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Leaving drought and hunger behind: out-migration from Karamoja, Uganda

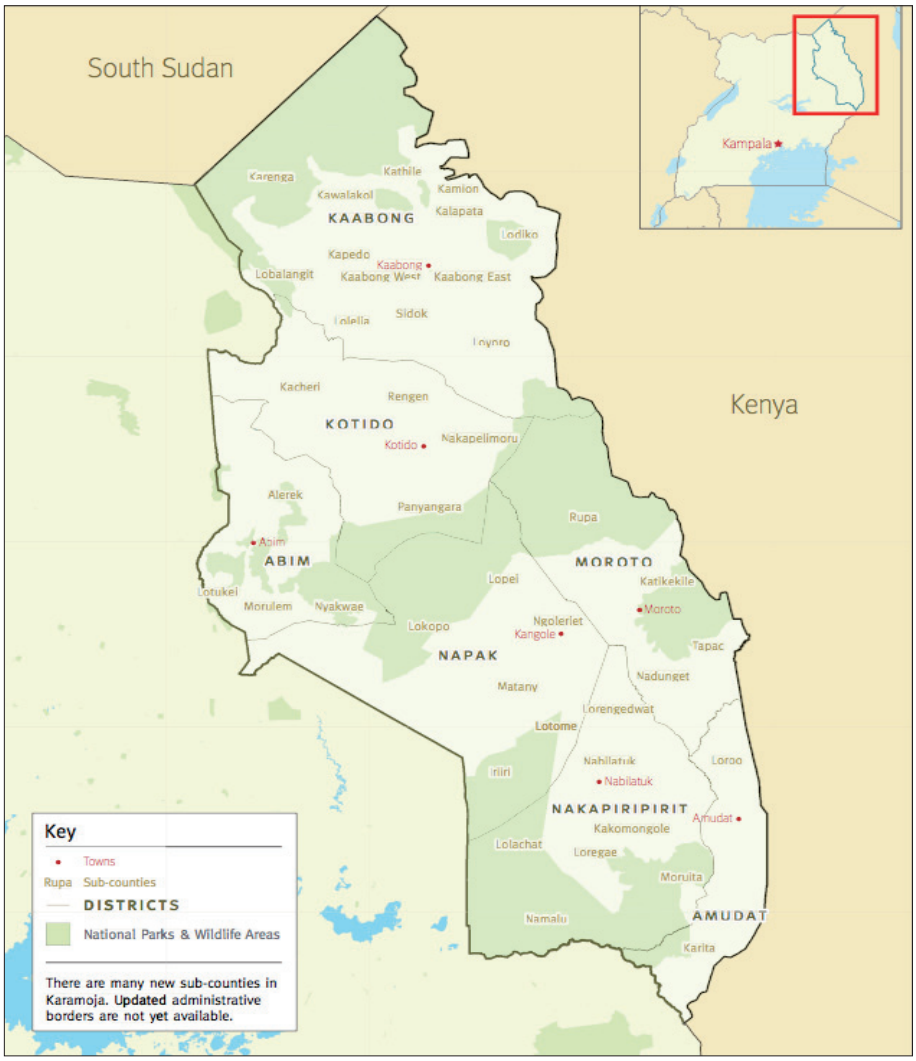
Environmental factors have long impacted migration flows everywhere in the world. People have historically migrated, both internally and internationally, from places that have become inhabitable due to damaging environmental conditions. Migration is often used as a coping mechanism, an adaption strategy, or even a survival strategy. As climate change accelerates changes in environment and the deterioration of livelihoods in certain areas of the world, these migration flows are expected to increase.

While climate change is a global phenomenon affecting all humans, it is often the least-developed countries and the lower income populations that are affected most severely by it. This is due to their limited capability to cope with the changes experienced and the often high dependence on natural resources. Karamoja is a district situated in the north-eastern part of Uganda, a small country in East Africa. It is a dry nomad-land inhabited mainly by pastoralists, where harvests are below the population's needs year after year. Climate change adds to the existing challenges for survival in Karamoja. Drought and floods are the most common disasters affecting Karamoja, causing famine and malnutrition. In an attempt to make ends meet, the region receives large amounts of food aid through international organizations. Climate change is expected to reduce crop yields further with an increased number of droughts in the years to come, challenging the already low economic development of the region.

