was away. Ensuring that nothing happened to these personal possessions was meant to prevent any harm befalling the men. Warriors also consulted with the sharpshooters<sup>19</sup> and scouts who provided details on how to carry out the raid, which individuals should go on the raid, and what roles different people would play. Traditional raiding parties included both armed and unarmed men, with the latter driving the raided animals home. Raided animals joined the herds of the families of the warriors, and some were presented directly to the seers and elders in respect and appreciation. The involvement and benefit of the entire community meant that the raids were sanctioned and that all community members (for

the most part) approved of and played an active role in contributing to the raid.<sup>20</sup>

In the past, a series of elaborate rules dictated behavior before, during and after the raids. These rules included how spears could be used during armed attacks. Seers and elders performed specific rituals to ensure the warriors' safety and success in the raids. Women worked together with the elders to bless and protect the raiders. Knighton describes how warriors would seldom go out on raids until being blessed by their mothers. The women anointed their sons with ritual clay to protect them from enemy bullets, spears and arrows.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, specific rituals would be conducted to welcome the raided animals home and to ensure their continuing health. Rituals to appease the spirits of any victims killed by the warriors were also performed; these rites prevented the spirits from haunting their killers. Seers prescribed all of these rituals and passed them on to the elders. Seers and the elders, not the warriors, had the final say on whether to carry out or abort a raid.

Traditionally, the community targeted for a raid would be sent messages to warn them of the coming attack. The warning messages often included a challenge, such as: "We are coming to take your cattle on such and such day. Therefore, if you are men enough, rise up to defend your animals or else we will come and take them!"<sup>22</sup> The battles themselves took place outside the manyattas by warriors dressed in full battle.<sup>23</sup> Women and children would move away from the battle area in advance. Loss of human life was minimal, as taboos existed on the killing of unarmed women, children, and the elderly. Those who killed such protected persons were believed to be cursed.<sup>24</sup>

Women would celebrate the return of the warriors from a successful raid with ululating, singing and

17 For a detailed discussion on the weapons trade and flow in the region, see Akabwai and Ateyo, *op. cit.*

18 See Knighton *op. cit.* for details on ceremonies performed before raiding or in the event that the community felt a raid was imminent.

19 Sharpshooters are men who have proven themselves to be very astute and brave warriors. They are often very good shots, being able to function like snipers by killing enemies at a distance. They may have deep and sonorous voices, and hence are able to project instructions (e.g., "move there," "circle around there," "move low over there") during battles to their colleagues. They are also skilled at planning raids and or repelling attacks. Interview with key informant #1, March 10, 2007.

20 Akabwai and Ateyo, *op. cit.* p. 200; Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

21 Knighton *op. cit.* p. 196.

22 Akabwai and Ateyo, *op. cit.*

23 Traditional battle regalia included spears, shields, and skin sandals to protect the feet from thorns. Today, battle regalia would include an AK-47, a full magazine of bullets, sandals made from tires, and a "stomach tightly fastened with a sheet to prevent hunger pains during the long journeys in search of target cattle." Written correspondence from key informant #1, July 21, 2007.

24 This contrasts Knighton's reports on Jie views towards killing women. Knighton states that warriors mark their right arms for the number of men killed and left arms for the number of women killed. Knighton posits that killing enemy women is legitimate in the view of the Jie because they play such an important role in supporting raids, see Knighton (2005), 196. Perhaps it is because of the different cosmology of the Jie that it is legitimate for them to kill women and children during raids, while for other Karamojong groups it is taboo (see Lamphear 1994 and Knighton *op. cit.*)

dancing to welcome the men and new animals home. Women also ululated to celebrate the safe return of warriors from unsuccessful raids (i.e., no animals captured). Women and girls played an important role in motivating men in their raids by singing in praise of mighty warriors or cajoling those who were considered cowards.<sup>25</sup>

Today, the performance of extensive rituals and adherence to stringent regulations in the planning and implementation of raids is rare. More commonly, warriors draw up plans for raids in secret and then launch attacks against unsuspecting groups. Prohibitions on the use of force during an attack appear to no longer exist. For instance, during an attack, raiders might shoot into a manyatta or kraal where women, children and the elderly are located. Children will reportedly run out from their manyattas or kraals in different directions during an attack, taking various escape routes in an effort to avoid being killed.<sup>26</sup> Warriors now try to minimize their contact with other warriors—who are likely to be armed—preferring instead to target the young shepherds or herdsmen guarding the animals.<sup>27</sup> Young herders (nearly all males) we interviewed all spoke about their fear of being killed by enemies who might strike at any time while they graze their animals.<sup>28</sup> Today, warriors may also launch attacks inside kraals, seeking animals as well as household property. Female respondents reported that enemy warriors will kill women and children found inside the kraals, including those attempting to flee. Huts are looted after their occupants are killed.<sup>29</sup> Women reported that they no longer leave young children unattended in the kraals because of the threat of surprise raids on the kraals.<sup>30</sup>

Respondents and key informants make distinctions between ‘thefts’ and ‘raids.’ Thefts are described as smaller scale, more opportunistic and more frequent, and thefts many involve only a few men who decide to try to grab some animals. Animals that become separated from the main herd or a herd in an isolated area are the most vulnerable to thefts. The element of surprise contributes to the success of thefts, as most oc-

25 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.; Knighton op. cit.

26 Interview with 13 Matheniko young females, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2007. The females said that there were a number of entrances and exits in their manyattas that they could use depending on which direction the attacks came from.

27 Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot young females, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with four Matheniko young females, Rupa sub-county, March 10, 2007.

28 This was reported by youth in all research sites.

29 Interview with seven Tepeth and Pokot young females, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

30 Interview with six Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

cur when shepherds are unprepared to fight back. In contrast, raids are much larger, better organized, and much less frequent. Problems between groups can start with the regular occurrence of thefts, which may gradually increase in scope and intensity to become full-scale raids.<sup>31</sup>

In the past raids mostly occurred across district, county or country borders and among different tribal groups. In part this was because it was easier to incorporate raided animals into herds that were far from their place of origin. More importantly, internal or territorial cohesion made it taboo to raid allied groups. This change has been most pronounced among the Karimojong ethnic group (Pian, Bokora and Matheniko), who did not engage in raids amongst themselves until the early to mid 1970s.<sup>32</sup> Today, raided or stolen animals are often sold quickly, in part to prevent them from being traced or recovered in revenge attacks, and internal raids within the borders of Karamoja and among former allies such as the Matheniko and Bokora are common.

## Effects of Armed Raiding

The rise in armed raiding has brought social and economic changes throughout Karamoja and neighboring districts. The widespread loss of livestock in Acholi and Lango regions fundamentally altered the livelihood systems and coping strategies of these groups. Elders in these areas highlight the loss of animals as a critical turning point in the strength of their societies. Some groups felt these losses more profoundly than others. Gray describes the impact of widespread raiding of the Bokora by the Matheniko in the 1970s and 1980s, and how the effects differed for these two groups:

*For the Matheniko, armed raiding against Bokora, in alliance with the Turkana, allowed them to halt the political, cultural, territorial, and economic losses of decades. Many Matheniko subsequently amassed huge herds....In contrast, in the same decade, many Bokora were forced out of the pastoral sector by Ma-*

31 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007; Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

32 Gray, op. cit., p.408. The Pian started to break away from the Matheniko and Bokora in the 1950s (see Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics*, 1966), but the intense internal raiding did not start until the 1970s. A group of Bokora men explained that, in their recollection, the Bokora decided to raid the Matheniko after the Matheniko became more closely linked to the Turkana, but accidentally attacked a Pian group instead. This brought a series of revenge attacks and the disintegration of the relationships. Interview with Bokora traders, Iriirii, March 7, 2007.

*theniko raiding. Furthermore, Matheniko raiding with automatic weapons during Akoro [The Great Famine] forced the Pian and Bokora to respond to the famine in ways that eventually would alter permanently their subsistence emphasis as well as their social identity.*<sup>33</sup>

Wealth is characterized by the ownership of cattle in traditional Karamojong society, and a large raid can plunge a household or community into poverty virtually overnight. Ocan interviewed 160 respondents in Karamoja and found that 47 had completely lost their cattle over the course of the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

The human impact of raiding can be seen in the disproportionate mortality rates for various population groups. For example, of more than 300 women interviewed by Gray's team during field work in 1998-1999, nearly every one had lost either a husband or child to violence among the Karimojong groups.<sup>35</sup> Although young men are likely to have the greatest proximity to the violence, the intensification and shifts in raiding patterns have also brought a higher rate of death, injury and sexual assault among other demographic groups as well. According to key informants, changes in the specific nature of violence are largely a function of cyclical revenge attacks. For instance, if property is destroyed, children killed and women raped in one attack, the warriors who partake in the revenge attack will purportedly engage in similar tactics in a cycle of negative reciprocity.<sup>36</sup>

Violence and insecurity in Karamoja is not limited to raiding. The tension and fear created by the constant presence of 'enemies' affects all aspects of life, including livelihood strategies, and brings specific risks for particular groups. Nearly all Bokora and Matheniko women and girls in our study population were fearful of going out to collect natural resources, and reported that women and girls are raped and sexually assaulted by enemy men. Some of the sexual assault victims are murdered and left in the bush. Most women interviewed reported hearing of a rape several times a month, with murders of women or girls occurring once or twice every few months. The perpetrators may be raiding parties, scouting parties, or simply groups of marauders from enemy or allied groups.

We spoke with some women and girls who had survived such attacks while collecting natural resources. None had received treatment for injuries. The survivors said that other people in the manyattas are saddened that these events have occurred, and we were not told of stigma in reporting these incidents to other community members. Most said that regardless of having suffered

33 Gray, op. cit., p. 409.

34 Ocan, op. cit., p. 24.

35 Gray, op. cit., p. 405.

36 Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007.

the attack and the continuing danger, they had to go back out the next day to collect resources in order to survive and to support their families.<sup>37</sup>

Children fear being abducted and used for human sacrifices.<sup>38</sup> For example, Matheniko children believe that seers from enemy groups (noting in particular the Tepeth) instruct warriors to find a child of a certain age and/or gender for a human sacrifice. These sacrifices are said to enable the enemies to carry out a successful raid or to prevent the group from which the child originated from attacking the seer's group.<sup>39</sup> A group of Tepeth and Pokot women also mentioned human sacrifice, and reported that a young Pokot boy had been hung and eviscerated near their kraal a month before our interview. This was believed to be the work of the enemies as a means of cursing the Pokot and causing panic.<sup>40</sup>

Matheniko children also fear being captured by enemies (in this case usually the Tepeth or the Jie) and held for ransom.<sup>41</sup> The captured child is reportedly killed if his or her parents do not pay a ransom, rumored to be two cows. The children had heard that the bodies of those children for whom ransom was not paid were found in the bush days or weeks later.<sup>42</sup>

Insecurity on the roads is another indicator of widespread violence and insecurity. Key informants and anecdotal reports blame road ambushes on "warriors returning from failed raids," but the frequency of these attacks at certain strategic locations (often in a border area between two groups) points to more carefully planned acts as well. Road ambushes—and the threat of road ambushes—have a profound effect on commerce, public transportation and relief and development activities in the region.

37 Interview with eight Bokora women, Matany sub-country, December 9, 2006; Interview with 4 Bokora women, Matany sub-county, December 9, 2006; Interview with Matheniko women, Rupa sub-county, March 11, 2007.

38 We feel it is important to give due credit to the fears of children, but also recognize the role of myth and legend in informing a child's perception of reality. However, key informants did say that although very infrequent, both the Tepeth and the Pokot are thought to practice human sacrifice as a means to either ensure a successful large-scale raid or prevent a raid or attack by an enemy group. Interview with key informant #1, July 16, 2007.

