

Situational Analysis of Food, Nutrition and Income Security in Karamoja

“A normalising view of Karamoja”

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The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Food Programme or the Government of Uganda.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Against Hunger (<i>Action contre la Faim</i>)
AISE	Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion
ASM	Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining
AU	African Union
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CPMCs	Community Project Management Committees
CRM	Community Resource Mapping
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DGSM	Department of Geological Surveys and Mining
DFID	Department for International Development
ECO	Ecological Christian Organisation
EFTAF	Empowering Farmers through Agribusiness and Financial Services
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSNA	Food Security and Nutrition Assessment
GoU	Government of Uganda
IDI	In-depth Interview
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
SP	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	Innovation for Poverty Action
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JSTOR	Journal Storage
KIDP	Karamoja Integrated Development Plan
KIDDP	Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme
KII	Key Informant Interview
KNRC	Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
MEMD	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MLG	Ministry of Local Government
MOH	Ministry of Health
MP	Member of Parliament
NAES	National Agricultural Education Strategy
NCA	Nutrition Causal Analysis

Acronyms

NDP	National Development Plan
NFA	National Forrest Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
NUSAF II	Second Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Programme
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
SAGE	Uganda Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment
SCG	Senior Citizens Grant
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UDHS	Uganda Demographic Health Survey
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPF	Uganda Police Forces
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme

Executive Summary

After decades of failing development aid, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Uganda has committed itself to identifying innovative approaches to better address food, nutrition and income insecurity in the Karamoja sub-region (referred to as Karamoja) of north-eastern Uganda. For this purpose, Development Pathways was contracted to undertake a situation analysis to uncover the underlying causes of food, nutrition and income insecurity in Karamoja, and to generate ideas for innovative social policy solutions and provide recommendations.

The situation analysis demonstrates that development across Uganda is highly uneven. In several instances Karamoja scores worst when compared with other regions in terms of food security, poverty, education and healthcare indicators. The roots of Karamoja's economic impoverishment can be traced back to the colonial period, when it was treated as a region of "exception" within the overall rule of the Ugandan State. This treatment resulted from a longstanding perception of transhumant pastoralism (the primary livelihood strategy of the Karamojong people) as "primitive", "irrational" and "violent". Over years, such treatment has relegated the region to the margins of the state formation process. As such, the inhabitants of Karamoja lack proper legal frameworks as well as benefits in terms of public goods and infrastructure, and legitimate political representation.

Despite the long-term presence of development partners in Uganda, the development gap between Karamoja and the rest of the country has widened since independence. Interventions have thus far set out to "treat the symptoms" of chronic food, nutrition and income insecurity in the region, as opposed to addressing the structural causes. As such, they have not had a significant impact on communities in the region. Over the past three decades humanitarian aid, targeted poor relief and workfare schemes have proven to be the most popular interventions carried out by development partners and by the government. While such interventions may have somewhat positively contributed to the avoidance of famine episodes, they have never succeeded in advancing the population's overall well-being and inclusion in the country's development.

Furthermore, "development" in Karamoja has consistently been conceptualised as agricultural by the government and development partners. Yet, with semi-arid lands due to repeated drought, unpredictable rainfalls and consistent below-average crop yield per hectare, agriculture is proving to be untenable as a major livelihood strategy in the region. If agriculture is continually promoted in this way, the Karamojong will never be able to produce enough food for their own subsistence (unless there are significant investments in irrigation).

Based on relevant literature and research findings from this study, it is right to say that the underlying causes of “failed development” in Karamoja cannot be traced to the Karamojong’s own failings. Over decades, the Karamojong have largely been subjected to the stigmatising characterisation of themselves as “lazy”, “idle” and “aid dependent”. They cannot be understood using a narrow sectoral approach. Such an exogenous negative narrative has been internalised by many Karamojong, heavily impacting notions of their identity and self-worth.

To shed light upon how and why Karamoja continually performs worst in terms of national average indicators, extensive available data has been disaggregated by age and gender from a lifecycle approach. This information has further been enriched with a livelihood analysis, thus revealing specific obstacles each age and gender group faces across a wide range of economic activities. If the government and development partners do not acknowledge the livelihood transition that has occurred over the past fifty years – which is causing increasing impoverishment and “intersecting inequality” – this may become the cause of further destitution. In this regard, the “business-as-usual approach” of government and development partners within the project cycle should be re-thought from scratch. The current livelihoods diversification requires innovative policies and projects and new ways of collecting data. Unless new efforts are made to improve the reliability of quantitative data, the designing of effective development policies will remain highly limited.

While the issues affecting the region are somehow unique compared to other rural areas in Uganda, this report illustrates that the “exceptionalism” prism – usually cast by the government and development partners onto the region – has been responsible for the reproduction of such negative development indicators. Paradoxically, a “normalising view” is a progressive approach to positively include Karamoja as a contributor to overall socio-economic development of the country. For this reason, the report looks at what are generally neglected topics in the region, such as unemployment and labour market dynamics and issues related to land tenure and power relations.

Finally, the situation analysis proposes a different interpretation, whereby the Karamojong’s problems are cast as being more similar to those of other rural areas of northern Uganda and related to issues such as deficient universal goods (healthcare, education and social security), land rights, low wages and high unemployment rates. The result is a report that will be useful for policy makers – both government and development partners – since specific problems are identified and appropriate policy interventions are provided.

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