To adapt to their harsh living-conditions, the people of Karamoja have traditionally seasonally out-migrated, but returned to the area when conditions improved (Stites et al, 2007). Today, the pattern of migration has changed, with more people seemingly leaving permanently (Gelsdorf et al, 2012). New migration patterns also include more minors migrating to urban areas in order to make money (IOM, 2013a), where many of these children risk being exploited for labour, or end up begging on the street. Hopes of a better life are not always fulfilled in the city. Policies regarding Karamojong migrants are few or completely absent, and not enough is known about how both adult and child migrants are treated in the city.

This paper examines how environmental change is one of several factors affecting the Karamoja region, and how this change expresses itself in new forms of out-migration. It raises the issue of ensuring livelihoods in Karamoja, and the consequences this new form of migration involves, looking at both international and national responses to the issue. Although a slow-onset disaster such as Karamoja need to recognize previous years trends and developments, it will focus especially on environmental change and migration in the year 2013.

Map 1. **The Karamoja Region, Uganda**



Source: Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2014.

1. KARAMOJA – A DUSTY NOMAD-LAND

Karamoja comprises the north-eastern part of the 'pearl of Africa' that is Uganda, and measures about 27,200 square kilometres, (Powell, 2010). It is a vast and dusty landscape, famous for the impressive Kidepo National Park in the north, and for its traditional pastoralist way of life and at times violent cattle raids. The region is made up of seven different districts, namely Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak. Out of the many ethnic groups in Uganda, nine are found in Karamoja, and are usually referred to as the Karamojong (MAAIF, 2013). The Karamojong constitute just over 1.1 million people (OCHA, 2009), out of a total population of about 34 million in the whole of Uganda (UN DESA, 2013). The Karamojong can be divided into the Dodoth, residing in the north, the Jie, inhabiting the central part, the Pokot, lining the Kenyan border, and the Bokora, Matheniko and Pian, all three living

in the south of the region (Powell, 2010).

Different from the rest of Uganda, the Karamojong is a primarily agro-pastoralist people. Their livelihoods therefore depend both on agriculture and on raising livestock, and cattle are key to life in Karamoja. Other livelihood options include foraging for food such as leaves[1] and casual labour (Gelsdorf et al, 2012). Their pastoral nomadic lifestyle entails moving around with their livestock in search of water and pasture. Nomadism as a way of life is often used in areas where natural resources are scarce and land is infertile. A nomadic way of live can be regarded as the most suitable one for the environment in Karamoja, taking advantage of the landscape in an efficient manner (ibid.). The Karamojong are thus used to travelling long distances for survival.

To understand today's situation in Karamoja, one must consider the historical developments of the region. The country suffered greatly in terms of human and economic development both under the rule of Idi Amin and with the war against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). When the current president, Yoweri Museveni, took control of the government in 1986 the country was extremely poor and its infrastructure lay in ruins. Although Uganda's economy has shown significant improvement since then, the progress has been unequal, with the north often being seen as 'left out' in terms of development. The Karamojong has for decades been regarded as 'backwards' compared to the rest of the country, largely because of their reliance on agro-pastoralism (HRW, 2014). Prime Minister Milton Obote famously said in 1963 "We shall not wait for Karamoja to develop," after a visit to the region (Daily Monitor, 2012), and state officials have been quoted saying the nomadic way of life is "outmoded" (HRW, 2014). With this understanding of the people, coupled with the insecurity and poor infrastructure of the region, Karamoja has often been one of the last to benefit from government policies and donor-funded projects (ibid.). When evaluating Karamoja, there is a stark difference from the rest of the country in regards to culture, lifestyle, development and environment.

2. ENVIRONMENT IN KARAMOJA

The environmental situation in Karamoja can be described as a slow-onset disaster. Slow-onset disasters take a long time to produce emergency conditions, and are usually accompanied by early warning signs (WHO, 2014). Drought is one slow-onset disaster causing failed harvests and death of livestock in Karamoja. Increasingly, Uganda is experiencing intense, frequent and prolonged droughts (GoU, 2013). The government reports that with Karamoja receiving especially low annual rainfall, people are affected by drought every year (ibid.). Droughts are characterized by strong winds, leading to vegetation drying up, crop failure, reduction in grazing area for cattle, and decreased food and milk production in Karamoja (ibid.). Droughts also dry up seasonal rivers and decrease existing water sources, already scarce in Karamoja.