39 Interview with 13 Matheniko girls, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

40 Interview with six Tepeth and Pokot women, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

41 In some cases, as with abduction by the Turkana in Kenya, children may be assimilated into the tribe.

42 Interview with 13 Matheniko young females, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006; Interview with Matheniko young people, Rupa sub-county, December 2, 2006.

## Commercial Cattle Raiding

Another important transition in the nature of raiding in Karamoja is the prevalence of commercial raiding. Traditionally, men took part in cattle raids to acquire cattle to increase their wealth, reclaim animals lost in a raid, and accrue bride price or bulls for prestige dances and other rituals. Raids were also a way for male youth to demonstrate their manhood through acts of strength and bravery. Raiding usually peaked during times of environmental stress and served as a means to resolve competition for resources between pastoral groups.<sup>43</sup> A successful raid restocked the home herd following environmental or natural crisis, such as a livestock epidemic or severe drought.<sup>44</sup>

Today, however, commercial motives underpin many raids. In a commercial raid, cattle are not retained by the warrior or his family but are sold or bartered as quickly as possible for goods, food, cash or weapons. Commercial raiding takes place not at the order and oversight of seers and elders, but by young warriors, often as a means for personal gain or at the behest of shop keepers, livestock agents and politicians.

Commercial raiding differs from traditional raiding in a number of ways. Two related differences are an increase in the frequency of raids, and a reduction in the size of raiding parties. As discussed, the scale and frequency of raiding increased markedly starting in the 1970s, and violence and brutality continued to intensify throughout the 1990s.<sup>45</sup> The growth in commercial raiding across this same period may play a causal role in the increased violence. In the past, a conventional raid would sometimes comprise as much as 600 to 1,000 warriors, with a third to half of them armed. Today, five to ten armed youth may secretly launch a raid against their neighbors to steal cattle. Although smaller, the lack of planning and opportunistic nature of these small attacks may result in a greater willingness to use violence.

The absence of an effective system of law and order and the lack of capacity of the police within Karamoja creates an environment that is ripe for commercial raiding. For the most part, authorities make few efforts to recover animals lost in either internal or external raids. When tribal groups have cross-border connections the recovery of stolen livestock is even more difficult. External raids across international borders within the Karamoja Cluster (such as between pastoral groups in Ethiopia and Kenya, Sudan and Kenya, etc.) have been going on for decades and there are relatively few examples of joint operations by authorities from different countries to return the stolen property or apprehend the culprits, even when death tolls from the raids are

43 Walker, op. cit., p. 18.

44 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.

45 Walker, op. cit., p. 18.

high. A lack of road and communication infrastructure hampers reporting and response times, and often the authorities can do nothing other than report the loss of property. The absence of official capacity to prevent, respond to, or protect against raids is one of the reasons that the Karamojong and other groups carry arms. They know that governments have not provided adequate security to protect human life or property.<sup>46</sup> Retaliation for raids and attacks often results in greater destruction of property and loss of life.

Stolen livestock are usually sold quickly to prevent the animals being traced or reclaimed. The need for a quick sale results in a low market price. When a transaction involves a large number of stolen animals the prices on the entire market can fall. The sale of stolen animals on the regional livestock markets has become so prevalent that a name has evolved for such animals. A *namorat* cow is an animal stolen by a group of youth and sold immediately, with the proceeds shared among the group.<sup>47</sup> On occasion and if fear of detection is low, the youth will perhaps keep a few of the cows (to increase their own herd, help raise bride price, or to have for prestige dances) but will sell the majority to purchase alcohol, material goods and food for their families.<sup>48</sup>

Commercial raiding is generally believed to be driven by the monetization of Karamojong society and to involve youth in search of material possessions and a more individual identity. This description is apt in many respects and captures tensions present in modern Karamojong society. Interviews with youth, however, point to a more complex set of factors behind commercial raiding. A group of Tepeth youth, for example, discussed the pressures on young men to protect livestock and settlements while also providing for their families. As described earlier, many of these men are caught in limbo, as they are not recognized and respected as adult males until they are initiated. This group cannot be initiated until the senior generation-set hands over power to the generation of their fathers, thereby allowing the creation of a new junior generation-set. Although referred to as youth, many of these men are in their 30s and 40s, and they have watched the herds of their fathers and grandfathers be decimated by raids, disease, drought and poverty. Asked what motivates raids and the quick turn-around of cattle for monetary gain, a group of youth at a kraal explained:

46 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.

47 *ibid.* The word *namorat* shares a root with the Karamojong word *akimor*, meaning “to share.” The animal is called a *namorat* cow because the youth divide the money accruing from the sale of the stolen animal. Written correspondence with key informant #1, July 21, 2007.

48 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.; Mirzeler and Young, op. cit.; interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

*It is motivated by hunger. There is nothing to eat. And we are born here in this bush so we don't know how to grow food! We grow up and find that our father has no animals. He will suffer. And what will we eat? So you look for wild fruit until you are tired and then you decide, 'let me raid even if I die.' Right now, even if I go to town, there is no one who will give me food [in the absence of cash or something to trade]. You just starve until you have the temptation to steal. This is why they say 'the boys are bad,' but it is the starvation of the old people and the children that leads us to raid.<sup>49</sup>*

These and other young men explained that they sell raided or stolen cattle in order to buy food to feed their families. To check this information we asked if raided cattle were sold off rapidly (and, consequently, at a low price) in years that are not marked by erratic rains and a poor harvest. The young men replied, "Even if there is plenty of food and milk people will raid! But the animals will usually be kept, and are only sold sometimes."<sup>50</sup> The youth explained that animals from larger raids were more likely to be kept than those from smaller scale and more opportunistic thefts.

The system of commercial raiding is linked to commerce and politics in Karamoja and beyond. As commercial raiding became more widespread, some shopkeepers reportedly became aware of the opportunity for an increase in their own profits and began to supply young men with bullets to use in the raids. A shopkeeper allegedly receives part of the profit from the sale of the raided cattle and uses it to restock his shop or expand his business. In other cases, prominent warriors have used the proceeds from raided cattle to start their own businesses. Two of the most prosperous and oldest businesses in Matany town in Bokora County were established by sharpshooters from their raiding profits.<sup>51</sup> Reportedly, these former warriors became inspirations for other young men who saw that money could be made through means other than raiding livestock. Today Matany is a bustling market town, and the Bokora are often described as 'very entrepreneurial.' Many of the traders and shopkeepers in other parts of Karamoja, as well as Karamojong businessmen in other parts of Uganda, are Bokora.<sup>52</sup>

49 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007. It should be noted that this and other discussions of raiding were usually descriptive in nature, and did not involve discussion of direct involvement or culpability on the part of respondents.

50 Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

51 Akabwai and Ateyo, op cit.

52 Interview with key informant #1, April 24, 2007; Gray, op. cit., p. 409.

Our informants alleged that the allure of commercial raiding has attracted certain powerful individuals, including local government officers, politicians and some Karamojong warriors. These individuals are alleged to have become directly involved in the perpetuation of raids by buying firearms and hiring youth to raid cattle which are then sold for profit. Reportedly, these external funders wait at pre-established locations for the youth to arrive with the raided animals. The youth are paid and the animals loaded onto lorries and taken to markets, many of which are outside of Karamoja.<sup>53</sup> Similar practices of large-scale, organized commercial raiding have been documented in northern Uganda, Kenya and Southern Sudan.

The expansion of commercial raiding contributes to the flow and exchange of weapons in the region, as pastoralists feel the need to purchase firearms and ammunition to defend their animals against increased, secretive raids or to take part in the raids themselves. The purported involvement of powerful business owners and politicians further complicates efforts to control the flow of weapons and disarm civilian populations.<sup>54</sup>

## The Role of Elders in Raiding

Commercial raiding of the nature described here is said to be rarely sanctioned by elders. Many authors and informants posit that an important driver in the growth of commercial raiding is the inability of the elders to routinely control the behavior of youth. Without being respected the elders do not have the authority to sanction or abort raids.<sup>55</sup> The role of the elders is only one of many aspects underpinning the transformation of raiding in Karamoja, but is worth examining in greater depth here.

A significant factor in understanding raiding is the status of relations among generation-sets. Groups across Karamoja are in a state of crises associated with the unwillingness of the senior generation-set to formally turn over power to the junior generation-set. This results in a large number of uninitiated men nearing middle-age with families of their own. The lack of status and recognition for this group is believed to directly relate to the increase in raiding, as some men participate in raiding as one of the few available options for gaining status and wealth. This pattern further erodes the level of authority and respect afforded to the elders.

For example, much of the raiding among the Matheniko, Pian, and the Bokora appears to be controlled

53 This system has been known to backfire on the businessmen, as occurred in an incident in 1992 in Kangole in Bokora County. The warriors killed the lorry driver after being paid and made off with the cattle.

54 Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.; Ochan op. cit.

55 See, for instance, Gray, op. cit.; Walker, op. cit.

by the set of youth (*ngikaracuna*) who fulfill the role of warriors. This is suggested by the frequency of stealing small numbers of animals from neighbors outside of Karamoja, such as the Teso, Bugisu and Sebei. Elders traditionally sought to curb thefts from neighbors, as this stresses relations and can damage long standing links between stock associates.<sup>56</sup> Informants reported that some youth among the Matheniko, Pian and Bokora have confronted their elders and forced the elders to submit to their authority, something unheard of in the past. This is not occurring in a uniform fashion across all groups. In particular, the elders of the Jie, Pokot and some sub-groups of the Tepeth sill wield ultimate decision-making power. Hence, in these three groups, it is unlikely that raiding is occurring without the awareness of and at least some oversight by the elders.<sup>57</sup> These societies are likely to retain aspects of the traditional raiding system to a greater degree.

Challenges to the authority of the elders, often by rebellious members of the junior generation-set and the growing number of uninitiated adult men, may be motivated by the desire to acquire cattle, cash, status and wives. This desire and frustration at relative lack of power may result in raids that occur outside of culturally-prescribed boundaries and hierarchies. For these men, a surplus of weapons and ammunition is available inside the region and through the regular flow of arms from neighboring countries.<sup>58</sup>

This analysis does not presume that elders and other members of society, including women and seers, no longer play a role in the perpetuation of raids. Individual elders—even in groups in which the overall power of the elders is believed to be in decline—may still hold a great deal of power and be able to command respect. Furthermore, even if elders and seers are not actively involved in sanctioning raids they often still benefit (explicitly or implicitly) from successful raids. They may therefore opt to give tacit support or to turn a blind eye to raids as they unfold.<sup>59</sup> As a group of Tepeth men explained, the elders might be “annoyed” when they hear that a raid has occurred,

*But they are happy that there are now more cattle. The youth pick a big bull and slaughter it to make the elders happy and then they are very satisfied and happy about the new cows.*<sup>60</sup>

Women also play a role in the perpetuation of armed raiding. According to informants, the importance of

marriage with cattle and the exchange of bride price underpin the raiding cycle. Younger men usually lack the requisite cattle for bride price, leading to arranged marriages between young women and older men who have greater cattle wealth. However, the increased involvement of younger men in unsanctioned raids has shifted this equation. In the words of a key informant:

*It is the belief of any pastoral woman who was properly married that her daughter should be married properly [through an exchange of cattle]... Usually the beautiful girl ends up being given in arranged marriage to a rich retched old man but these days the young man will pick up his AK-47 and go to raid. If he is lucky he comes back with his loot and a quick marriage ceremony is organized and the bride is taken with ululation and barrage of gun shots! Of course the girl's mother will rightly be happy but little does she know how much blood was poured to bring such dowry! This is how the poor youth respond and this is contributing to perpetual cattle rustling in the Karamoja cluster.*<sup>61</sup>

Based on this analysis, women play a critical role in raids, and yet are also frequently the most adamant voices against the violence. Women are said to blame the elders for sending the young men to raid a bull in exchange for the elders' blessing. The women come before the elders and sing satirical songs in opposition to the raids and even threaten to refuse sex with their men, saying that it is useless to produce children whom the elders will send out to die. But it is these same women who are said to abet the raids by encouraging high bride prices for their daughters.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.; Knighton op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Akabwai and Ateyo op. cit.; Ochan op. cit.; Mirzeler and Young op. cit.

