

INTER-AGENCY REGIONAL ANALYSTS NETWORK

FUTURE LIVELIHOODS IN KARAMOJA

A Scenario Analysis Looking Forward to 2022

EAST AFRICA

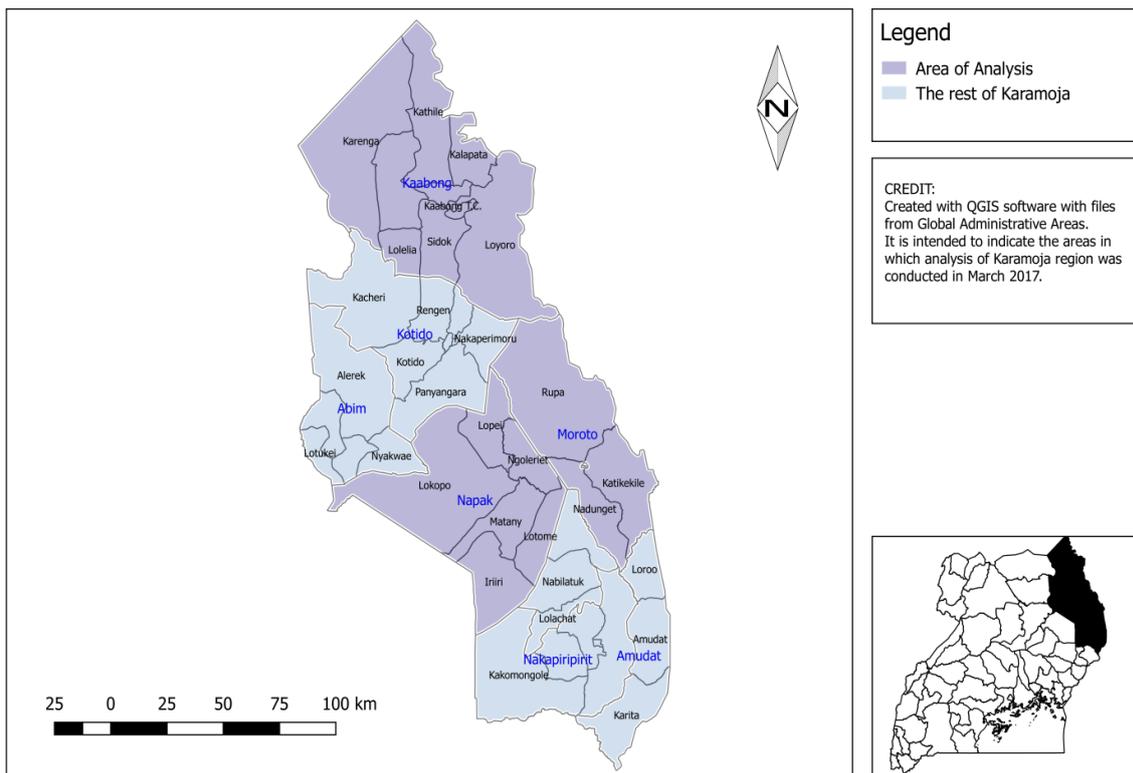
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MAP OF KARAMOJA SHOWING AREAS OF ANALYSIS



KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Farming and pastoralism will continue to play a predominant role in Karamoja's livelihoods portfolio for the foreseeable future. Agriculture is not a livelihoods sector that will change quickly or dramatically.
2. Though mining and tourism may improve state revenues and personal income, the two sectors are not robust enough to generate many new jobs or livelihood opportunities in and of themselves.
3. A transition from pastoralism to settled agro-pastoral livelihoods has been taking place in the last decade and will continue. However, the transition is painful in terms of cultural and traditional resistance to changing ways of life and, in particular, gender roles.
4. A strategic focus on behaviour change is therefore integral to easing livelihood transitions as market linkages grow and the influence of the state increases.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

This report utilizes strategic foresight techniques to build three scenarios for the future of livelihoods in Karamoja. Through desk research and key informant interviews with government officials and representatives from civil society, a number of key drivers were identified that impacted the quality and quantity of livelihood growth in Karamoja. These drivers were ranked on a matrix charting their potential impact versus the amount of uncertainty they may face over the next five years. Hypotheses were constructed for each key driver and used to build narratively cohesive scenarios. The objective for this report is to inform strategic responses to each scenario in an attempt to identify one response that can flexibly adapt to an indeterminate future.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, Uganda has consistently posted GDP growth rates over 5% and made solid gains in reducing poverty. However, economic growth and poverty reduction have not occurred uniformly across the country. While Central and Western districts have reduced their share of Uganda's poor from 15% to 6% and 17% to 10% from 2006 to 2013, the Northern Region has seen a jump from 39% to 47% over the same time period.¹

Karamoja is Uganda's poorest sub-region;² it has historically been viewed as a violent, underdeveloped peripheral area since the colonial era. Unsited for mainstream theories of state building and development, pastoralist communities, like those in Karamoja, were and are often problematized in policy and practice as uncivilized, uncontrollable, and outside the system due to their transient nature and independence. The solution, therefore, has traditionally been an attempt by both colonial and post-colonial powers to bring pastoral communities inside the state system through forced settlement, impermeable borders, and a transition to rain-fed agriculture. In Karamoja, these attempts have typically gone hand in hand with state violence, reprisal killings, and broken communities. For example, under Idi Amin's reign, the Ugandan state attempted a pacification and development scheme, with former Prime Minister Milton Obote famously declaring, "We shall not wait for Karamoja to develop."³ The plan failed.