1. Women are reported to forage in the bush for leaves from the Ekorete tree to make sauce. The leaves from this tree supposedly save many households during drought when there is nothing else to eat (Uganda Radio Network, 2014)

Picture 1. **Women fetching water in what is left of the river in Moroto, Karamoja**

Source: Vilhelmsen Haug, 2013

Drought and famine have claimed many lives in Karamoja throughout history (GoU, 2013), and it remains by far the most food-insecure region in the country (Gelsdorf et al, 2012). According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, 2013's main harvest in Karamoja was expected to be 30-50 per cent lower than average because of poor rains, sending almost half a million people in need of humanitarian assistance (The East African, 2014). The dry spell came when the crops needed water the most, and unfavorable temperatures led to water stress on plants, affecting production (Tenywa et al, 2013). When the rain finally arrived, local Ugandan newspapers reported "people were happy when they saw the rain at first, but then it continued and they became uneasy" (Ariong and Emwamu, 2013). As the rain continued, it flooded gardens, washed away crops and roads, and made that there would not be any crops to harvest in the first quarter of the year (ibid.). Hunger had killed 46 people already by the middle of July 2013 (ibid.).

The environmental factor causing food insecurity can be described as substantial, but food insecurity also stems from conflict and other factors (Mayer, 2014). "The fact that children speak glowingly of eating food from garbage dumps should serve as a wake-up call as to the levels of food insecurity ..." (interview with child that had migrated to Kampala, in Stites et al, 2007:24). Between April and August 2013, drought again created widespread famine in the region (GoU, 2013). Crops withered and animals died, and several people migrated to other areas in search for water and pasture for their animals, and food for themselves (ibid.). In periods of drought, families may only eat once a day or not at all (Powell, 2010). The average Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate in Karamoja lies on 11 per cent, with extremely high GAM rates in Moroto (20.2 per cent) and Nakapiripirit (14.4 per cent) (Mayer, 2014). To compare, the international emergency threshold lies at 10 per cent (OCHA, 2008). However, not everybody have the means to migrate, and most people stay behind and manage one way or another (Mayer, 2014).

Climate models predict that Uganda will experience an increase in average temperatures up to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next twenty years (GoU, 2013). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) state that

increasing temperatures will cause dry regions to become drier, and lead to reduced crop productivity in seasonally dry and tropical regions (2012). The Ugandan government report that these changes in temperature are unprecedented in the country's history and make the country's food security situation unclear (GoU, 2013).

Changes in rainfall patterns are also expected to occur along with climate change. Rainfall is limited and unpredictable in Karamoja, with an expected annual average rainfall of 400 mm in the east of Karamoja and 1000 mm in the west of the region (Irish Aid, 2007 in Powell, 2010). Karamoja already experiences frequent flash floods and poorly distributed torrential rains, leading to loss of harvests and food insecurity (GoU, 2013).

Picture 2. Herding cattle in the dry landscape of Karamoja

Source: Vilhelmsen Haug, 2013

Soil degradation is also a serious problem in Karamoja (Mayer, 2014). In times of less rainfall, the soil dries out, and heavier rainfall creates larger and more rapid overflow, increasing the chance for floods and erosion. Flooding in addition to drought is a major problem in Karamoja, as it washes away planted seeds and crops (GoU, 2013). Floods also reduce the productivity of land, resulting in further declined food production (UNFCCC, 2012). In semi-arid and arid areas in Africa, growing seasons, crop potential and the area suitable for agricultural activity is predicted to decrease with climate change (UNFCCC, 2012).

Climate change is also anticipated to cause a shift in epidemics and diseases. Warmer weather and prolonged rains will increase incidences of malaria and other tropical diseases, already widespread in the area (GoU, 2013). With limited access to health facilities and resources available for their services, this will put an additional strain on the people. These prolonged droughts, erratic rains and flash floods also increase the incidence of pests, vectors and diseases in plants and livestock (ibid.).

Pastoralists have always been vulnerable to climate variations because of their reliance on rainfall and access to water and pasture. Threats to the environment in Karamoja are already present, and include overgrazing of pasture, a reduction of soil quality, overburdening of water resources, loss of biodiversity, and the depletion of wild foods, animal forage and firewood (Kagan et al, 2009). While famine and bush

fires are already the norm during dry spells, the advance of climate change will only prolong and worsen these situations (GoU, 2013).