<sup>59</sup> Walker, op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, March 13, 2007.

<sup>61</sup> Written correspondence from key informant #1, July 21, 2007.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* Efforts at building grassroots peace groups often directly target women and seek to delve more deeply into some of these issues and the role played by women in regard to security issues.

## IX. Disarmament Campaigns and Cordon and Search Operations

### Raids, Militias and Calls for Disarmament (1960s-2000)

As we have seen, while armed raiding has historically been part of the pastoral economy of Karamoja and a plague upon its neighbors, beginning in the 1970s cattle raiding became increasingly violent and deadly.<sup>1</sup> Between the years 1983 and 1994 the Karamojong in Uganda experienced levels of violence unmatched in their remembered histories or the colonial period.<sup>2</sup> The marked rise in violence in this period does not mean that violent raids were not a long-standing problem: for years, weaker clans within Karamoja and among neighboring ethnic groups had petitioned the British colonial powers and later the state of Uganda to take action against armed raiding. Communities created various militias and self-defense units in an attempt to deal with armed raiding, with varying success.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s a number of factors coalesced to intensify cattle rustling by various ethnic groups within Karamoja. Most notably this included serious drought and resulting high levels of food insecurity, which led to increased raiding as a survival strategy; the collapse of the Amin regime and the wholesale looting of the army barracks in Moroto; the use of those looted automatic weapons to facilitate even deadlier cattle raiding; the collapse of relations among the Kari-mojong (Matheniko, Bokora and Pian); and increased insecurity which resulted in local people not planting their fields, leading in part to the famine of 1980-81.<sup>4</sup>

Eastern Uganda has been home to a series of civil defense forces since the country's independence in 1962.<sup>5</sup> In the period 1986-1989, the government took steps to disband militia forces in Teso, Bagisu, Sebei,

Lango and Acholi areas. These forces had provided a degree of protection against cattle raiders from Karamoja. With the loss of these protective elements Karamojong raiders soon depleted nearly all of the cattle from these border areas.<sup>6</sup>

In a number of interviews conducted for this report and as documented in other studies,<sup>7</sup> respondents accused the GoU of facilitating the raiding in this period. Accusations made against the government range from an intentional uneven disbanding of local militias to the disarmament of communities that took up weapons to prevent more raiding to playing an active role and directly benefiting from the raids. Many interviewees alleged that vehicles belonging to NRM ministers and government officials (and bearing government plates) were seen loading and transporting stolen livestock.<sup>8</sup>

Raiding among ethnic groups within Karamoja was reportedly down during the period of heightened attacks on the neighboring districts in the late 1980s, although rainy season violence still flared when the cattle were brought back into the region. Key informants explained that it was when all animals were nearly depleted from Teso, Lango and Acholiland, that the raiding within Karamoja intensified.

The 1990s brought continuing brutality and violence by Karamojong raiders in both the Karamoja districts and neighboring areas. By the early 1990s, communities within and adjacent to Karamoja were once again raising militias for protection. These militias were called the "vigilantes" and were trained by the GoU army to help protect against raiding. The vigilante fighters were all male and used their own weapons. Women were recruited into the vigilantes to gather intelligence but

1 See for example, Margie Buchanan-Smith and Jeremy Lind, *Armed violence and poverty in Northern Kenya*, University of Bradford, UK, 2005;

2 See Gray, op. cit.

3 See Mirzeler and Young, op. cit.

4 See Alnwick, op. cit., p. 127-144; R.J. Beillik and L. Henderson. "Mortality, Nutritional Status and Diet During the Famine in Karamoja, Uganda, 1980", *Lancet* 11. p. 1330-1333. 1981.

5 See Akabwai and Ateyo for a description of the rise of civil defense forces.

6 For example, in that same time period, over 90% of cattle from Acholiland were raided which had severe economic and cultural impacts.

7 Dyan Mazurana, Darlington Akabwai, Priscillar Ateyo, Clement Ochan, and Frank Olyet, *In Search of Security: A Regional Analysis of Armed Conflict in Northern Uganda, Eastern Uganda and South Sudan* Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, Medford, November 2005.

8 Allegations relating to the GoU participation in the looting were made in numerous interviews in Teso, Lango and Acholiland conducted from January through September 2005.

did not fight. The vigilantes were charged with protecting the cattle of their villages from raiders. This could include moving with the cattle herders into temporary camps, as well as pursuing and killing armed bandits. The vigilantes allegedly received support in food and clothing from non-governmental organizations.<sup>9</sup>

In 1996, the vigilantes were (rather reluctantly) brought by President Museveni under the control of the UPDF. The total force numbered approximately 8,000 men (all women were expelled when the force came under UPDF control). By most accounts this group initially performed well and security increased in the region.<sup>10</sup> However, the vigilantes soon began taking sides in the internal cattle raiding and the groups eventually had to be disbanded.<sup>11</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, armed raiding has significantly impacted northeastern Uganda on multiple levels, including deepening poverty through the loss of assets and destruction of livelihoods; increased mortality; a resultant rise in the number of female-headed households;<sup>12</sup> increased displacement within Karamoja and in neighboring areas; food insecurity and reduced nutritional levels; reduced trade due to road banditry and lack of infrastructure; and the disruption and closure of health and educational facilities and corresponding reduction in health and education levels. National and international humanitarian and development agencies have had little presence in Karamoja over the past three decades, due in part to reluctance to engage in a region plagued by crime, banditry and insecurity.<sup>13</sup> A senior government official in Moroto summarized some of these problems and trends:

*The guns in Moroto have cleared many lives including the children and officers working in the area. People have lost property, food and other [goods] when the warriors don't find animals in the homesteads. De-*

9 See Mkutu op. cit.

10 See M. Quam, "Creating Peace in an Armed Society: Karamoja, Uganda, 1996", *African Studies Quarterly* vol. 1, No. 1, 1997.

11 For a more detailed discussion on the rise of militias in the area, see Akabwai and Ateyo, op. cit.

12 As discussed in the section on marriage in Karamoja, many widows are remarried to their brothers-in-law after the death of a husband. In many instances, however, these women are joining a polygamous household and may not receive adequate support for themselves or their children from the new husbands, resulting in many de facto female-headed households.

13 In 2007 international presence in Karamoja significantly increased with OCHA, OHCHR and UNICEF all opening offices.

*velopment actors fear reaching Moroto because of the insecurity in the district.*<sup>14</sup>

Notably, a number of recent studies have shown that when pastoral areas are able to achieve a stable peace, coupled with well-planned development, these negative trends can be reversed.<sup>15</sup>

The GoU's approach to addressing the problems of armed raiding and associated violence in Karamoja has been based upon a targeted removal of weapons. While weapons are certainly a problem in the region, the prevalence of firearms is just one symptom of the broader underlying issues. Initiatives that seek to build security by removing weapons fail to address the root causes of the insecurity and to safe-guard against the factors that have led populations to arm themselves. As a result, the forced disarmament processes introduced since 2000 have ultimately brought about an increase in violence and led to the active rearming of communities.

## 2001-2002 Disarmament

In December 2001 the government launched a disarmament exercise in Karamoja, with the President himself participating in the disarmament in Bokora County. This disarmament exercise was divided into two phases: voluntary and forceful disarmament. Leading up to the voluntary portion of the process, the government consulted a wide range of stakeholders and partners that were to design the framework and participate in the disarmament. Stakeholders included the UPDF, members of parliament (MPs) from Karamoja, local government authorities, international and national NGOs, civil society organizations, and Karamojong university students. An NGO, Action for Development of Local Communities (ADOL), conducted research at the grassroots level to find out how pastoralists viewed the forthcoming disarmament exercise. ADOL then shared the perceptions of the targeted communities in workshops with the government and stakeholders. Informants from stakeholder organizations reported that this forum was important and useful, as it provided an opportunity to dialogue with and advise the government.

The international NGOs and civil society groups, including churches, reportedly presented the view to the government that firearms should not be singled out as the main problem in Karamoja.<sup>16</sup> They stressed that the underlying problems exacerbating insecurity were the lack of governance, the absence of law and order,

14 Interview with senior government official, Moroto district, May 16, 2005.

15 See for example Buchanan-Smith and Lind, op. cit.

16 Interview with the Ugandan Joint Christian Council, Kampala, 21 March, 2005.

and the failure of the government to provide development in the region. Furthermore, these organizations highlighted the fact that many Karamojong were holding weapons to protect themselves due to the extremely low capacity of the police to provide protection or security. Sensitization and mobilization of the Karamojong community to accept a voluntary and peaceful handing over of the firearms and an increase in state-provided security was the main strategy the stakeholders advised the Ugandan government and military to adopt.<sup>17</sup>

In the eyes of some stakeholders and observers, the build-up to the 2001-2002 disarmament exercise showed that the Ugandan government was willing to listen to the views of both local communities and concerned parties. Many felt that the government was demonstrating positive political will in its engagement at various levels, and this in turn attracted support for the disarmament program from the donor community.

The government gave Karamojong communities two months (until February 15, 2002) to turn over weapons voluntarily. Extensive community sensitization occurred in this period, and incentives—including ox-plows, food, and building materials—were offered to those who handed in weapons.<sup>18</sup> An estimated 10,000 firearms were surrendered during this time,<sup>19</sup> and many communities were reportedly optimistic that the government was going to protect people against internal and external raiding. When the deadline for voluntary disarmament was reached, however, the government shifted to disarmament by force, employing ‘cordon and search’ tactics. Allegations of human rights abuses quickly followed.<sup>20</sup>

From the perspective of Karamojong communities, members of civil society and the humanitarian community, one of the most serious problems with the 2001-2002 campaign was the uneven and uncoordinated nature of the disarmament. This was mentioned by all informants. Communities who gave up firearms or were disarmed were often attacked—sometimes within a matter of days—by stronger groups that had not disarmed. In fact, some of the incentives for voluntary surrender of weapons increased vulnerability to attack. For example, people were given corrugated steel roof-

ing material, clearly identifying them as those who had disarmed.<sup>21</sup>

Compounding the problem of uneven disarmament was the failure of the government and military to adequately protect the communities that had given up their weapons. The government had promised security to local communities, but the Presidential Assistant on Karamoja Disarmament later admitted that only 145 police officers were present in the region during the campaign.<sup>22</sup> The national government had said that 146 local defense forces (militias) would be stationed in each county when weapons were surrendered, but the number was reduced to 60 and some counties had even fewer.<sup>23</sup>

The lack of even and simultaneous disarmament throughout Karamoja was a key factor in the overall collapse of the exercise. Certain groups, such as the Bokora and the Dodoth, handed in their firearms in large numbers, whereas others retained their weapons. Attacks against the unarmed and unprotected groups were reportedly swift and devastating, resulting in the loss of many assets—from livestock to sauce pans—and deaths and injuries, particularly of men who tried to defend their animals and property. Seeing the repercussions of handing in weapons, the remainder of the communities in Karamoja refused to disarm and all voluntary disarmament came to a grinding halt. Facing opposition, the security forces used increasingly forceful tactics against civilians. Witnesses throughout Karamoja reported that soldiers harassed women, beat people, forced people to perform physical acts as punishment, and stripped elders naked and forced them to sit in the direct sun.

A more systemic problem in the 2001-2002 disarmament campaign was the failure to take into account the underlying causes of the violence in the region and the reasons why populations were armed. These causes included—among others—lack of state protection, lack of law and order, lack of justice systems, commercialization of raiding, loss of livelihoods due to restrictions upon cross-border movement, and underdevelopment of the region on the part of the state. Sufficient measures were not put in place to address these issues, and in a number of cases, deadly violence and raiding actually increased among the groups.