In the late 2000s, the Ugandan government tried again, this time under President Yoweri Museveni. While the national army, the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF), was accused of abuses under the disarmament campaign, its action was considered a success. According to key informants across the sub-region, security has improved, cattle raids have decreased, and development has flourished with increased trade, tourism, and improved infrastructure as violence has declined.

Still, Karamoja remains Uganda's poorest sub-region, largely dependent on cultivation and animal husbandry to provide livelihoods in an environment known for its harsh climatic variability. Fully 75% of the sub-region's population is considered destitute under the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative's (OPHI) Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).⁴ Reliant on food aid for decades, the region's only path to sustainable development is through improving livelihoods, growing incomes, and reducing reliance upon foreign assistance through increased crop and livestock production and the possibility of new tourist, mining, and industry revenues.

The following paper examines the challenges and opportunities for Karamoja through 2022. It takes a systems-based approach to analyzing the region, examining the heavy trends and identifying key drivers of change to build futures-oriented scenarios for strategic planning. Various paths to development exist in Karamoja and as a livelihoods-based system architecture takes shape, it will underpin population movements, growth possibilities, and both domestic and cross-border market opportunities. As development takes root in a post-conflict setting, the most important consideration will be that it empowers the local people of Karamoja and enables them to build livelihoods suitable for their specific cultural, geographic, and social conditions.

¹ The World Bank, 2016. [Uganda Poverty Assessment 2016: Fact Sheet](#). 20 September 2016.

² UNDP 2015. [Uganda Human Development Report 2015: Unlocking the Development Potential of Northern Uganda](#).

³ Human Rights Watch, 2014. *"How Can We Survive Here?": The Impact of Mining on Human Rights in Karamoja, Uganda*.

⁴ OPHI 2016. [OPHI Country Briefing December 2016: Uganda](#).

HEAVY TRENDS IN KARAMOJA'S DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Karamoja's development and livelihoods system has a variety of networked drivers internal and external to the region. Heavy trends are highly impactful and relatively certain over the time period for this report. Heavy trends are, therefore, present in every scenario for Karamoja, and actors who build a strategy around the scenarios herein should take these trends into consideration as underlying factors in building a strategic response.

An implicit assumption regarding the heavy trends is the degree of inevitability for each driver without the specificity of a prediction. Karamoja is known, for example, to possess a high degree of variability in rainfall, leading to periods of extended drought and crop failure. Drought cycles in the region have shortened to three years,⁵ and while this report makes no attempt to predict *when* the next drought will occur or which areas will be most affected, it does anticipate that unpredictable rainfall will lead to drought and food insecurity at some point in the five-year outlook.

Additionally, institutions such as gender relations do not change quickly. While Karamoja's cultural and economic trends are transforming traditional gender roles, it is unlikely that any single event or series of events will change gender relations dramatically over the course of the five-year outlook. Any incident that could change gender relations dramatically in such a short time period would be considered a 'game changer' event, a black swan that, while extremely unlikely, would have such drastic implications that it would disrupt most of the heavy trends and key drivers in the region. Brutal interstate conflict or a disease epidemic are both examples of just such a black swan event.

CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND REGIONAL WARMING

80% of Ugandans are dependent on rain-fed agriculture, a sector that makes up 60% of Uganda's export earnings.⁶ Karamoja's climate has a high degree of rainfall variability, long dry seasons, and short, intense rainy periods. The sub-region is vulnerable to both drought and flooding and has traditionally supported pastoral groups who have best adapted themselves to the erratic weather through semi-nomadic transhumance.

The people of Karamoja are traditionally cattle keepers, reliant on the open savannah and free movement between the region's dry belt and the area known as the 'green belt,' a rainier zone running through Napak, Kotido, and Kaabong district that has been undergoing increasing settlement for agricultural exploitation. The people of Karamoja are not the only pastoralists who use the region, however. Before colonialism imposed artificial boundaries, there was no real division between pastoral groups. The Turkana in Kenya still move their herds into Karamoja to take advantage of better pasture in the dry season, for example. These migration patterns remain relatively unchanged, even as pasture and climate have degraded and some Turkana have remained in Karamoja far longer into the season than was historically the case.

The perception in Karamoja is that rainy seasons are becoming shorter and more erratic. Rainfall is viewed as inconsistent, with torrential downpours interspersed with long dry periods that can ruin a season's crop. However, meteorological studies have shown little support for the view that drought incidence is increasing.⁷ Instead, rainfall in Karamoja has always historically been extremely variable and unpredictable. This high

⁵ Musinguzi, Bamuturaki. "[Drought, Hunger Strike Karamoja's 'Cattle Corridor.'](#)" *The East African*. 10 August 2013.

⁶ Climate & Development Knowledge Network. [PROJECT: Economic Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Uganda](#). Retrieved 29 March 2017.