3. LEAVING KARAMOJA BEHIND

Internal migration has for a long time been an integral and critical part of the Karamojong's livelihood strategy, and seasonal migration is part of a Karamojong's life. Migration was associated with wet and dry seasons, where cattle were moved in search for more food. When migrating, the Karamojong would establish 'stock associates' and long-term connections between patriarchs across district borders (Stites et al, 2007). Children were sometimes sent to live and work with these stock associates, especially in times of severe drought, and would return when conditions were better (ibid.). Regarding the Bokora people, said to have the highest numbers of out-migration, Stites et al states that "out-migration ... is a distress adaption of a previously existing and effective coping mechanism that involved negotiated and planned movement between stock associates and relatives" (Stites et al 2007:24). Presently, migrants rely on a network of Karamojong in urban areas and districts (IOM, 2013a). In some situations, family and information networks inform potential migrants about labour availability (Stites et al, 2007). People sharing familial, village or clan connections are more likely to migrate (ibid.).

Seasonal migration patterns tended to be limited within Karamoja and its neighbouring regions, but in the 20th century political and natural shocks has driven people to migrate further (IOM, 2013a). Many people are described as having one foot in the countryside and one in the city, as a measure of insurance (Stites and Akabwai, 2012). New migration patterns involve more minors migrating to urban areas to make money (IOM, 2013a). Both traditional and current migration is circular in nature, meaning that children will often return home with the money that have earned after a period of time, and eventually re-migrate in order to earn more (ibid.). Unlike the previous mentioned 'stock associates,' migrants today tend to more often go to work for people they have no previous connection or relation to (Stites et al, 2007). Unlike before when migration was mostly limited to the region, more migrants today go to Kampala and other big cities (Billings, 2014).

Although migration is a coping strategy, it is a limited one (Mayer, 2014). When the Karamojong are asked why they do not migrate or move to somewhere living conditions are easier than in Karamoja, the replies are usually that they are unable or unwilling to do so (ibid.). This might stem from differences in language, lack of education, illiteracy, racism and discrimination, as well as a tradition and culture where it is of crucial importance not to invade anyone else's territory (ibid.). Also, as in most migration situations, the lowest-income persons cannot afford to leave. "Other people also had hunger, but they lacked the money to travel to Kampala. They would have all gone if they could. I saved money by colleting firewood until I could afford to go" (interview with a woman at the Kobulin reception site in Stites et al, 2007:13). Worsening living conditions for people were usually followed by a final trigger event that acted as a catalyst for them to migrate (ibid.).[2] Both historically and currently, more women than men migrate (ibid.). Men are often needed to herd cattle at home, while women face a wider range of employment opportunities in the city, such as housekeeping, cooking or childcare.

2. Trigger events can be loosing assets through raids, death of a family member, physical or sexual violence, or, if a child, neglect.

LIFE AS A MIGRANT – THE PARTICULAR CASE OF STREET CHILDREN

Children migrating are common, as 50 per cent of the population of Karamoja is estimated to be below 18 years old (Knaute and Kagan 2008, in Powell, 2010). Almost half of all households in the districts of Napak and Moroto have at least one child that has migrated (IOM, 2013a). Trafficking of children from Karamoja is also a problem, and IOM reports that they assisted 128 children trafficked for labour exploitation in 2013 (2013b). They had been trafficked for the purpose of street begging, and said that they were sent to Kampala because there was "no money" at home (ibid.). Many of the children were also trafficked in order to be used in illegal activities such as petty theft (IOM, 2013c).

It is difficult for the Karamojong to find jobs in the cities, and they usually end up with simple jobs in market areas (Mayer, 2014). Many children also engage in begging, either full-time, or in addition to jobs such as sweeping mills, caring for other children, unloading trucks, stocking stores or collecting and selling metal (Stites et al, 2007). Children are particularly vulnerable, and risk trafficking or sexual abuse, or being exploited in the labour force (ibid.). Migrants often lack places to sleep in the urban centers, and many end up sleeping outside, where they are exposed to crime, potential police and civilian harassment, and possible sexual abuse (Stites and Akabwai, 2012). Both boys and girls face abuse by other children and grown-ups (IOM, 2013a)

Children also risk being taken in by the police or Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) when begging on the streets. While the official information on today's situation could not be found for this paper, authorities are known to have previously done regular 'round-ups' of street children where they have been placed in so-called 'rehabilitation' centers, usually run by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (Stites et al, 2007; interview with Alexander Billings, 2014). Centres such as the Kampiringisa Rehabilitation Centre outside Kampala, which was originally a low-security place for delinquent children and youths, has served as a detention site prior to referral to the Kobulin reception site in Karamoja or to the children's direct return to Karamoja (Stites et al, 2007). The centre is poorly resourced and conditions are run-down with hardly any services for the children (Billings, 2014). The children are often detained at these centres until somebody pays for their release or until they are sent back home (Stites et al, 2007). The approach of returning children to their homes has often been unsuccessful, with children re-migrating, making it migration of a circular nature (Billings, 2014).