17 *ibid.*

18 There were some allegations of corruption in the distribution of the incentives, with claims that some people who had not disarmed received cash and corrugated iron sheets. In particular, informants alleged that person who helped the UPDF gain entry into communities were rewarded with cash and other benefits.

19 Office of the Prime Minister, “KIDDP,” pp 7-9; Mkuu, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

20 Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p 24.

21 The receipt of ox-plows was also reportedly a problem in some areas, as the Pokot are outraged to see oxen shackled to plows, which they consider enslavement and extreme cruelty to animals. When they encountered such oxen, in some cases they killed the owners and ‘freed’ the oxen. Interview with James Feeney, United Nations World Food Program, 4 December 2006, Moroto. Ox-plows are, of course, used without incident in many other areas and the need for plows was frequently raised by respondents.

22 Interview with the Presidential Assistant on Karamoja Disarmament, Kampala Uganda, 19 April 2005.

23 *ibid.*

From a strategic point of view, the initial success of the voluntary phase was quickly erased when the military launched operations against pastoral populations who had not disarmed. The perception among Karamojong shifted as the tactics of the military operation<sup>24</sup> became more forceful. People no longer saw the program as one of disarmament, but rather as a military offensive<sup>25</sup> against civilians. Resistance increased accordingly. Creating further tensions, the pastoralists objected to the presence of the non-Karamojong commanders leading the military offensives, and were particularly opposed to the inclusion of groups from neighboring regions in the military forces.<sup>26</sup>

Ultimately, the forced disarmament phase ended prematurely due to intensified attacks by the LRA in northern Uganda and an expansion of the attacks on civilians into Teso and Lango areas in March 2002.<sup>27</sup> In response, the GoU redeployed the forces from eastern Uganda and Karamoja into northern Uganda. This redeployment created a security vacuum which worsened insecurity in Karamoja and led to an intensification of attacks against disarmed groups. The victims of such raids quickly sought to rearm themselves, and young men headed to Sudan to purchase weapons and ammunition. New alliances were formed in this process, as explained by an informant in Sudan:

*After the first disarmament [2001-2002] the Jie terrorized the Dodoth, forcing them to create a friendship with Toposa of Sudan in order to re-arm themselves. This enabled them [the Dodoth] to acquire guns massively from Toposa and Didinga, the neighbors with which they are in lasting peace.*<sup>28</sup>

24 A military operation is an activity by a military or naval force, including military campaigns. A military campaign is defined as military operations or activities aimed at a particular goal, usually with set geographical or temporal restraints.

25 Military offensives are military operations against enemies that are carried out through the use of weapons. We use the term ‘offensives’ when referring to military operations that have escalated beyond the stated purpose of disarmament and employ tactics of intimidation, humiliation, and abuse. These tactics characterize interactions between enemy forces, and are not part of a military action against a civilian population that is ultimately seeking to improve peace and security.

26 Many respondents in Karamoja believe the people from Teso and Lango are seeking revenge for past Karamojong raids in their territories, and have long objected to the presence of LDUs made up of men from these regions.

27 Violence and insecurity continued in Teso and Lango throughout 2002 and into 2003. In June 2003 the LRA launched vicious attacks and in June 2003, a second round of LRA attacks were launched in Katakwi district, including the abduction of hundreds of children.

28 Interview with anonymous source, June 2005, Toposaland, Sudan.

The success and extent of re-armament efforts varied by group. The Dodoth, for instance, had much greater access to weapons than did the Bokora due to the former group’s proximity to Sudan.<sup>29</sup> As discussed throughout this paper, the relative weakness of the Bokora continues today, and has had a profound impact upon their livelihood strategies.<sup>30</sup>

As stated, the primary flaw of the 2001-2002 disarmament program was the failure to address the reasons behind the widespread prevalence of small arms in the region. A second flaw was the uneven and uncoordinated disarmament that left some groups open to attack by those who still had weapons. The government failed in its key responsibility to protect its citizens, even after giving security guarantees in exchange for disarmament.

There were some positive aspects of the 2001 program, however, including the mobilization and sensitization of local communities and involvement of stakeholders, although the degree to which the views of communities and stakeholders were followed is open to debate. Furthermore, there were successes in the initial voluntary phase and promised incentives (although problematic) were delivered in at least some areas.

## Disarmament Returns to the Agenda, 2004-2005

The 2001-2002 disarmament campaign did not improve security in Karamoja. In fact, insecurity increased as groups sought to rearm. Complaints from neighboring areas and continuing violence in the region led the national government to focus again on disarmament in Karamoja in September 2004. Rumors of another disarmament campaign were met with strong resistance from communities with Karamoja, many of whom were still experiencing the repercussions of the previous disarmament. The UPDF remained largely absent from the region at this time.<sup>31</sup> Some local defense unit (LDU) members were still in Karamoja, many of whom had been allowed to keep their weapons following the 2001-2002 disarmament campaign. However, desertion rates

29 The GoU, acting on advice from local politicians, re-armed the Pian of Lorengedwat in Nakapiripirit district (home of the then Minister of State for Karamoja Affairs). This rearming was allegedly in response to the inter-ethnic raids by armed groups against those who had disarmed. The Lorengedwat were allegedly re-armed by the GoU for protection against the Pokot who had returned with the weapons they had hidden in the Kadam mountains on the Kenyan border. See Mkutu, op. cit., p. 55 and HRW, 2007.

30 See also Stites, Mazurana, and Akabwai, op. cit.

31 The UPDF remained engaged pursuing the LRA in northern Uganda during this time period.

from the LDUs were very high after the GoU began to transfer LDUs to fight in the north.<sup>32</sup>

Members of our research team were in Karamoja during the community mobilization and consultations regarding disarmament in 2004-2005. Our early findings suggested that any disarmament campaign would have little to no chance of success, due in large part to resentment and mistrust towards the government on the part of Karamojong communities. There was a good deal of tension surrounding even the discussion of disarmament. To illustrate, in May 2005, a hundred kraal leaders were called for a meeting with the UPDF. The leaders warned the UPDF that they should not talk about disarmament as this would ignite insecurity, but rather should concentrate on peace initiatives. The UPDF pursued the discussion of disarmament, to the angry reaction of the leaders gathered. One man stepped forward, a former kraal leader who had lost several of his children and all of his cattle (400 heads) in a raid that occurred days after he surrendered weapons in the 2001-2002 campaign. This man threw his disarmament certificate at the top UPDF commander and spat, "I am now reduced to a dog by those people who did not hand over their guns to you!"<sup>33</sup>

The general view held by nearly all informants interviewed in this period was similar. Members of parliament, opposition leaders, residents of communities from neighboring areas and the Karamojong themselves believed that the government's primary reason for reviving the discussion of disarmament was to secure votes for President Museveni in the 2006 elections.<sup>34</sup> Support for disarmament—and therefore for the NRM regime—was sought among groups heavily hit by Karamojong raiders and by weaker ethnic groups within Karamoja. Many informants felt that the focus on disarmament was opportunistic and politically-motivated and would not translate into a serious program on the ground.

## Disarmament, 2006–mid 2007

The mobilization and consultation activities in Karamoja in 2004 and 2005 were accompanied by a stakeholder and donor consultative process in Kampala. This exercise, led by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

32 Mkutu op. cit.; Human Rights Watch, op cit., pp. 23-24.

33 Interview with staff from Kotido Peace Initiative (KOPEIN), Kotido, June 16, 2005. The respondent was referring to events that took place at a large kraal meeting held in mid-May 2005.

34 This was a similar pattern to the 2001 elections. In these elections President Museveni campaigned on a message of increased security in districts neighboring Karamoja through the removal of firearms from the Karamojong, but this security failed to materialize.

and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), sought to build on the lessons learned in 2001-2002 and resulted in a draft of the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Initiative (KIDDP). The KIDDP seeks to combine disarmament activities with development interventions and as of November 2007 was before the Cabinet. A widespread criticism of the draft document was its failure to sequence development interventions with disarmament activities, thereby failing to give adequate time for development successes to serve as an incentive to hand over weapons.<sup>35</sup> The draft also condones forced disarmament through the use of cordon and search operations, although this tactic is listed as measure of last resort.<sup>36</sup> A number of the key donors refused to provide support for KIDDP as it was written, contending that it was largely a disarmament document that lacked solid development strategies.<sup>37</sup> The most recent version of KIDDP retains the cordon and search guidelines, but offers a preface that (rather confusingly) says while voluntary and peaceful disarmament is ideally the primary strategy, involuntary disarmament should aim to take guns held illegally. Notably, this draft refers to the continued validity of the earlier disarmament guidelines issued by the UPDF.

The GoU under the leadership of President Museveni has tasked the UPDF to carry out law enforcement within Karamoja. These tasks include armed operations to track and recover raided cattle,<sup>38</sup> arrest criminal suspects and turn them over to the courts,<sup>39</sup> and disarm the population. After the Presidential elections of February 2006, the GoU disarmament strategy for Karamoja took on a wholly military character, even though discussions on KIDDP were still on-going in Kampala. President Museveni, apparently motivated by the slow-pace of voluntary disarmament and the rates of rising crime in Karamoja, ordered the UPDF to resume cordon and search operations.<sup>40</sup>

The new military campaign began in May 2006 with over a dozen military operations targeting the Jie in Kotido District. Hundreds of homes and dozens of manyattas were reportedly burned to the ground. People were

35 This view was voiced in numerous interviews with members of the humanitarian and development community in Kampala, as well as in follow-up discussions with agency headquarters.

36 Office of the Prime Minister, KIDDP, pp.33-34.

37 Interviews with donors speaking off-the-record, Kampala, Uganda, November and December 2006.

38 Attempts to track and retrieve stolen livestock are sporadic rather than routine, personal communication Elizabeth Evenson, October 10, 2007.

39 Problematically, given the dismal condition of the civilian courts in Karamoja, at times the UPDF uses military courts to try civilians, see HRW, 2007.

40 Human Rights Watch, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

rounded up and detained at barracks, including women and children. According to Human Rights Watch, local sources reported that 23 civilians had been killed, 22 civilians injured, 279 arrested, and 663 small arms collected within a month of the start of the disarmament campaign.<sup>41</sup> By November, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> divisions of the UPDF had been moved into Karamoja, including attack helicopters, armored vehicles and tanks. In late November 2006, a UN official gave a conservative estimate of over 2,500 cattle killed by UPDF aerial attacks, and stressed that human casualties were unknown due to problems accessing the area.<sup>42</sup> Between October 29, 2006 and March 31, 2007, OHCHR reported at least 161, and up to 189 civilians, had been killed in cordon and search operations and other UPDF operations.<sup>43</sup>

It is questionable as to whether the military operations within the disarmament campaign that began in May 2006 can be legitimately considered ‘disarmament,’ since they include military operations against unarmed civilian populations (men, women and children) and disproportionate use of force<sup>44</sup> by the UPDF. It remains unclear (and the GoU has to date not clarified) under what specific authority the UPDF is acting in carrying out these operations (which are sometimes referred to as law enforcement), and hence, under which national laws and regulations the military is bound.<sup>45</sup>

Our team was in Karamoja while UPDF cordon and search operations were taking place in May 2006. Team members documented events in communities in Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts. In some instances, team members arrived in communities within hours of a UPDF offensive and found many still smoldering. We talked with men, women and youth who claimed they had been beaten, tortured, and abused by the UPDF and LDUs and in some cases we saw their injuries, including cuts and swollen joints alleged due to torture. We interviewed eyewitnesses and survivors

41 *ibid.* p. 29.