⁷ Jordaan, Andries. *Karamoja, Uganda Drought Risk Assessment: Is Drought to Blame for Chronic Food Insecurity?* International Rescue Committee: May 5, 2015.

degree of variability has severely affected rain-fed crop production in Karamoja but has historically had little impact on pastoral livelihoods thanks to the movement of people and animals in search of water and pasture, which for centuries was available in abundance, if one knew where to look. That is changing as pasture disappears for farmland and wildlife sanctuaries and behind impermeable national boundaries.

It is difficult to predict how climate change will affect Karamoja as few models have adequately grappled with sub-regional variations in East Africa. However, it is likely that Northern Uganda will experience increased rainfall from March-May until 2050 and a potential 42% increase in rainfall from October to December by 2080. However, the same projections also anticipate a reduction of rainfall between 14% and 41% between July and September.⁸ This indicates that the agricultural season will shift somewhat over the coming fifty years if current projections hold. Karamoja's single rainy season is difficult to compare to the rest of Northern Uganda, but regardless, there is consensus that warming will occur across the region. Average annual temperatures have been rising over the last 40 years, with a maximum temperature increase of 1.9C in Kaabong district and a 3.9C increase in Moroto in that time period.⁹

Finally, while there have been an increase in flooding across the region, it is unclear how much of this is due to climate variability and how much can be associated with land degradation and the loss of soils and ground cover. Karamoja has seen a dramatic reduction of vegetation in the last several decades as the loss of cattle has forced people to harvest trees for charcoal and brick production as an alternative source of income. In areas with increased settlement, vegetation loss has been higher, and as urbanization grows, it is likely that settlements will continue to lose vegetation and tree cover, a vicious cycle that could lead to increased damage from flooding, poorer soils, and a worsening perception of the effect climate has on agricultural livelihoods.

DEMOGRAPHY

Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the fastest growing populations in the world, but Uganda is an outlier even in this statistic. The country's crude birth rate of 43/1000 people is the 7th highest in the world.¹⁰ It's 3.3% annual population growth means that it is expected to pass 50m people by 2023 from 41.3m in March 2017. The country's median age of 16 has not yet reached the stages where the country can reap the benefit of demographic dividends, when the working age share of the population outnumbers that of those who are outside the labor market. Uganda is a very young country and will remain so for the outlook of this report.

Population statistics are less reliable on the sub-regional level in Uganda. The 2002 census likely overstated Karamoja's total population, and while the 2014 census corrected this estimate, the lack of reliable data makes accurate projections for the region difficult. What is known is that Karamoja's population trends mirror those of Uganda overall. The sub-region is young and growing at a tremendous pace. The difficulty for livelihoods will be integrating these young people into the labor market. Youth unemployment is a challenge across the country but especially so for Karamoja, which has fewer opportunities for livelihoods and income generation.

Typically, urbanization is a heavy trend across the sub-Saharan Africa. However, in Karamoja, the population increases as well as the reduction in violence since 2011 has created unique population movements that have substantial effects on both livelihoods and migration. The ongoing population boom has brought more people to cities, especially young people with education who do not see a future in agriculture or traditional pastoral livelihoods. However, violence reduction has also allowed people to move deeper into rural areas to take up farming. Previously, the violence associated with cattle raiding and reprisal killings kept the people of Karamoja

⁸ Mercycorps, 2016. Karamoja Strategic Resilience Assessment: Final Report.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ World Bank. [Birth Rate, crude \(per 1000 people\)](#). Accessed 29 March 2017.

close to the relative safety of cities, police outposts, and UPDF barracks. With the reduction in violence, people are opening up more land for farming and moving farther from established settlements, taking them away from health and education services.

POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

Karamoja's position as Uganda's poorest sub-region carries with it a host of socio-economic issues and challenges for development. Key informants on several occasions pointed to harvest-time sales of cereals, which indicated that farmers do not enjoy enough financial security or enough infrastructure in cereal banks to hold their crops and wait for better prices outside the glut related to farming season. In especially lean times, cereals are then bought back at higher prices, indicating that households in Karamoja do not have the ability to break a cycle of financial and food insecurity. Food prices are often inflated at the beginning of the rainy season during the traditional hunger gap, which can push families into rural areas in search of staple goods. Markets across Karamoja often also suffer from poor access, with Kaabong particularly vulnerable as it sits at the end of the road for most Ugandan traders in the region. New transport infrastructure projects, as well as the possibility of connecting Karamoja to South Sudan and Kenya, could remarkably open up markets and lower prices for the people of the Karamoja.

Poor market access and poverty-induced sales increase the level of malnutrition in the region.¹¹ Though Karamoja has made great strides since 2003, general acute malnutrition rates are often above the World Health Organization's (WHO) emergency threshold of 10%. The low number of health facilities in the region increase the risk of diseases associated with poor nutrition and hurt the potential for education to make a serious impact on the livelihood possibilities of the sectors that the government of Uganda is trying to promote in Karamoja, especially in mining and services related to the tourism industry. Severe malnutrition, both acute and chronic, is a serious issue in the sub-region that will affect health and education opportunities and thus transformations of livelihoods for the next several years.