Uganda has both national and international policies and legal instruments to protect the rights and welfare of children. The Government of Uganda recognizes that there are more children living in the poorer northern regions of the country (GoU, 2013). The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) have the responsibility to protect street children, children being exploited for labour and those children that suffer abuse and discrimination. For children to be protected they must not only be protected against trafficking and exploitation, but also be provided adequate nutrition and food security.

People seem to migrate both within and outside Karamoja. The prevalence of out-migration among the general population from Napak and Moroto is 16 per 100 persons (2012 numbers) (IOM, forthcoming(a)). Some go to work on marble quarrying and gold mining sites near Moroto and in agriculture in peri-urban sites (Stites and Akabwai, 2012). The main activities that migrants engaged in in the cities of Mbale and Moroto were selling charcoal, brewing, hawking, selling handicrafts, pushing wheelbarrows at the market and so on, including other simple jobs (ibid.). Migrants often did one job in conjunction with others, indicating that it was difficult to find a steady job with regular pay (ibid.). Some jobs were also paid in exchange for getting a place

to sleep for the night, or for food (ibid.). Most people migrating in the developing world will move to slums, living in inadequate housing with a lack of basic services (ibid.). Research among Karamojong migrants found that some form of harassment is a problem for most migrants, and they suffer both verbal and physical abuse (ibid.).

Despite the difficulties of urban life, many people report that they prefer life in town rather than rural areas, as there are more coping strategies in urban settings (Stites and Akabwai, 2012). Some mentioned benefits of migrating to town were information about hygiene, school, bathing, washing clothes, Christianity, paying less attention to witch doctors, more land open to agriculture, gaining skills, and more inter-marriages (ibid.). People said that there were more economic opportunities in town, more safety and less hunger (ibid.). Some felt they had gained valuable skills as agriculture laborers, and wanted to take the skills home to Karamoja, but worried about the rains being unreliable (ibid.).

Despite the environment not being the sole reason for migration from Karamoja, the Karamojong can be regarded as environmental migrants. The Ugandan government is critically aware of its many internal and international migrants, having suffered itself from a civil war creating hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people, and being situated among several war-torn countries also pushing refugees across their border. Rural-urban migration is creating rapid urbanization, and migrants often end up living in slums in the cities. However, there is not much focus on environmental migrants in the country as of now, and it is difficult to obtain accurate data on migration to and from Karamoja. Besides the region being relatively insecure until a few years ago, surveying internal migration in a populous country such as Uganda with limited resources can be challenging and a possible reason for the lack of statistics.

4. LEAVING HUNGER AND INSECURITY

During the famine in 2013, a national newspaper reported that about 5000 Karamojong had fled into neighboring Kenya where food was provided by the government (Ariong and Emwamu, 2013). Another national newspaper reported that 8000 people had to migrate from their homes to nearby areas (Tenywa et al, 2013). Some people, including children, had gone to the gold mines to look for gold to sell for food (ibid.).

Insecurity and widespread loss of livestock are said to be the main reasons for leaving Karamoja. "Who is so new in Uganda that he does not know the common problems of drought, raids, and disarmament that have affected the Karamojong?" (An interview with a man at Kobulin reception site in Stites et al, 2007:8). There is a strong link between natural resource capability and population settlement, and people are known to leave unproductive areas for areas that are more habitable and resourceful. People do not only suffer from food shortage, but also poor sanitation, contaminated water, opportunistic diseases, diarrhea and malaria (Mayer, 2014). Still, environmental risks and natural disasters are becoming major drivers of displacement and internal migration in Karamoja (IOM, 2013a).

The response mechanisms to climate changes have remained as it was before: it incites movement among the pastoralists in search for water and pasture. This often leads to conflict as they meet people from neighbouring regions and compete with them for scarce natural resources (GoU, 2013). Karamoja have experienced decades of insecurity caused in part by the dictator and former governor of Uganda Idi Amin Dada's rule and fall, and the following availability of small arms in the region. Insecurity is thus listed as another main reason for migration (Stites et al, 2007). Human and livestock security has deteriorated over the past years, and the loss of livestock by drought or raids profoundly affects both food security and human security of households (ibid.). After the collapse of Idi Amin Dada in 1979, various Karamojong

communities looted arms depots in the region, leading to extremely violent cattle raids with high casualty numbers (ibid.). Cattle raiding have, however, served as both a sociocultural and economic institution for centuries (Gelsdorf et al, 2012) but protracted inter- and intra-clan conflicts over cattle and access to pasture and resources, cross-border incursions by groups from neighbouring Kenya and South Sudan, have all negatively affected the region's socio-economic development (Powell, 2010). Despite successful government-lead demobilization programs and decreasing casualty numbers from raids and feuds, insecurity remains an important factor in understanding the living conditions in Karamoja.