42 Interview with UN OCHA, Kampala, 27 November 2006.

43 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Situation in Kotido, Karamoja, from 29 October to 15 November 2006*, November 23, 2006; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Update report*. Importantly, OHCHR only began compiling numbers of deaths from some cordon and search operations in late 2006.

44 Most notably, this is the result of the UPDF using an offensive military strategy that is disproportionate to the actual threat posed to the military by armed Karamojong civilians. In addition, there is the use of significantly more sophisticated weapons by trained UPDF soldiers against civilians using rifles.

45 For more discussion on this, see Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

of dozens of UPDF military operations throughout these three districts. We continued to document the results of cordon and search operations, operations by the UPDF and government-supported militias, and allegations of abuse, torture, arbitrary detention, destruction of property and looting through March 2007. Other reports were published regarding human rights violations by the UPDF against Karamojong civilians during this time period.<sup>46</sup> In particular, the findings of Human Rights Watch and OHCHR corroborate our interviewees’ allegations of unlawful killings, use of excessive force, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary detention, and destruction of property during UPDF-conducted operations in Karamoja.<sup>47</sup>

We documented human rights violations allegedly carried out by the UPDF in Kotido, Nakapiripirit and Moroto districts from May 2006-March 2007. Rather than report on particular events, which is done in other reports published both by ourselves and others,<sup>48</sup> we discuss the pattern of operations and the associated abuses that we witnessed or was reported to us.<sup>49</sup>

The pattern of cordon and search operations was reported with consistency. The military conducted many of these operations without the use of violence. In other cases, however, abuse of civilians and extensive use of force occurred. It is unclear what triggered the transition from a military operation to an offensive against

46 Most notably see HRW, 2007; See UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Update report on the situation of Human Rights in Karamoja, from 16 November 2006 to 31 March 2007,” April 19, 2007, <http://www.ohchr.org/english/docs/OHCHR.Karamoja.March2007.rev4.1.doc> (accessed September 21, 2007). For discussion of past human rights violations during disarmament exercises see Ben Knighton, “The State as Raider among the Karamojong: ‘Where There Are No Guns, They Use the Threat of Guns,’” *Africa*, vol. 73 (2003), pp. 439-46.

47 HRW, 2007; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Update report on the situation of Human Rights in Karamoja, from 16 November 2006 to 31 March 2007,” April 19, 2007; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Update report on the situation of human rights in Karamoja, from 1 April to 12 August 2007,” September 3, 2007, <http://www.ohchr.org/english/docs/Ugandareportfinal.pdf> (accessed September 20, 2007).

48 *ibid.*

49 In order to protect the identities of our informants, we have chosen not to provide information on the date or location of our interviews. Rather, we report on the patterns that emerged from the research on this subject.

civilians. In some instances the soldiers may have responded inappropriately to resistance or reluctance to hand over weapons or may have responded with disproportionate use of force (such as helicopter gunships) when faced with small arms. Some international officials hypothesize that retaliation for UPDF losses may have spurred the military's use of violent tactics.<sup>50</sup>

A description of cordon and search operations helps to illuminate the way in which a rapid transition into violence is possible. Respondents explained that to conduct a cordon and search, UPDF and government-supported militias approach manyattas, often in the early hours of the morning between 2-4 am and form a perimeter. Armed UPDF soldiers conduct a hut-by-hut search for weapons, either immediately or at first light. Residents in the surrounded manyattas are ordered out of their homes and are only allowed to return when the soldiers are satisfied that they have located all weapons.

Respondents, witnesses and members of civil society groups explained that the first point of possible confrontation could occur after the perimeter has been formed around the manyatta or kraal. Individuals perceived to be escaping or alerting others in the area are particularly vulnerable. Resistance to presence of the soldiers was sometimes met with armed force, and a number of informants reported that men, women, children and the elderly had been killed during this stage of the operation. In one location in Bokora, this included a youth who was shot after leaving the manyatta in the night to relieve himself stumbled upon soldiers. A second common point of confrontation was during the hut-to-hut searches, particularly if weapons were suspected to be present but not found. Respondents alleged that the UPDF and government militia forces at times beat men, women, children and the elderly to compel the surrender of weapons. At times the security forces meted out collective punishment against resisters. In Kotido and Nakapiripirit districts, for instance, our team arrived at several manyattas that had been burned to the ground following cordon and search operations the night before.

The failure to find weapons or a requisite number of weapons appears to sometimes result in the detention of individuals, often on lack of any evidence of illegal activity. We documented reports of men, women, boys and girls being taken from sites and detained in UPDF barracks. These people would not be released until their families either brought a firearm or paid for their release with cattle. According to our informants, UPDF commanders would allegedly sell the cattle brought in exchange for detainees at local livestock markets. A number of informants reported that they or members of their family were held for several weeks. This is in

<sup>50</sup> Interview with UN officials, Kampala, November 9, 2007.

contrast to claims by the UPDF spokesman, who said that detained persons are released after two days, even if their family members do not bring in weapons.<sup>51</sup>

Once in detention, reports of abuse, torture and poor treatment increase. One woman, detained with her child, reported that a UPDF soldier took her crying baby from her arms and then used the baby as an instrument to beat the woman. Other women reported being forced to sit for long hours in the open sun. UPDF soldiers would offer them water, but as they tried to drink the soldiers would slap them in the face. Male youth who were detained reported being beaten on their joints, especially their ankles and knees, and we saw young men with badly swollen and bruised legs. Some male youth reported to us that they were no longer willing to go into town centers because they were too often arbitrarily detained at military barracks and subject to UPDF abuse. Importantly, UPDF barracks are not gazetted to hold civilians, and in particular they are not to hold children. Although access to the barracks was initially denied, the barracks were opened to inspection by the ICRC by late 2006.<sup>52</sup>

Cordon and search operations and hut-to-hut searches in particular provide ample opportunities for theft and looting by soldiers and militia members. Throughout the areas where we worked in which cordon and search operations were occurring, we heard widespread allegations of looting by the UPDF and the government-supported militias. It is unknown whether these incidents were undertaken by opportunistic individuals or were part of a widespread strategy. Looted items included livestock, cash, weapons, cooking pots and pans, clothes, bedding, and food items. Esteemed kraal and manyatta leaders with whom one of the authors has worked for many years reported losing large sums of money to UPDF looting, with amounts ranged from 210,000 UGS (US\$125) to 1,500,000 UGS (US\$890). Indeed, in an internal draft of a government investigation into the cordon and search operations, a General Aronda stated that the initial operations were "free-for-all affairs."<sup>53</sup>

Local leaders reported that they had requested protection for their communities and livestock during the disarmament campaign of 2006, but that UPDF commanders told them they were only interested in collecting firearms and would not provide any protection to the newly disarmed population. By 2007 this practice had begun to change, but it mattered little to the communities that already had been hit by enemy raiders, often within two to three days of UPDF disarmament.

<sup>51</sup> See HRW, 2007, 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Comments by ICRC staff member at briefing at UN OCHA, Kampala, November 7, 2007. According to OHCHR's latest reports, they too have gained access to the barracks.

<sup>53</sup> See Human Rights Watch op. cit., p. 75.

Reports from communities and our mapping of raids indicate that raids often followed in the immediate wake of UPDF disarmament or military operations. For example, Jie raiders attacked the village of Napetet in Moroto district shortly after the UPDF disarmament on 3 June 2006 and stole 218 head of cattle. Tragically, Jie warriors killed a prominent kraal leader in the attack. This leader, Apalobakaluk, had been one of the strongest advocates for peace in Karamoja.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, just a day earlier, another prominent kraal leader from Moroto, Apalotwala Amaikori, convinced his men to surrender their weapons peacefully, and he handed in the guns from his own home. Offered no protection by the GoU, the area was attacked days later by a group of Jie who killed Apalotwala and took 130 cattle. There was no attempt made by the government security forces to recover the cattle or arrest the culprits in either case. Significantly, and we cannot stress this point enough, the killing of leaders and elders, particularly those who are prominent peace-makers, further undermines any effort to bring peace and stability to Karamoja.

As tensions eroded and violence increases, resistance on the part of certain groups has also risen. In interviews, leaders and warriors in some regions of Karamoja stressed that the UPDF may be able to kill with impunity, but that the Karamojong would not lie like dogs waiting to be killed, but would prefer to die engaged in battle. Direct engagement with security forces has been most apparent in Kotido. A well-publicized incident occurred in late October 2006 following an alleged UPDF massacre at a dance festival in Kotido town. Jie warriors launched a retaliatory attack and killed a number of soldiers and ambushed government facilities in Kotido town.<sup>55</sup>

Many allege that the Jie have borne the brunt of military offensives because they have refused to bow to the will of the government and military. The resistance on the part of the Jie has resulted in disproportionate UPDF force, including the use of helicopter gunships, tanks, and small arms (including rockets, RPGs and mortars) against pastoral populations fighting with small arms. Some of these UPDF offensives have occurred where significant numbers of the inhabitants were unarmed women and children.

In November 2006, an inter-agency team conducted an assessment of the human rights situation in Kotido.<sup>56</sup> During the assessment, the team heard allegations of

54 Apalobakaluk worked with one of the authors (DA), then employed by the African Union, to facilitate peace between warring groups.

55 For more details see the *New Vision*, October 31, 2006.

56 Assessment Team, *Kotido Inter-Agency Assessment*, November 10, 2006. The team was led by UN OCHA with representatives from UNICEF, WFP, OHCHR, OXFAM, CUAMM, the Italian Institute for Cooperation and Development, with ECHO as an observer.

many UPDF abuses, including extra-judicial killings, the burning of manyattas, the destruction and looting of property, and the use of tanks and mortars against civilians. The team saw evidence of a UPDF massacre and visited sites alleged to be mass graves. The team also heard and documented allegations regarding the Jie's retaliatory attack on Kotido town.<sup>57</sup> To date, the GoU has not publicly responded to the allegations and observations put forward by the inter-agency team.

The OPM commissioned a team to investigate allegations made in June and July 2006 of widespread human rights abuses by the UPDF. The team completed the report by September 2006, but to date the government has not publicly released the document.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the GoU has carried out three investigations into allegations of human rights abuses to date, but no findings or reports have been publicly released.<sup>59</sup> This lack of transparency and follow-up has contributed further to the perception within Karamoja that the UPDF is able to act with impunity. The failure of the GoU to carry out rigorous and independent investigations, publish the findings of the investigations and take action against criminal activities and/or human rights violations committed by security personnel is a missed opportunity. This reluctance on the part of the GoU has increased mistrust and tensions with communities. If released and disseminated, the reports could lead to a dialogue on how to reach shared goals—the improved security of the people of Karamoja and neighboring districts—in a peaceful manner.

## Increased National Dialogue

Military operations and offensives in Karamoja as part of the disarmament campaign have resulted in the death and injury of adults and children, the loss of livestock, the destruction of assets and the devastation of livelihoods. It is unlikely that helicopter gunships and armored tanks will bring peace to the region or security to the neighboring areas. Furthermore, disarmament is not a workable strategy in the absence of trained and well-manned police force in the region, as any group that is disarmed and left without protection will be attacked by others. The ready availability of weapons in the larger region allows for rapid rearmament in the absence of government law and order and protection. Yet to date, there remain no robust plans to increase police presence in Karamoja.

By November 2006, some members of parliament from Karamoja were calling for the cessation of cordon and search operations. Addressing journalists, the

57 *ibid.*

58 While the report has reportedly been circulated among government and donor offices, it has never been made public.

59 Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

chairman of the Karamoja Parliamentary Group, Samuel Abura (Matheniko) said:

Everyone in Karamoja agrees that the guns must go, but what the UPDF is conducting now is no longer disarmament, but purely a military operation. We are in favor of disarmament, but the exercise has been derailed leading to innocent children, youth, women and aged falling victims of the operation.<sup>60</sup>

The next day, UN OCHA in Kampala released a press statement accusing the UPDF of killing civilians and destroying property in Kotido district.

The Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) —a regional organization originally bringing states together to tackle drought in the region—hosted a meeting in May 2007 on disarming pastoralists in the Greater Horn of Africa, including Uganda. Diplomats at the event reiterated the need for police to protect (not attack) pastoral populations and for the development of infrastructure and provision of basic services to support pastoral livelihoods. Abdelrahim Khalil, the director of the conflict prevention arm of IGAD, said:

Taking their guns away will not solve the problem. They can get more. There is recognition that national policies have failed. We have not been able to contain conflicts in the region... You need a government presence. People need to feel they are part of the state. And the cultures which encourage armed conflict need to be dealt with using better education.<sup>61</sup>

Within Uganda, however, the President, OPM, and UPDF have employed a military strategy that has resulted in the deaths of both civilians and UPDF soldiers. UPDF 3rd Division Operations and Training Officer Paul Lokech said, “We are determined to get on with our mission, to rid the region of these guns.”<sup>62</sup> His use of highly confrontational rhetoric is indicative of the problems in creating trust and building longer-term stability in the region. He detailed a military operation in May 2007 in Katiekile in Moroto, one of our study sites, reporting that the UPDF rounded up members of a homestead, impounded over 1,500 head of cattle and recovered 25 small arms. “This village had never surrendered a single gun. They thought they were untouchable but we dared them.”<sup>63</sup>

President Museveni, in the State of the Nation address on June 8, 2007, reported that the UPDF collected 1,203 guns between January and May 2007. Only 59 of

60 “Karamoja MPs Want Disarmament Halted,” *The New Vision*, November 9, 2006. The Karamoja Parliamentary Group is an official body operating within the Parliament comprised of MPs who monitor and at times visit Karamoja. The group reports to Parliament and the President.

61 Reuters, Tackle Roots of Deadly African Cattle Raids, May 28, 2007

62 Richard Otim, “Uganda: Disarmament Restores Peace in Karamoja,” *The Monitor*, June 11, 2007.

63 *ibid.*

these guns were handed in voluntarily. He also said that 3rd Division Court Martial has tried 101 “hard core warriors” and sentenced them to five to ten years of imprisonment. The President continued:

*Recently, while in Karamoja, I asked the 3rd Division Commanders why they did not punish more harshly the rustlers that kill people. I will ask the UPDF Legal Department to advise us on how these rustlers can be punished more harshly.*<sup>64</sup>

Again, this national discourse is not in line with the policies recommended by the African Union to bring peace and stability to the countries in the Karamoja Cluster.

The larger problem remains the absence of pro-pastoral policies and the involvement of the military in what should be social services, development initiatives and law enforcement activities. In late June 2007, the GoU and UPDF launched a program of communal grazing programs for pastoralists in Nakapiripirit district. The commanding officer of the UPDF 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, Col. Patrick Kankiriho, criticized Karamojong leaders who opposed the communal grazing system. He compared these leaders to Acholi leaders who opposed the forced removal of civilians from their villages in northern Uganda into internally displaced camps, which he hailed as a success.<sup>65</sup> (Despite the fact that the international community has long described the camps as humanitarian disasters and as responsible for the premature deaths of tens of thousands of people.<sup>66</sup>) The UPDF has also said that soldiers will apprehend any school-age child found in grazing areas, arrest their parents and force the children into schools.<sup>67</sup> Again, Col. Kankiriho stated:

*Now that we have seen the fruits of forceful disarmament, I am going to switch to forceful education for all school-going children in Karamoja in order to ensure that the children attain some level of education as a basic human right and this will be used as the basis for development in Karamoja.*<sup>68</sup>

64 *ibid.*

65 Nathan Etengu, “UPDF Soldiers Look After Karamojong Cattle,” *New Vision*, 21 June 2007.

66 The Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health in partnership with WHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, IRC, *Health and Mortality Survey among Internally Displaced People in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda*, Kampala, Uganda, July 2005.

67 Etengu, *op. cit.* Due to pressure by UN agencies and donor governments, the plan to force children into school was not carried out.

68 David Mafabi, “Army to Force Karimojong Children into School,” *The Monitor*, 25 June, 2007.

## UPDF Violations Decrease but Impunity for Human Rights Violators Continues

More positively, violations by the UPDF during cordon and search operations, although still reported, appear to have decreased in the second half of 2007.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the GoU has carried out three investigations into human rights abuses, but to date the findings of these reports have not been released publicly. The GoU has also developed guidelines for the conduct of UPDF during cordon and search operations, and increased training for UPDF soldiers. The UPDF has expanded efforts to engage with community and local leaders about the goals of disarmament.<sup>70</sup> And finally, road ambushes appear to have decreased, although this may indicate a current suppression of conflict rather than a resolution of the underlying factors driving the violence.<sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, grave human rights violations allegedly committed by UPDF personnel have yet to be seriously investigated and responded to by the UPDF and the GoU. Furthermore, the failure by the GoU to clearly identify the laws and regulations under which the UPDF carries out law enforcement operations, as well as the lack of procedural regulations regarding the rights of citizens during such operations, leaves civilians vulnerable to continued arbitrary searches and detention, as well as other serious human rights violations of the nature discussed in this and other reports.

In addition, the GoU has taken no measures to account for the majority of these violations, or to provide redress and reparation for the victims. In particular, no reparations have been provided for the death of parents or caregivers, loss and destruction of property, injury, or for violations suffered due to physical and mental abuse. Reparation programs are those that are designed to distribute a direct benefit to the victim themselves, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, as well as other key measures and initiatives within justice systems that, if crafted with forethought and care, could have reparative effects, namely rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantee of non-recurrence.

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69 However, such findings should be treated with caution as it was only in late 2006 that OHCHR began systematically reporting on human rights violations in the region and found widespread violations. Given that this serves as the baseline, it is very early to begin to discuss trends. See, OHCHR, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Update report on the situation of human rights in Karamoja from 1 April to 12 August 2007*.

70 OHCHR, report of 1 April to 12 August 2007.

71 Extensive flooding in the latter part of 2007 has also limited road travel, which might be reflected in the decline in number of road ambushes.

Additionally, it is questionable whether even a small percentage of those responsible for grave human rights violations will ever face justice. While the UPDF claims it has taken measures against those found responsible for violations, this information remains confidential. With few exceptions, commitments by the army leadership to bring soldiers to account have not been backed up substantiating details, such as the nature of the violations investigated or the punishments received.

Meanwhile, although President Museveni has called on the population in Karamoja to expose army abuses, victims are unlikely to feel assured that their complaints will be taken seriously given that the UPDF spokesperson continues to dismiss allegations of human rights violations as “isolated incidences” in the national press.<sup>72</sup> Importantly, justice does not only need to be done, it needs to be *seen* to be done, particularly by those communities that have suffered. The current atmosphere of impunity for rights violators within the UPDF is unacceptable and should be challenged.

We contend that there is a need to sequence development and disarmament. Here development should not only be understood in economic and livelihood terms. It is imperative to boost and demilitarize protection processes by strengthening civilian police, judicial systems and neutral state structures within local governments.<sup>73</sup>

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72 “Keep off army affairs, M7 says,” *New Vision*, Oct. 3, 2007.

73 We acknowledge Paul Ronan in his communication with us of October 26, 2007, for helping to hone our thinking on this matter.

## X. Conclusions

### Generation-Sets, Age-Classes and the Passage of Power

The current senior generation-set has been in power for more than 50 years and has refused to pass power to the junior generation-set. Only two generation-sets can exist at any one time and a son cannot be in the same generation-set as his father. This means that no male children of the junior generation-set have been initiated, as there is no generation-set for them to join. Many of these 'children' are now in their 30s and 40s, and have children of their own approaching adulthood. These uninitiated men are not officially recognized as adult members of their society; in fact, they have the same official status as women. We believe that this tension between the generations underpins a crisis in society as the younger men seek status and power through other means, including acquisition of wealth through raiding. Although the extent of the crisis differs from one group within Karamoja to the next, with some groups retaining greater authority of the elders than others, this remains a fundamental aspect of the current crisis of insecurity throughout Karamoja and hence requires a greater understanding.

### Livelihoods

Findings indicate that groups that are able to retain their pastoral livelihoods—based on seasonal mobility, a balance of human and animal population between kraals and manyattas, and seasonal cultivation where possible—are, in general, pursuing the most sustainable livelihoods and have the highest levels of human security. This finding is supported by WFP's EFSA data, which show that agro-pastoral households have the highest levels of food security. Furthermore, data from our study show that these groups appear to have greater inter-generational harmony, less participation in armed raiding, less exploitation of the natural environment, and higher school enrollment. While some of this can be explained by geographic location (of the Tepeth) and the protection provided by the mountains, it is important to keep in mind that pastoral and agro-pastoral (where possible) lifestyles are the most appropriate

livelihood strategies for the conditions of Karamoja. Efforts should be made, therefore, to support these livelihoods where possible, while at the same time encouraging diversification away from strict animal husbandry (through diversification to more drought resistant food crops, for instance).

Of course, not everyone in Karamoja wants to be or can be a pastoralist, particularly as the population grows. More development, educational opportunities beyond primary school, and economic investment is needed to create an economic system capable of absorbing people engaged in different or diverse livelihood strategies.

Mobility is central to the success of pastoral livelihoods. At present, movement has been curtailed by insecurity, inter-group conflict, and tension with residents of neighboring areas due to Karamojong raiding and brutality in these districts. Many areas within Karamoja are 'no-go' areas and cross-border movement with animals is prohibited by the GoU in some areas and dangerous in others. It is often women and children who enter into these dangerous areas for resource extraction and who are reportedly subjected to rape, kidnapping and killing. Addressing these issues is complex and requires long-term solutions based on an understanding of the gender and generational impacts of insecurity and conflict, community dialogue that includes discussions with women and children, a new approach by political leaders, trust-building with affected communities, and the bolstering of effective law and order institutions and mechanisms throughout Karamoja.

The ability of groups to access pastures beyond their home districts is particularly important in drought years. This access is likely to become more important as climate change increases. Although relations with communities in neighboring districts are strained due to violence, our team has carried out interviews in Acholi, Lango and Teso and we found that local communities in these areas also benefited from the presence of the Karamojong kraals in their areas. The presence of Karamojong herders and their animals provides an important market, and Karamojong trade animal products for grains, non-food commodities, beer and other products. Karamojong livestock raids and brutality against

human populations eventually have eroded some of this trust, but it is important to acknowledge the mutually beneficial aspects of these relationships and to seek long-term solutions to this current impasse.

Security, human security and livelihoods are intertwined in Karamoja. Livelihood outcomes will result in greater prosperity and livelihood strategies will be more sustainable in a secure environment. Improved security will allow for the pursuit of pastoral livelihoods, as well as greater diversification into other livelihood activities following an increase in development and economic investment in the region. Human security will also improve with greater physical security as the constant threat and fear of arbitrary violence, revenge attacks, and the destruction of livelihood assets decreases.

Support to livelihoods in Karamoja should emphasize bolstering the pastoral economy through the expansion of trade, improved access to towns, veterinary interventions for improved animal health, and better physical security through state presence (i.e., well trained and equipped police forces and justice systems). An improved economic and investment environment is also critical to improving livelihood opportunities in Karamoja. Local and national policies should be adjusted to promote development in the region. These policies might include tax incentives, an improved regulatory environment, investment in physical infrastructure and the expansion and maintenance of electrical services. Long-term and widespread development and economic investment will help diversify livelihood strategies, absorbing people who are not interested in or not able to pursue more strictly pastoral livelihoods. The necessary level of development will require a major commitment on the part of the national government and adequate and sustained support to district and local government offices. The thorny issues of corruption and accountability at national, district and local levels will have to be addressed in this process if the benefits are to reach the populations on the ground.