The extreme poverty in Karamoja also has serious impacts on health, wellness, and the societal fabric of the region. Migration has been increasing out of Karamoja to major cities including Mbale and Kampala. Migrants leave in search of economic opportunities that are not easily found in the sub-region. However, migration also puts them at risk of trafficking and exploitation. According to the US State Department in its 2015 Trafficking in Persons report, women and children are "particularly vulnerable to domestic servitude, commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging." Increased population movements have also increased the risk from HIV/AIDS. Karamoja's HIV rate has increased from 1.7% in 2000 to 5.3% in 2011,¹² and may only worsen as mining and trade become more important to Karamoja's economic portfolio.

GENDER RELATIONS

The Northern Region shows the second highest levels of gender-based discrimination in Uganda;¹³ however, there is significant sub-regional variation. Karamoja, for example, displays only moderate gender-based discrimination relative to the rest of the country. Traditional attitudes towards women are highly patriarchal but with an interesting degree of autonomy for women in certain sectors. Karamoja ranks third out of ten sub-regions for women's civil rights,¹⁴ with some of the highest levels of equitable access to justice in the country.

¹¹ Action Against Hunger, 2016. *Link NCA: Nutrition Causal Analysis: Moroto District, Karamoja Region, Uganda February-July 2016*.

¹² Bukenya, Daraus. "[Confronting Rising HIV Prevalence in Karamoja](#)." New Vision. 8 December 2016.

¹³ Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2015. [Uganda: SIGI Country Report](#). p103.

¹⁴ Ibid. p106.

Women play an important role in the politics of the sub-region, as represented by First Lady Janet Museveni's role as State Minister for Karamoja Affairs from 2009. She was later promoted to Minister for Karamoja Affairs from 2011 to 2016.

While the sub-region performs well in the public sphere, the private lives of most in Karamoja are still very traditional and very patriarchal. Karamoja is the worst performing sub-region in Uganda for discriminatory social institutions within the family.¹⁵ It has the highest preference for sons of any sub-region in the country, despite the shrinking space for traditional male livelihoods in the pastoral sector. The level of gender-based violence in Karamoja is extremely high. Some analysts see a link between limited opportunities for male livelihoods and women's growing economic role in the family, leading to an increase in alcoholism and domestic violence. One in four women in Karamoja has experienced intimate partner violence within the last twelve months. Gender-based violence cases are rarely reported, so numbers are difficult to estimate and highly contested by government officials and health professionals.

What is known is that women are often responsible for domestic chores within the household while simultaneously generating significant household income in agriculture, petty trade in poultry and food products, wage labor, and mining. Women in Karamoja actually enjoy some of the best access to economic resources in the north. Karamoja is 8% less likely to restrict women's access to natural resources and economic opportunity than the country average, and attitudes towards discrimination are remarkably low – 17% of respondents believe women should be denied equal access to finance as men and should not be allowed to access and manage land equal to men. This is better than the country average of 20% and three times better than neighboring Acholi region, where fully 54% of respondents believe women's access to land and finance should not be equal to that of men.¹⁶ However, it is important here to clarify that land may be an easy asset to share in Karamoja. Livestock has traditionally been the greatest source of income and livelihood for the region; while women may enjoy access to land, this may not benefit them overall without access to livestock, which are traditionally the property of men.

While women's public roles may start to change traditional relationships, the cultural institutions that have survived for centuries are unlikely to change radically in the next five years. However, for livelihood promotion, it is clear that livelihoods may not empower women in Karamoja if men cannot accept traditionally female income generation practices or if men's work does not grow alongside that of women. Until this transition occurs, women will continue to take on more and more responsibilities both within and outside the home.¹⁷

CULTURAL LINKS TO CATTLE

The peoples of Karamoja migrated to the region between 1600 and 1700 AD from pasturelands in southern Ethiopia. Since their migration, they have engaged in primarily pastoral activities until recent decades, when they began to incorporate more cultivation into their livelihood portfolios. Their traditional socio-cultural history, however, is based around cattle and the search for pasture. As a result, they have a deep connection to livestock that has not integrated well into modern systems of capitalism and the nation-state.

These livelihoods have suffered tremendously since the UPDF disarmament campaign. Already brutal raiding closed off grazing areas and forced herds into government-protected kraals where diseases were more

¹⁵ Ibid p103.

¹⁶ Ibid p105.

¹⁷ This increased workload is bad not only for women, but for families, as women's increased workload has been shown to have a negative effect of breastfeeding rates in Moroto. See: Action Against Hunger, 2016. *Link NCA: Nutrition Causal Analysis: Moroto District, Karamoja Region, Uganda February-July 2016.*

common and easily transmittable. The result has been devastation of pastoral livelihoods, without a significant transformation of cultural relations to cattle. Formerly, cattle in Karamoja were not a particularly liquid asset except in times of extreme duress. This has begun to change with the establishment of clear cattle markets, but despite a reduction in violence and raiding as well as safer market access, the pastoralists of Karamoja have used the years since disarmament to restock herds rather than integrate themselves fully into a market system. Cattle are important to social relations such as bride price, and the exigencies of herd management often actively discourage children from attending school, as time away from the cattle competes with the need for traditional knowledge of quality pasture and water points often far from settled lands.