The Bokora are reported to be the ethnic group to out-migrate the largest, in terms of both children and adults (Billings, 2014). Disarmament programs have been relatively successful among the Bokora, thus leaving them more vulnerable to raids, but whether this is the reason for especially high migration numbers from this group have not been determined (ibid.). Nonetheless, household surveys in 2013 found that there was a decrease in migration among the survey group, but the reason for this is not clear (ibid.).

Picture 3. Town life in Karamoja

Source: Vilhelmsen Haug, 2013

Poverty is another factor concerning migration, and Uganda ranked 161 out of 186 countries listed in the United Nations Human Development Index in 2013 (UNDP, 2013), with Karamoja being the poorest region in the country (Gelsdorf et al, 2012). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 82 per cent of the people in Karamoja live under the poverty line (2008). Only 46 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and 8 per cent access to sanitation units (ibid.). Poverty is an underlying cause for out-migration, as poverty decreases the resources available to cope with environmental degradation and climate change. Additional reasons for out-migration are high unemployment, poor leadership in the region, domestic violence and/or the neglect or abuse of children (Stites et al, 2007).

5. IS THE PASTORALIST LIFESTYLE UNDER THREAT?

On the national level there is an on-going discussion on what should be done in Karamoja to improve livelihoods and decrease migration from the area. The debate has been on the economic viability (and desirability) of pastoralism, the official discourse being that it is not valuable to the country's economy (Powell, 2010; Gelsdorf et al, 2012). Janet Museveni, Minister of Karamoja Affairs, said that: "... we in the Government cannot romanticize about nomadism as a way of life, because it is a danger we have to Figure ht like we Figure ht like any other social ills (cited in Gelsdorf, 2012:14).

Government efforts seem to be aimed at stopping and reversing the trend of out-migration, with efforts to return the people to their places of origin or to newly created settlements in areas "better suited for agriculture" (Stites and Akabwai, 2012:4). Government policies have previously discriminated against nomadism to rather promote agriculture (HRW, 2014; The East African, 2014). Money for food aid is supposed to be phased out, making families more dependent on home-grown food, such as cassava and potatoes, implying durable settlement in one place.[3] Policies have undermined traditional livelihoods through promoting ranching, nationalisation of key resources, forced destocking and privatisation of rangelands (FEWS NET, 2005), thus rapidly dismantling pastoral systems (Vidal, 2011). It seems to be the government's aim to eradicate pastoralism in order to clear land for foreign-owned, mechanised farms, for conservation and for mineral exploitation (ibid.).[4] With land being sold to foreign corporations to grow biofuels, more 'conservation' and mining areas, critics hold that this will increase hunger and force more young people to move into cities (ibid.).

Picture 4. Cattle and goats are important livestock in Karamoja

Source: Vilhelmsen Haug, 2013.

3. According to Vidal, this is stated in a leaked letter from Janet Museveni, Minister of Karamoja Affairs (2011)
4. Read more about the consequences of mineral resource extraction in Human Rights Watch, 2014

The viability of pastoralism is dependent on the availability of natural resources, access to land and environmental factors, and can easily be disrupted by climatic, economic and political changes (Blench, 2001), as have been seen in Karamoja. However, as Karamoja suffer from erratic and poorly distributed rainfall, pastoralism may be a better-suited livelihood option in this region than sedentism (FEWS NET, 2005). Sedentism usually requires a favourable climate for sufficient year-round resources so that people can survive on the site without moving, and often creates an increased demand for natural resources. This involves a transformation from foraging to agricultural and animal domestication. With climate change and the following probability of rise in temperatures and increase in droughts, animals will be more at risk, and conventional farming can become impossible (Vidal, 2011). While pastoralists adapt to climate change by moving, cultivators are largely unable to respond as they do not know when or what to plant (ibid.), and experts disagree on whether sedentarisation will lead to increased livelihood security (Gelsdorf et al, 2012). There are both benefits and disadvantages to the government's promotion of agriculture, and time will tell if this has been the best strategy to pursue (Billings, 2014). The goal should be to find a balance between the pastoralist traditional culture and national policies largely focused on agriculture (ibid.).

6. WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Various international and national organizations are working in Karamoja to relieve the pressure on the people, providing food aid, running livelihood programmes, education programmes, and assisting people in new farming and agricultural methods. In the cities, NGOs work with some of the migrants, most often street children. IOM is assisting victims of trafficking and helping them resettle in Karamoja.

Extreme climate vulnerability is one of several factors that have made the Karamojong so vulnerable to food insecurity (HRW, 2014). In response to this, relief organizations have provided food aid in the region for decades (Stites et al, 2007). The World Food Programme (WFP) has a large presence in Karamoja, distributing food aid and running other types of programs. The WFP also runs programs for re-forestation and soil rehabilitation. However, for these programs to be successful there needs to be food production or livestock to graze on this soil, emphasising the complexity of solutions (Mayer, 2014).

With regards to environmental hazards, the Ugandan government has undertaken several initiatives and measures to mitigate the unwanted consequences. The government has a National Policy on Disaster Preparedness and Management, promoting national vulnerability assessment, risk mitigation, disaster prevention, preparedness, effective response and recovery, in a manner that integrates disaster risk management with development programming and planning (GoU, 2010). The report states that "despite a growing understanding and acceptance of the importance of disaster risk reduction and increased disaster response capacities, disasters and in particular the management and reduction of risk, continue to pose a national challenge.

The National Development Plan deals with climate change, identifying the constraints and highlighting objectives, strategies and interventions that should be implemented to address climate change concerns (GoU, 2013). The Uganda Vision 2040 plan also states actions that should be undertaken to address climate change, and calls for funding from both international and local finance institutions (ibid). The National Climate Change Policy is still being drafted, but is supposed to be an important response to climate change in Uganda, laying down objectives and strategies that will address climate change within each sector, such as agriculture (ibid.). The National Adaption Plan of Action (NAPA) was launched with support from the Global Environment Fund (GEF), and its objective is for 'Least Developed Countries

(LDCs) to identify priority activities that respond to their immediate need to adapt to climate change (ibid.).

Pilot projects are being implemented across the country to strengthen the people's resilience to climate change impacts, but have been challenged by lack of funding and/or low capacity of local governments to integrate the adaption activities (GoU, 2013). Uganda is also party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, both obliging Uganda to put in place mitigation and adaption measures to address the causes and effects of climate change, as well as undertake education and awareness programs (ibid.).

The 'Ministry of Karamoja Affairs' was established in 1998 and is today headed by Janet Museveni, President Museveni's wife. The Karamoja Livelihoods Improvement Programme (KALIP) is a European Union funded programme supporting livelihoods production in Karamoja for agro-pastoralists. In Nakapiripirit some women formed the Tokora Community Disaster Management Committee to identify the hazards affecting them (GoU, 2013). They have also established a cereal bank and mobilized funding to buy cereals from farmers during harvest, which are sold back to the farmers at subsidized prices during shortage (ibid.). As the government is trying to diversify livelihoods, a creation of markets to sell the new agricultural and animal products must take place (Mayer, 2014). Today, there is a lack of markets both within and outside Karamoja, making this approach even more challenging (ibid.).

Picture 5. Women carrying wood back to Moroto, Karamoja

Source: Vilhelmsen Haug, 2013

In 2008, the Ministry of Health highlighted the need for access to clean water for livestock and humans, and the government attempted to provide water tanks to benefit the Karamojong livestock, and reduce the need to travel the long distances in order to water the animals (in Powell, 2010). However, tanks were often empty and not geographically evenly distributed, partly due to insecurity in the region and high maintenance costs (Ministry of Health, 2008, in Powell, 2010). Another initiative taken is the drilling of boreholes, but Kagan et al, argue that this is not the best solution, fixing grazing to specific locations and decreasing pastoral mobility (2009). Overgrazing also becomes more common around the boreholes, leading to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity and increased food insecurity (ibid.).

Climate change is a relatively new concern in Uganda, and is still gaining momentum (GoU, 2013). Research has shown that most levels of the population have a limited awareness of climate change, hindering implementation of policies and reduction of risks (ibid.). There is, however, no doubt that the impacts of climate change will be severe, especially in the agricultural sector, which is mostly subsistence

in nature and rain fed (ibid.). Prolonged droughts reduce crop yields and unreliable rainfall patterns challenge people's ability to produce or purchase sufficient food. Climate change will potentially cause food insecurity for households, malnutrition, poor health, and eventually death (ibid.).