## Food Security

Understanding and improving food security in Karamoja requires a multi-sectoral approach. Food security includes access and availability to food, but also links closely to animal health, as healthy animals produce more milk, can be bled in the dry season, and are more likely to reproduce. WFP data shows that the more food secure households generally have more animals; these households are not only wealthier, but also have greater reliance on own-production and can smooth consumption and weather shocks through the sale of an animal when necessary. Purchased food items, particularly grains, form an important part of the diet of many households during at least some part of the year, and

improving access to these food sources will also help to bolster food security at the household level.

The findings from this study indicate the importance of the links between manyattas and kraals in maintaining food security. Not only food and animal products but also people—including some of the most vulnerable members of society—move between the two types of settlements as a means of managing both food and human security, as this movement enables vulnerable women and children to move to more food secure areas in times of stress. The balance between manyattas and kraals requires that people are able to move with their animals to areas of fresh pasture and adequate water. When this mobility does not, or cannot, happen (due to constraints on mobility or lack of adequate protection for animals, for instance), animals are less healthy and hence the human population depending on them suffers. This in turn affects the food security status of all individuals in the community.

The community members who carry food and information back and forth between manyattas and kraals are often girls and young women. While there are some risks inherent in this journey, it was not reported that this activity resulted in any greater danger than any other livelihood task performed regularly by women and girls, such as collecting natural resources and moving to and from towns and trading centers.

## Education

Many Karamojong adults and children place little value on formal education and lack an understanding as to what actually occurs in a school. We hypothesize that if the curriculum were to be more tailored to pastoral realities, including technical training aimed at building skills in animal husbandry, veterinary care, midwifery, health care and water management, then perhaps the Karamojong would find schooling something worth investing in for their children. Technical training courses for adults in these subjects would also provide an outlet for the many youth who have lost cattle to raids and are currently largely idle in many areas. Such courses could include a basic literacy and numeracy component. Curricula in classrooms of all types and levels (primary, secondary and technical training) should be geared towards helping children and young people gain knowledge about and pride in themselves as pastoralists. Because of the poor quality of education in the region, bridging courses are also needed to help young people from Karamoja qualify for national training schools. These are likely to be particularly valuable in math and science.

Many children who do attend school start late, i.e., older than the standard start age of six years. Children are then pulled out of school early in their adolescent

years to contribute to household livelihoods or, in the case of girls, to marry. Starting at the appropriate age would allow children to complete more primary school before these pressures begin.

The current rhetoric from the UPDF and some elected officials regarding the need to force Karamojong children into schools is counter-productive and will only weaken any remaining trust that the civilian population has in the state and the military.<sup>1</sup> Forcefully removing Karamojong children from their families and placing them in boarding schools violates the rights of children and their families and is in contradiction to Uganda's Children's Act, which states that children have a right to live with and be cared for by their families.<sup>2</sup> Similar practices of forced separation and education have had devastating long-term consequences in every country where such actions have been carried out.<sup>3</sup> This option should be soundly rejected.

## Health

There is little current data regarding the health needs of the Karamojong populations. Nonetheless, given their small numbers, health facilities and practitioners are inadequate for the needs of the population. Currently health facilities and trained practitioners are consolidated near larger urban centers. However, there is a need for their increased presence in both trading centers and in mobile units that could move out to some of the larger kraals.

The Pokot and the Tepeth practice female genital cutting. All families able to afford the ceremonies associated with this practice have their daughters undergo female genital cutting. However, given that the ceremonies can only occur when there is a good harvest, it may be possible to have a period of several years in which to conduct outreach with the populations on the harmful effects of genital cutting. To carry out this work, the male elders of the manyattas and kraals would have to be consulted, along with the traditional birth attendants and the highly respected seers. If the council of

1 David Mafabi, "Army to Force Karimojong Children into School," *The Monitor*, 25 June, 2007.

2 This also goes against the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Uganda is a signatory.

3 Much has been written about the disastrous impacts of the forced 'residential school' system for the indigenous people of Canada, the United States and Australia. See, inter alia, Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Residential Schools*, (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2004); John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Jean Barman et al, *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy* (UBC Press, 1986).

male elders or seers were to turn against the practice, the practice would stand a good chance of ending.

## Marriage in Karamoja

A discussion of a range of unions highlights the particular vulnerabilities of certain groups, particularly girls and women married without cattle and their children. We also examined the ways in which society is changing due to loss of cattle, greater wealth disparity among individuals, and impoverishment. Marriage with cattle provides an important social safety net for women and children and recognition and status for men. As the rate of marriages with cattle declines, the nature of Karamojong society shifts and, eventually, new forms of social safety nets and new means of acquiring status and power are likely to emerge. This process is gradual, however, and is happening in different ways among the different groups. Additional research into this issue is needed to understand the impact of the decrease in marriage with cattle for men, women, children and the social structure as a whole, including linkages between growing difficulty in acquiring cattle and the increase in violent raids.

In thinking about the transformation of unions as an indicator of change it is important to consider the status of widows. These women can be particularly vulnerable, even though few are likely to remain technically widows for long due to the practice of widow inheritance. It is apparent, however, that some of these women and their children are more vulnerable upon remarriage, as our data indicate that the new husbands are often unwilling or unable to support the women or their children from first marriages. A widow has customary rights to the cattle of her deceased husband if she was married with cattle, but this asset is often non-existent, split among multiple wives, or lost in the same raid that took the husband's life. A widow who does inherit cattle upon the death of her husband may lose the cattle through force (i.e., the animals are taken over by the new husband) or through distress sales as she seeks to support herself and her children.

## Armed Raiding, Disarmament and Cordon and Search Operations

Armed and violent raiding is the most prevalent form of brutality and abuse experienced by the people in Karamoja, and young men are the primary perpetrators of this violence. This report has sought to demonstrate that these raids are not purely individual criminal acts, but are driven by complex and inter-related fac-

tors including extreme lack of development and opportunity, tensions in inter-generational relations, pressure on young men to provide for their families while also demonstrating their status and power, distrust in the state, and cyclical revenge attacks. Importantly, such raids occur within a vacuum of justice and effective law and order mechanisms. Regardless of the motivations, raids are often brutal and result in injury, death and impoverishment through loss of assets. Large tracts of land have become off limits due to insecurity, further hampering the mobility of people and animals which is critical to the success of livelihoods within Karamoja. Trade is down and prices are high due to road banditry, and few development or humanitarian agencies are willing to take the risks of working in the region. These repercussions mean that it is critical to address the underlying causes of raiding and to provide alternatives to those males who partake in raids as a part of a livelihood strategy or a means to gain status in the absence of initiation practices.

Disarmament initiatives in Karamoja under colonial and post-independent regimes have never been shown to be effective in reducing insecurity over the medium to long term. Many inter-related factors underpin this lack of success, including easy access to weapons throughout the region; the failure of the government to facilitate effective law and order mechanisms to protect those who have disarmed; the absence of a penal and justice system to serve as disincentive to rearming; and the inability to date of disarmament programs to operate in parallel to other approaches to address the underlying causes of the high prevalence of small arms in region. The KIDDP consultative process took some of the steps required in this direction, but disarmament without development and in the absence of civilian police and justice systems has continued unabated. Short-term gains may be counted in the number of guns collected, but systemic failures are apparent in gross human rights abuses, disproportionate use of force, abuse and extortion of civilians, continued impunity of the state and security forces, further erosion of civilian trust in the state and security forces, and likely (based on past experiences) rearming and return to violence over the medium to long term.

The GoU does appear to have recognized the importance of protection and law and order for disarmed populations. As of March 2007, Bokora manyattas that had livestock were expected to bring the herds to the barracks for protection by UPDF soldiers and members of local defense units. Although the recognition of the need for protection is an important development, a security scheme that entails all animals being held together under UPDF control is not sustainable over the long term. One of the major concerns relates to the level of UPDF awareness of seasonal migration patterns. The question of who migrates with the herds—this nearly

always includes women and vulnerable children seeking access to a supply of animal products—and how the soldiers will deal with this reality from a protection perspective is of particular importance. The 2006/2007 dry season was reported to be unusually wet, with sporadic rainfall which resulted in more grasses and fresh water sources than in a normal year. This meant that the UPDF were able to keep several thousand head of cattle near the barracks. This will not be possible in normal dry seasons, and it is unclear (to the UPDF commanders interviewed as well as to the research team) how the UPDF will deal with the need to split the animals into smaller groups for dry season migration. Already pastoralists are removing their animals from protected kraals due to overcrowding and the spread of livestock disease. Finally, better security schemes for livestock do nothing to assist those who have already lost their livestock due to raids or in the disarmament processes.

The provision of state protection for livestock appears to have been temporary, as protected kraals were dismantled in November 2007. Anecdotal reports of increased insecurity and widespread raids upon the unprotected communities have emerged, but further details are not available at the time of finalizing this report.

Many traditional elders feel that an investment in peace on the part of the military and government—as opposed to on disarmament—would be much more productive in making sustainable security gains. The elders are key players in working towards peace, but they have often been sidelined by both colonial and post colonial governments. Policies that undermine traditional Karamojong practices and livelihoods also erode the power of traditional leadership and the ability of leaders to maintain order in their populations. Some elders have called for the need for reconciliation rituals between the people of Karamoja and their land, which has absorbed much blood. Some believe that their god, *Akujū*, is angered by the violence and has turned away from the Karamojong, and that awareness of reconciliation among all generations needs to take place.

## Gross Human Rights Violations

Numerous allegations of abuse of civilian populations by the Ugandan military have arisen since the start of the most recent disarmament campaign in May 2006. We picked up many of these in our work, including witnessing the aftermath of UPDF military offensives in several instances, and our report joins a growing line of credible reports to this effect. The September 2007 update on Karamoja by OHCHR stated that the number of cases of reported human rights abuses by the military decreased significantly from 1 April to 12 August 2007

when compared to the preceding period.<sup>4</sup> If accurate, this is obviously a positive development. However, it is difficult to know what factors might be contributing to this decline in reported cases, factors that could range from efforts on the part of the security forces to refrain from abuse of civilians to a lack of reporting on the part of victims due to fear of retribution or disillusionment in the response. The test will be if the number of reported cases continues to decline, and if additional findings (publicly released) from independent groups on the ground supports these patterns over time.

Regardless of recent developments, there is overwhelming evidence that human rights abuses have occurred as part of the forced disarmament campaign and that little action has been taken on the part of the government to publicly acknowledge and condemn incidents, investigate allegations (and publicly release the reports), take punitive action against those who perpetrated the abuses, and provide compensation and reparations to victims and their families. It is critical that the GoU and its military end the pervasive culture of impunity and take action, including making reparations to individuals and communities. There are many positive lessons to be learned from a transparent and open process, and such exercises in accountability and truth-telling will help to pave the way for longer-term peace and reconciliation in this divided society.

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4 OHCHR, "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Uganda: Update report on the situation of human rights in Karamoja from 1 April to 12 August 2007," Issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## XI. Recommendations

Recommendations are made to the relevant bodies of the Government of Uganda, donor governments, the United Nations, NGOs, and community-based organizations working in Uganda, as well as traditional leaders within Karamoja. Although we direct our comments to all relevant actors, we stress that the GoU bears primary responsibility for peace, security, law and order, justice and development in the Karamoja region and for protecting and upholding the rights of the Karamojong people, wherever they may choose to live in Uganda.

### Livelihoods

Support to livelihoods in Karamoja requires investment in pastoralism, infrastructure, social services, trade, law and order, and justice and moving away from policies that seek to destroy or erode the traditional livelihood base. To this end, policy-makers and donors should:

- Recognize that sedentarization is not a viable option in a region characterized by a shifting and fragile ecosystem. Recognize that pastoralism and agro-pastoralism are the most appropriate livelihood strategies for the majority of people living in this environment.
- Commit to and fund long-term infrastructure development in the region. Projects should be designed through community dialogue (with men and women of different ages) regarding priorities, expectations and urgent needs. Development initiatives should use local labor and rely on local expertise.
- Invest in and expand the network of social services, including basic health facilities, mobile clinics, primary and secondary schools, agriculture extension programs, financial services and technology infrastructure.
- Improve security through community dialogue, introduction of an adequate number of professional, trained and well-equipped police, and bolstering of the justice systems.