These cultural links are unlikely to change in the short term. In the long run, Karamoja's pastoralists will be forced to adapt in the face of state sanctioned development and the increased penetration of capitalist livelihoods - livestock as productive, tradeable asset rather than way of life. Small-scale pastoralists will be forced to commercialize their production and join the market, step out and into alternative livelihoods, or settle and used mix agro-pastoral livelihoods, but this will take time, and cultural traditions may only change with younger generations who find it increasingly difficult to live the traditional pastoralist life. Indeed, these changes are already taking place in many areas, but they will be resisted by those who hold fast to traditional livelihoods and ways of life.

LIVELIHOOD SECTORS IN KARAMOJA

In Uganda's development plan, Karamoja's traditional livelihoods have proven insufficient to develop the sub-region in any meaningful way. The government has, therefore, embarked on a national development plan in which Karamoja is given special attention for transforming livelihoods along a few specific sectors: agro-pastoralism, mining, and tourism, with infrastructure developments leading naturally to an increase in trade opportunities and the possibility of value-added industry in sectors associated with the three main priorities for development.

AGRO-PASTORALISM

The changes to pastoral livelihoods have forced many in Karamoja into the agricultural sector or, more often, settled agro-pastoralism. Violence reduction has reopened many rural areas to agricultural development, taking farmers further from settlements with easy access to health and education facilities. However, the transition to crop-based livelihoods is not an easy one for the traditional pastoralists in Karamoja. Between climate variability, lack of inputs, poor market access, and little experience with farming, cultivation in the sub-region is risky and out of reach for many. Despite this, several interviewees avowed that semi-nomadic pastoralism does not have a future in Karamoja. Cultivation is viewed by many as a path forward into development and modernity.

Agriculture is, however, viewed with suspicion by some in the sub-region. Several respondents noted the intersection of traditional pastoral livelihoods with climate variability as a historically important livelihood well-adapted to the region. Others saw agricultural promotion as a top-down policy choice by politicians in Kampala, many of whom are from agricultural societies themselves. Cultural stereotypes see settled agricultural people in power as promoting their own way of life without proper cultural understanding of Karamoja's adherence to pastoralism. It was noted that past Ministers for Karamoja Affairs have never been from Karamoja sub-region, so the perception is that politicians promoting livelihood development in Kampala have little experience with the region or its needs.

Nevertheless, agricultural development is occurring across Karamoja, especially in the 'green-belt' communities bordering neighboring Acholi, Lango, Teso, and Sebel sub-regions. However, for agriculture to succeed it will

need to capitalize and link into regional markets, which themselves are weak and underdeveloped. Already developed pastoral livelihoods, on the other hand, could benefit from value-added industry in meat processing, dairy, and leather goods. For these value-added industries to grow, the cultural attachment to cattle would need to fundamentally change to a cash-based income system, which is unlikely to occur until market access improves and market forces transform social relations in the sub-region.

MINING

Northern Uganda is rich in a variety of minerals including limestone, pozzolana, gold, vermiculite, cobalt, wolfram, iron ore, columbite-tantalite (coltan), and gypsum.¹⁸ However, the two most important in the Karamoja sub-region in the five-year outlook are gold and marble. Currently, gold is mined on a small scale in the mountains bordering Kenya. Gold mining is not a primary source of livelihood, but often subsidizes income during periods of hardship and is an available income-generation strategy for both women and children, who have a much harder time accessing primary livelihoods like cattle.

Uganda has recently made a major investment in their mining sector with reference to gold. The government opened a gold smelting operation in Entebbe in February 2017 that can refine gold to 99.9% purity, the standard for export to international markets.¹⁹ In Karamoja, roads and industrial electric transmission are both being developed specifically for the mining sector, indicating a desire on the government's part to industrialize the mining sector in the sub-region. Even if the movement towards greater industrialization of mining in Karamoja accelerates in the five-year outlook, it is unclear that local peoples could benefit from these jobs. Educational opportunities in Karamoja are poor, with low literacy, and what interviewees typically referred to as 'inappropriate' studies for those students who do go on to university in larger cities throughout Uganda. Some interviewees complained that schooling in Karamoja focused too much on 'social work,' i.e. work with the aim of alleviating the conditions of those in need of help or welfare rather than the skills that will enable them to succeed in industrial livelihoods, such as science, math, and engineering for the mining sector.



In December 2014, it was estimated that 13,000 people were involved in the mining of marble in Karamoja.²⁰ Marble is integral to cement production; however, there is no cement industry within the sub-region. This was raised as a grievance by several key informants, who complained that the product is taken out of the sub-region to the Tororo cement factory, Uganda's largest producer of steel and cement, several hours away. If cement is produced closer to the mines near Moroto, a key value-added industry could secure livelihoods and bring ancillary benefits to the region. Again, however, the issue of proper training and education is a constraint on future development of value added industries such as cement production.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, 2014. "How Can We Survive Here?": *The Impact of Mining on Human Rights in Karamoja, Uganda*.

¹⁹ Africa Confidential. "[Museveni Goes for Gold](#)." Vol 58-5. 3 March 2017.