Despite well-articulated policies, policy and program implementation has not been optimal (GoU, 2013). Many programs and much funding have been given to projects in Karamoja, but results can be hard to determine. It is described as a difficult area to work in with limited opportunities, with high levels of illiteracy, climate degradation, in a post-conflict setting (Mayer, 2014). The government argues that financing at the initial levels is a major constraint to successfully implementing the above-mentioned initiatives (GoU, 2013).

7. THE FUTURE FOR THE KARAMOJONG AND KARAMOJA

This paper examines the harsh environmental conditions the pastoralists in Karamoja face, and how this contributes to the rural-urban migration that is taking place. Climate change is likely to continue the current trend of successive poor rains, increase drought-related shocks and cause unpredictable and sometimes heavy rainfall (Oxfam, 2008). Out-migration is therefore likely to continue or rise in the same way as it has for the past few years. However, an increase in temperature and rain intensity during the short rains, October to December, may also lead to longer access to wet-season pasture and less frequent drought (ibid.). Nevertheless, possible negative implications of this can be livestock succumbing to heat stress, agricultural encroachment on grazing land, increased flooding and the further spread of wet season diseases (both among humans and livestock) (ibid.).

Further research should be done on the consequences of climate change, how these will affect the people living in Karamoja, and what can be done to mitigate the detrimental results of it. The challenges of climate change must be seen in connexion with other factors affecting the region, such as the pastoralist way of life, poverty and insecurity. Attention should be given to the Karamojong's own voice on how to cope with climate change in the area, as they can certainly be said to be experts on this. Instead of disregarding pastoralism as a viable and beneficial way of life in Karamoja, traditional practices incorporating modern developments could prove to be the most effective way to ensure livelihoods.

Gaps in state's preparedness to climate change come from inequality, lack of political will and poverty, and leads the lowest income countries to be the least able to ensure their population's food security (Oxfam, 2014). Hunger is not inevitable, but climate change is worsening food security situations around the world (ibid.). The lowest income people spend most of what they earn on food and unfortunately are the ones most severely affected when food crises hit.

Migration has been a survival strategy in search of water and pasture in dry areas for centuries, but migration patterns have changed recently, with more children migrating, and migrants moving further away. It is uncertain what becomes of these migrants, as there is little data that can establish whether they stay in the city, whether they move on to new places, or whether they go back to Karamoja. Migrants, especially children, often end up on the streets of Kampala begging or doing other simple jobs to survive. Many Karamojong that come to the cities end up living in slums (Billings, 2014). There is a need for more data on contemporary migration patterns, concerning destinations, the time spent away, and the reasons for moving, remittances and return patterns. New financial systems are being formed, with extended social networks and remittances, but little is known about the benefits of these (Stites and Akabwai, 2012).

How the Karamojong will be able to adapt to climate and environmental changes

will depend on the response from the government and international partners. Interventions so far seem unlikely to affect migration flows (Stites et al, 2007). However, as numbers from IOM shows, child migration was lower in 2013 than in 2012 (IOM, forthcoming(b)). Suggested reasons for this is improved collective efficacy, a perception of safety, livestock ownership and increased food security (ibid.). If these factors continue to improve, migration can be further reduced.

The government's approach seems to be improving livelihoods for the Karamojong in Karamoja, and an attempt to resettle those migrants who have reached the city. Livelihoods for the Karamojong must be ensured, for both those who live in Karamoja and those who already live in the city. Some argue that migrants from Karamoja should be considered as internally displaced people rather than economic migrants, which is the government's view today (Sundal, 2010). This would then ensure United Nations protection during resettlement, limit displacement, and avoid human rights violations (ibid.).

It should be of careful consideration whether the government's approach of improving livelihoods in Karamoja is a beneficial long-term solution for the Karamojong, or if this approach is causing more harm than good. The questions that will be raised in regard to resettlement are both ethical and practical. What will be the livelihood basis at resettlement sites, and how will this prevent people from simply migrating once more? It is likely that rural-urban migration will continue as climate change intensifies droughts and floods, thus decreasing food security. As more Karamojong reach the city, networks with people back home will increase the likelihood of more people migrating. Their life in the city will depend on what approaches the government will take to migration, increasing security and livelihood options for the Karamojong there, or focusing on resettlement and improved livelihood options in the region. ♦

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Interviews

- Interview with Alexander Billings, Project Officer, International Organization for Migration (IOM), conducted on 30 March 2014
- Interview with Vera Mayer, Food and Nutrition Security Coordinator, World Food Programme (WFP), conducted on 30 March 2014