- Acknowledge that populations in urban areas are growing and respond with appropriate programs, all the while recognizing that the majority of the population is rural and cannot support themselves over time through a sedentary lifestyle.

- Help to re-establish positive and non-violent links between pastoral groups in Karamoja and their stock associates in the districts bordering Karamoja.

Pastoralism depends on mobility of animals and humans. This movement enables the most productive use of available pasture and water while also allowing areas time to recover. To this end it is vital to:

- Support conflict negotiation and mitigation activities across ethnic and district borders to minimize attacks and improve relations between groups and access to natural resources.
- Support peace initiatives among a range of demographic groups, including women and youth.
- Encourage local district officials to allow movement for trade and grazing across district and national borders.
- Increase surveillance and reporting of livestock diseases through community-based animal health workers to prevent spread of viruses.
- Evaluate existing boreholes, dams and improved watering points in or near manyattas and kraals and do so through community participation.
- Rehabilitate those facilities that support pastoral livelihoods and strategies of animal mobility, but not in order to promote increased sedentarization.

### Food Security

Animal health is a critical component of food security in Karamoja, and therefore we include the following animal health recommendations under food security:

- Train and facilitate community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) selected from the beneficiary communities. Both males and females should be included in the training program, and refresher courses given at regular intervals. CAHWs should be split between manyattas and kraals and should move with animal herds.

- Review extensive existing literature regarding best practices and lessons learned in CAHW programs in pastoral areas<sup>1</sup> and incorporate them into program design.

- Seek national and international partners to provide inexpensive and quality veterinary medicines. Ensure that these medicines are available throughout Karamoja and accessible to populations in both manyattas and kraals.

Purchased food is an important part of household diets during at least part of the year, and some households rely on purchased or traded items all year. Improving access to trading centers and the affordability of food in these markets is an important aspect of food security in Karamoja. To this end the government and development actors should improve:

- the condition of roads, including main and secondary roads, to facilitate the movement of goods both within Karamoja and to and from neighboring areas;

- wet season access by upgrading roads and bridges across low-lying areas in Karamoja and in neighboring districts;

- security on roads through the increased presence and patrols of trained and professional police.

Erratic rainfall patterns and variations in soil conditions and climate create a range of growing conditions across the Karamoja region. Crop cultivation is more productive in some areas than others and this varies

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, B. Admassu et al, "Impact assessment of a community-based animal health project in Dollo Ado and Dollo Bay districts, southern Ethiopia" *Tropical Animal Health and Production*, vol 37 (1) January 2005: 33-48; A. Catley et al, "Para-veterinary professionals and the development of quality, self-sustaining community-based services," *Rev Sci Tech*, vol 23 (1), April 2004: 225-52; JC Rubyogo et al, "Sustainability of a privatized community-based animal health worker system in Mwingi District, Kenya" *Tropical Animal Health and Production*, vol 37 (4), May 2005: 253-66; R. Allport, "The use of community-based animal health workers to strengthen disease surveillance in Tanzania," *Rev Sci Tech*, vol 24 (3), Dec 2005; 921-32.

from one year to the next. Some respondents in Bokora explained that they picked up important techniques for growing a wider variety of drought resistant crops from their neighbors in Teso. Expanding access to this information and crop varieties, where relevant based on growing conditions, may help to increase crop diversification and yields. There is a need to:

- investigate possible expansion of agriculture extension officers with experience in drought-resistant crops and farming techniques;

- facilitate information sharing among groups and regions to gain agricultural knowledge and also to build trust;

- recognize and develop programming that takes into account the fact that agriculture is primarily the domain of women and it is women who are predominately responsible for deciding what to plant and when.

## Education

School enrollment varies significantly from one community to the next, with many parents or children having very little understanding of what attending school entails. School-feeding is a major pull factor for attendance in primary school. Most respondents had heard of ABEK and many communities visited were enthusiastic about ABEK, but most have not yet benefited. Key stakeholders must:

- promote and support the realization of human rights of children, in particular through improved access to health, education, and justice, including the improvement of the security situation in Karamoja;

- ensure continuation and expansion of school-feeding programs in all primary schools;

- seek to better understand drop-out factors in specific areas;

- implement programs to retain students beyond the early years: scaling up of school-feeding is likely to be a part of this;

- consider expanding take-home rations to include boys, as we found minimal gender variation in school enrollment;

- seek to expand ABEK outreach and to provide updates and information to communities who

have been visited to manage expectations and maintain community involvement;

- ensure that ABEK facilitators are trained and facilitated throughout their work, and that schedules are maintained for the start of programs. ABEK is not a substitute for properly managed and adapted primary education, and the GoU should work to develop and strengthen the school system in Karamoja in a way that incorporates on-going lessons learned from ABEK.

- conduct awareness campaigns in rural areas on the value of education and ensure they are led by people who can answer questions in a non-judgmental non-discriminatory manner;

- ensure that uniforms are not compulsory in any schools in Karamoja, as this negates Karamojong children's right to cultural expression;

- ensure that school curricula use concepts that are relevant to Karamojong children and portray the many positive aspects of pastoral communities;

- recognize that forcefully removing Karamojong children from their families and placing them in boarding schools violates the rights of children and their families, and that similar practices have met with devastating long-term consequences in every country where such measures have been attempted;

- create technical training programs relevant to pastoral livelihoods aimed at adults and youth: this might include animal husbandry, animal health, water management, drought-resistant farming, business skills, midwifery, and basic human health;

- encourage parents to enroll children in school at the appropriate age, i.e., six years.

- enable traditional leaders to work with education officials to learn more about and promote the merits of education for both boys and girls.

- create incentives for teachers, particularly Karamojong teachers, to live and work in the area.

- create national bridging programs for children from Karamoja to assist with entry into professional schools such as nursing academies.

## Health

Health facilities in Karamoja are inadequate for the needs of the population and investment is needed in

basic infrastructure as well as improving the quality of care. It is necessary to:

- improve access to basic health care in trading centers throughout Karamoja through inputs in training, basic infrastructure, housing for medical staff;

- provide basic medical training to community health workers who are nominated and selected by their community;

- train multiple health workers of varying ages in each location and stipulate that one health worker should be with the kraal at all times;

- improve access to quality basic medications in trading centers throughout Karamoja;

- conduct health and hygiene trainings throughout Karamoja in both manyattas and kraals;

- conduct an assessment to better understand local perceptions of health care and interactions with the health care system, including the interaction with traditional versus modern medicine;

- train skilled attendants<sup>2</sup> within communities to assist with labor and births. In communities where a traditional birth attendant exists, work to bring this person up to level of skilled attendant.

- identify and train community health workers and enable them to work in manyattas and kraals, including traveling with kraal populations. In areas where community health workers do not exist, provide mobile clinics for vaccination and dispersal of basic medications. Ensure that these clinics travel to both manyattas and kraals on a regular basis.

- ensure traditional leaders work with health officers to gain safe passage to kraals and manyattas and to promote younger men and women into health care training as a means to improve the overall health of the population.

2 According to the World Health Organization, a “skilled attendant” is “an accredited health professional—such as a midwife, doctor or nurse—who has been educated and trained to proficiency in the skills needed to manage normal (uncomplicated) pregnancies, childbirth and the immediate postnatal period, and in the identification, management and referral of complications in women and newborns” (World Health Organization, 2004). See WHO, “Proportion of births attended by a skilled attendant—2007 updates,” available at [http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/global\\_monitoring/skilled\\_attendant\\_atbirth2007.pdf](http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/global_monitoring/skilled_attendant_atbirth2007.pdf).

## Armed Raiding

Violence in Karamoja will decrease only when the underlying causes of this violence have been addressed, sufficient justice and law and order institutions and mechanisms are in place, and when expanded economic opportunities exist, particularly for young men. There are, however, interim steps that can be taken to limit the market for raided cattle:

- Increase government efforts to curtail commercial raiding, including through checks at cattle markets for animal ownership.
- Facilitate and train police to investigate the attempted sale of stolen livestock.
- Investigate the role of local officials and politicians in facilitating and profiting from commercial raiding.
- Work with traditional leaders to enable the transfer of power from the senior-generation set to the junior-generation set: this would help curtail raiding as a means for gaining status among men within the junior-generation set.
- Ensure engagement of traditional leaders in efforts to forge peaceful alliances with neighboring groups and increase efforts to curtail armed raiding by males under their control.
- Implement regional efforts, potentially under the leadership of IGAD, to combat the regional weapons trade.
- Increase collaboration and coordination among law enforcement officers in the region to help facilitate the pursuit and return of stolen animals across international borders.

## Disarmament

Voluntary disarmament should be supported with significantly increased law and order presence and protection for pastoral populations throughout Karamoja. In conjunction, there is a need to develop infrastructure and support basic human and livestock services that uphold pastoral livelihoods. Disarmament efforts should also be regional in scope, as the Karamojong are surrounded by well-armed tribes in Kenya and Sudan.

- Disarmament, primarily the responsibility of the national government, should follow, not precede, development in an area.

- Disarmament should be voluntary and based upon realistic incentives developed through participation with communities and with local and national stakeholders.

- Weapons collected in disarmament exercises should be compiled, catalogued and destroyed in a transparent and accountable manner.

- Written proof of disarmament should be provided to individuals, households and communities that have disarmed.

- Force should not be used disproportionately against civilians. Disarmament should occur in as uniform a manner as possible.

- There is a need for coordinated disarmament exercises amongst the various ethnic groups.

- Adequate protection measures should be put in place for groups that have been disarmed, including protection of remaining livestock.

- If livestock are to be housed with security personnel, the army and/or police need to take responsibility for protecting the people (including women, children and infants) who will accompany these animals.

- Security personnel need to have plans in place for animal migration. Decisions regarding animal movement should be taken only through collaboration with kraal and manyatta leaders.

- For persons detained during disarmament exercises, all sites of detention should be gazetted and open to inspection at any time by the Ugandan Human Rights Commission and the ICRC.

- Trained and well-resourced police should be introduced in greater numbers in Karamoja. The UPDF should act in support of police operations (including disarmament and detention) only under special circumstances and only with full transparency.

- Traditional leaders should work together with the GoU and UPDF to ensure the safety and security of their populations and the voluntary turning in of weapons.

- Learn from examples of good relations between manyatta and kraal leaders and the UPDF of the kind noted in this report. Such good relations could be strengthened in ways that ease tensions and assist in voluntary disarmament and improved road security.

## Human Rights Violations

- Any and all allegations of rape, murder, torture, arbitrary or unlawful detention, abuse, looting and other grave human rights violations committed by the UPDF or militias during disarmament should be investigated by an independent and respected body.

- The GoU should publicly acknowledge and condemn human rights abuses committed by the UPDF or government-supported militias and should act swiftly to prosecute perpetrators. Measures should be put into effect to prevent similar violations and these measures should be made public.

- The reports from the GoU and independent investigations into gross human rights violations should be made available to the public and widely circulated.

- All security forces should be held accountable for violations of the UPDF code of conduct and of international human rights standards.

- The GoU should provide reparations for persons and their families who are found to have suffered grave rights violations at the hands of state forces during disarmament and cordon and search operations, arrest and detention, as well as due to armed raids that occurred after the person was disarmed and left unprotected.

- Child protection measures should be strengthened, including monitoring, reporting, referral and response structures. Strengthen and develop mechanisms to respond to allegations of child rights violations and child abuse in the region.

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