²⁰ Wanyama, Olandason. "[Over 13,000 Involved in Marble Mining in Karamoja](#)." Uganda Radio Network. 6 Dec 2014.

TOURISM

As a periphery region that has remained relatively untouched by development, Karamoja holds extensive tourist potential, both for its unique cultures and people as well as its animal life. The government of Uganda's infrastructure development, including major roads and electrification schemes will only increase the tourist potential of Karamoja's districts, making it both easier to visit and more comfortable once there. The wildlife potential for Karamoja is great, as 40.8% of land is already gazetted for wildlife through the National Forest Authority or the Ugandan Wildlife Authority. The disarmament campaign has also increased wildlife and reduced poaching in the years since it ended.

For tourism to provide a significant addition to livelihoods in the region, it must clear several hurdles. While the provision of roads and electrification will ease tourist access to the region, Karamoja remains several hours farther from the main international airport in Entebbe than its competitors in the tourist trade. Karamoja is literally at the end of the road for most overland tourists, and while wildlife viewing can contribute significantly to regional budgets, its share of the labor force participation remains small. Land that has been gazetted for wildlife is taken out of the livelihood portfolio for farmers, herders, and miners, as well as removing important income generation activities including charcoal production, which although environmentally damaging and unsustainable at current levels, nevertheless provides significant income potential for local communities.

Thus, the cost-benefit ratio for communities in Karamoja is still stacked somewhat against tourism in the region. Local peoples see their lands gazetted, reducing space for agriculture and pastoral livelihoods. Key informants emphasized that the inability to burn pasture in the parks increased the incidence of tsetse fly in pastures close to the park, reducing the viability of livestock in those regions. Animals, especially elephants, leave the park and can cause serious damage to crops and raise tensions with communities alongside wildlife areas. These are problems that are already in place and will need to be managed by increasing links between communities and the wildlife authority.

Managing the conflicts that arise between local communities and park authorities will be integral to boosting tourism as a viable sector and one which benefits the local population in a meaningful way. At this stage, many respondents felt the benefits of tourism accrued to the state, while the costs are borne mostly by many of the peoples of Karamoja. Equitable distribution of profits and further community engagement could create increased opportunities for local peoples in Karamoja's tourist sector.

PETTY TRADE

Petty trade typically absorbs a small percentage of labor force, so while it is important to commerce in the sub-region, it is unlikely to be a major livelihood driver over the next five years. Petty trade is, however, likely to expand significantly based on the reduction in violence in the region and investments in infrastructure. Whether that growth benefits Karamoja's traders is another question, but an important gender driver should be considered – women in Karamoja are much better integrated into petty trade than elsewhere in the country. As those trade links improve, women's empowerment may benefit from increased income and autonomy.

The Ugandan government has committed to improving Karamoja's transport infrastructure, building highways between the sub-regions main towns and linking them to major cities including Soroti, Lira, and Mbale. Tarmacked roads, such as the one under construction between Moroto/Soroti and the already completed Moroto/Nakapiripirit highway are integral for the sub-region's development beyond the already heavy investment in improving the sub-region's murrum roads. Murrum, while drastically improving trade linkages, still presents great challenges to overland transport due to the damage rainy-season floods can do to the red clay.

The peace dividend has already seen an expansion in economic activity and this is likely to continue. However, there are likely important studies to be done in terms of the roles various ethnicities are playing in trade. Many of Karamoja's people do not have the capital to invest in trade, so there is a question of dominance by groups from outside the region in certain sectors, which could cause rising tensions if Karamoja trades away the majority of its wealth.

More important than the sub-region's rising domestic trade, Karamoja could be an important way point in regional trade as well. The government has plans to extend transport infrastructure into Turkana and Eastern Equatoria, which would improve trade linkages and export opportunities for Ugandan businesses and bring much more wealth to the region. Indeed, traders already ply these routes, but the cost is high. Improved infrastructure could bring the greater 'Karamoja Cluster,' encompassing Turkana, Eastern Equatoria, and SNNPR in Ethiopia, closer together and have a much bigger livelihood impact than domestic Ugandan trade alone.

DISRUPTIVE CHALLENGES

Karamoja is rising developmentally with serious commitment from the Ugandan government to improve trade links, electricity provision, and investment in agriculture, trade, and mining. However, overcoming decades of underinvestment is not an easy task, and there are several challenges that may hinder or even reverse developmental gains over the five year outlook. Three of the most important are highlighted here. These should not be considered guaranteed disruptors, but the threat of disruption is great enough that strategies developed through this report should take into account the risk associated with these challenges and plan accordingly.

CROSS-BORDER CONSIDERATIONS

Karamoja's position on the north-eastern border of Uganda means that it is both far from centralized power while also vulnerable to domestic issues in neighboring states that it cannot control, and since most African borders are the creation of colonial powers, the peoples of Karamoja often have closer links to their pastoral neighbors in Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia than they have with the settled agriculturalists in southern Uganda.

South Sudan's ongoing civil war has not significantly reached the borders of Karamoja. In 2016, an attack on Ikotos displaced several thousand to Kaabong district, where they were relocated to Uganda's refugee settlement areas farther west. Eastern Equatoria has remained quiet since. It is stable and there is reportedly staunch support for the SPLA in the main administrative town Kapoeta, which was never taken by the Sudanese throughout the Second Sudanese Civil War. The border region between Eastern Equatoria and Karamoja should, therefore, remain relatively stable.

South Sudan's civil war, however, is extremely volatile, and Uganda has found itself further enmeshed in the violence as the war has spread to the Greater Equatoria region. Some analysts fear that a shadow front could be opening up in the northern Acholi border region. There are rumors that South Sudanese intelligence officials have infiltrated Uganda's refugee areas in an attempt to ferret out opposition fighters. If the opposition moved east to avoid Juba's reach, they may find fertile ground for rebellion in the relatively unpopulated areas of Karamoja. The number of easily-accessible weapons in South Sudan should be of great concern to authorities in Karamoja, as unresolved issues from the disarmament campaign could fuel further grievances in the sub-region. Turkana, similarly, is flooded with weapons, and its porous border is a threat to security and even economic prosperity in Karamoja, as gold is often smuggled into Kenya to avoid tax.

Additionally, if Karamoja develops at a greater rate than its neighbors, the sub-region could see a spike in cross-border movements to access both markets and services. Some in Karamoja are concerned that the Turkana and Equatorians already cross the border to access healthcare, depleting stocks for local peoples and skewing population calculations for services. Several Turkana have been camped in the mountains on the border since last year due to poor rains and drought conditions in north-western Kenya. Respondents noted that the Turkana have refused to return to Kenya, reportedly saying, “We are not going back to die.” Their position in Karamoja’s pasturelands threatens to disrupt traditional cattle movements and could lead to conflict.

NATIONAL-LEVEL POLITICAL ISSUES

Karamoja is staunchly supportive of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the party of Yoweri Museveni, which has governed Uganda since 1986. This is obvious from even casual observance in any major city in the sub-region. NRM shirts and political paraphernalia from the 2016 campaign are still on display throughout Karamoja. With 2016’s highly contested elections, there was fear among the people of Karamoja that if violence were to take place, they may be pulled into a national conflagration.

President Museveni will be unable to run for the presidency in 2021 due to constitutional age restrictions barring anyone over the age of 75 from the nation’s highest office, but there is already a campaign underway to change the constitution and allow Museveni to continue to govern the country.²¹ The possibility of disruptive elections near the end of this five-year outlook should be seriously considered in any strategic response and monitored closely for risk mitigation to projects and programming.

Finally, while the national government has committed to a development plan for Karamoja, it is important to note that Karamoja sub-region is almost entirely dependent on the central government in Kampala for its budget. Priorities can change and when they do so, they have a serious impact on planning. An example commonly cited in the region is the highway connecting Moroto to Mbale in Eastern District. It was originally routed directly through Nakapiripirit, but once the road to Nakapiripirit was completed, the highway was rerouted instead through Soroti, a detour of several hundred kilometres from the most direct route. Considering that mining and tourism revenues, two of the most important growth sectors in Karamoja, mostly accrue to the central government, it is unlikely that Karamoja will gain any degree of control over its own finances in the five-year outlook.

NON-CLIMATE RELATED CROP DISRUPTION

In 2017, Uganda confirmed its first incidences of fall armyworm caterpillar infestation, which are related to the African armyworm but native to the Americas and resistant to locally available pesticides.²² The invasive species is especially damaging to primary crops including maize, cotton, millet, wheat, and rice, and has already done damage to agricultural livelihoods in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Ghana. Confirmed in 20 districts around Uganda, the government has committed 1bn shillings to response action. Senior officials have indicated that the infestation could cause the country to lose up to 15% of its crop. The introduction of the invasive species into Karamoja’s agricultural system could be devastating, as most farmers cannot afford the pesticides necessary to deal with a large-scale infestation.

Damage to Uganda’s crops could drastically raise food prices, especially in an area with poor market access like Karamoja. The damage to livelihoods would also be significant if the pest spread to the green belt agricultural

²¹ Africa Confidential. “[Museveni’s Marathon](#).” 20 January 2017.

²² AFP. “Crop Destroying Armyworm Caterpillars Spread to Uganda.” 24 March 2017

areas of the sub-region. A particularly bad outbreak would put farmers in a much worse position for any drought that will inevitably affect their output in the future.

SCENARIOS FOR 2022

Disarmament and serious government intervention is beginning what could prove to be an important developmental transformation in Karamoja. New roads and electric lines are only one sign of the transformation taking place in the sub-region. The following three scenarios attempt to game out the possibilities for livelihoods in Karamoja in the next five years. None of these scenarios should be considered definite, nor are they predictions. Instead they grapple with the key drivers in the system and the possibility for transformation. The scenarios sketch a picture of how livelihoods might be transformed in each outlook, but second- and third-order effects exist that may be mapped out in order to strengthen strategic interventions in the region.

SCENARIO ONE – “SUCCESS AT A PRICE”

The Ugandan state doubles down on its commitment to develop Karamoja, pouring money into the system and committing to long-term change. Highways and electrification are prioritized for industrial development and regional trade. Highways link the major towns in the region and boost petty trade and agricultural markets. New roads are built into South Sudan and Kenya, linking Lodwar and Kapoeta closer to Moroto and Kampala than even Nairobi or Juba. Spurred by the increase in trade, towns grow quickly, perhaps outgrowing their carrying capacity as water, housing, and services struggle to keep pace. Heavy investment in mining sees industrial operations pushing artisanal miners out of the sector in both gold and marble production. The region struggles to find educated Karamojong to staff industrial operations such as gold mines and a planned cement factory, and higher-skilled workers from outside the region move to Karamoja in search of employment.

The success of the development plan cements NRM’s political dominance in the region and the party easily wins its parliamentary seats in 2021. Favor begets favor as the party rewards Karamoja’s political support with financial support and more development aid. International development aid shrinks as a percentage of overall financial assistance to the region but is often used to fund the government’s development priorities, which are still geared towards agricultural development for the majority of livelihoods. Agriculturalists move increasingly into the ‘green zone’ areas for cultivation, opening new towns and markets; however, the boom is inherently precarious as drought always threatens agricultural output.

In the long-run the government may regret its own success – income and state revenues increase, but livelihoods do not track with development. Unemployment for many increases and raises tensions. Increased access to services draws migrant populations from Kenya and South Sudan, raising additional grievances as the migrants compete for limited blue-collar jobs while the highest paying professions in the mining and tourism sectors are often held by Ugandans from outside Karamoja. This may even be true of livestock – traditionally the primary livelihood in Karamoja. In this scenario, livestock are increasingly controlled by wealthier herders, even some from outside the region. As wealth in the livestock sectors concentrates in the hands of a few, competition will increase, and smaller herders will be driven out of the system.

SCENARIO TWO – “SLOW AND STEADY”

Investment in Karamoja falters once major infrastructure projects have been completed. Roads are not extended to Kenya and South Sudan, so Karamoja remains a periphery region only marginally connected to Uganda’s domestic markets. Trade grows and food prices are cheaper, but the opening of trade does little to reduce poverty, as most are still too destitute to make use of grain banking schemes or other resilience mechanisms to attract better prices outside of harvest season.

International gold prices are up, but the government's plans to invest in mining do not pan out. International mining companies are not in the market for new capital expenditure, so much of the mining falls to an increasing number of artisanal miners. Mining settlements open up in the areas far from current towns, and a mini gold rush is on the way, with associated risks to public health and sanitation in unplanned communities. The marble industry still employs similar numbers as it does now, but investment in value added industry does not occur and much of the product is still exported to Tororo for processing.

Livelihoods in mining are thus up, but precarious and influenced heavily by international gold markets. Tourism benefits from the investment in infrastructure, but the major source of livelihoods remains pastoralism. A major drought event pushes the government to rethink its developmental priorities regarding agriculture based livelihoods. Investment is sought for pastoral livelihoods and value added industries related to livestock. Rural areas are quickly repopulated thanks to the reduction in violence and cattle raiding since the disarmament process, and while Karamoja is not drawn closer to the centralized state, it is more prosperous as a result of stable livelihood developments in agro-pastoralism. The sub-region is growing, not as quickly as in scenario one, but with a bit more stability in livelihoods and service provision.

SCENARIO THREE – “REVERSALS OF FORTUNE”

Developments in the international aid sector work against Karamoja as major international partners such as the UK and US draw down their commitments toward the end of the outlook period, reducing support for livelihood development in Karamoja. At the same time, the government's interest in the region wanes amid a global slump in commodity prices. Gold revenues hold little attractive potential over the next five years, and despite a prominent tourist campaign, the government finds it difficult to increase revenues from Karamoja's wildlife.

Thus two major sources of government revenue and livelihoods stall amidst a general fall in agricultural revenues. Drought pushes farmers into insolvency and increased food insecurity. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of weapons seem to be crossing the border from South Sudan, increasing criminality and cattle raiding. Even poaching is on the rise as local peoples near the park compete with wildlife for pasture and agricultural land. Karamoja is again problematized in the development discourse as being almost pathologically incapable of development. Political will falters, and in the next government planning process, funding for Karamoja is cut dramatically. The sub-region continues to be reliant on food aid for the next several years, but even this is drying up under DfID and USAID cuts. The picture in 2022 is thus one of destitution, rising malnutrition, increasing migration out of Karamoja, and exploitation of Karamoja's migrants in towns and cities across the country.

CONCLUSION

Northern Uganda has traditionally suffered from a lack of investment and development in comparison to the rest of the country. The Karamoja sub-region is no exception. Often left behind throughout its history, Karamoja's pastoralists have been a problem for modern theories of development. Their attachment to cattle and unwillingness to fully participate in capitalist markets and the constraints of the nation-state has meant they have often been left behind by developments in the rest of the country. A successful disarmament campaign from 2006 to 2011 has dramatically reduced violence to the point where the Ugandan government and international donors have made great commitments to developing the sub-region through road and infrastructure projects. However, for development to have a serious impact on Karamoja, it must promote livelihoods and help change traditional livelihoods that are often considered archaic in the current development context. The challenges to this are many but necessary if the region is to shed its peripheral status and join the rest of the country on an equal footing.