



## GREATER HORN OF AFRICA (GHA) FOOD SECURITY BULLETIN

### Resource Based Conflicts and Food Security in the Greater Horn of Africa: A Preliminary Report on the Conflict Baseline Survey in the Karamojong Cluster of Kenya and Uganda

#### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The Greater Horn of Africa (GHA) continues to experience violent conflicts, which severely impact food security and livelihoods of communities and rural development in the region. Conflicts within the GHA are many and complex, and they occur at different levels. These conflicts can be intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic, or cross border in nature. They most frequently manifest themselves as livestock raiding or rustling, violent disputes over scarce watering points, highway banditry and abductions. This report focuses on the food security implications of resource based pastoralist conflicts, while acknowledging that there are other localized socio-political upheavals within the GHA that relate to and influence pastoral and resource based conflicts. The report recommends the enhancement of integrated peace building interventions, support for community and civil society networks dedicated to conflict resolution and mitigation, help to diversify livelihoods options, and the creation of a socio-economic infrastructure, including improved health and education facilities and services in pastoralist areas prone to resource based conflicts.

#### LIVELIHOODS, FOOD SECURITY AND RESOURCE BASED CONFLICTS IN THE PASTORALIST AREAS

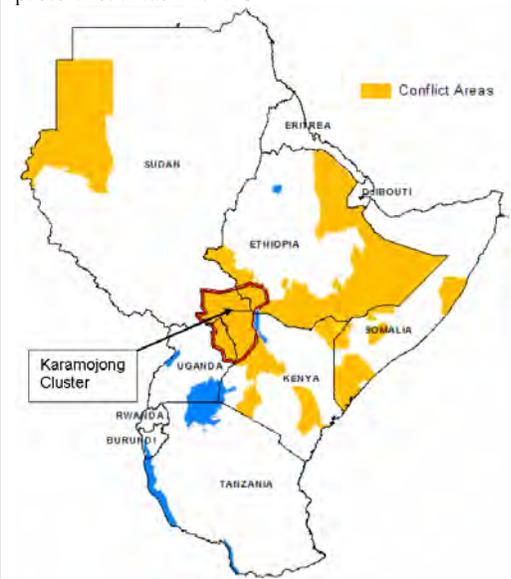
The root causes of conflicts in pastoralist areas of the GHA are principally competition for shrinking pasture and water resources. They revolve around livestock and involve the use of arms (which makes the conflicts more violent than in the past and result in indiscriminate killing). Over the years, pastoralist conflicts have become more frequent and unpredictable, exhibiting a marked escalation in violence and geographic distribution. This development has made the GHA one of the most food insecure regions in the world, endangering pastoralist livelihoods. This is also related to generally adverse weather conditions in the past half century. The conflicts are mostly found in semi-arid lands, which support only with great difficulty any meaningful form of food production or other livelihood options. Marginalization by post-independence governments has also compounded the pastoralist problem within the GHA.

The various pastoral conflicts that have been characterized in the GHA are just a “footnote to the much larger conflicts...”<sup>1</sup> that are prevalent not just in the region but the world over. The civil wars and related disputes within the region have a further marginalizing effect on the pastoralist communities and contribute to the escalation of violence between these groups. Some of the numerous conflicts in the GHA, depicted in Figure 1, include the Darfur conflict in the Sudan, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in Uganda, instability caused by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) along the Ethio-Kenya border and the collapse of governance in Somalia, as well as the tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia. All conflicts involve the competition over natural resources. In addition, a number of conflict flashpoints along national borders are found in pastoral areas where natural resources are stretched and rural livelihoods are increasingly tenuous.

Cross border pastoralist conflicts within the GHA are concentrated along the international borderlands of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Southern Sudan and Uganda. Examples of cross border inter-pastoralist conflicts include those between the Turkana (Kenya) and Dodoth (Uganda), the Turkana (Kenya) and Toposa (Southern Sudan), the Pokot of Kenya and Uganda versus the Sabiny of Kenya and Uganda as well as the Turkana of Kenya against the Matheniko of Uganda. Other conflict corridors within the GHA include the Turkana (Kenya), the Dassenach (Ethiopia) and the Nyang’atom (Ethiopia/Sudan).

Resource based conflict and insecurity in the pastoral areas seriously affect pastoralist livelihoods by hampering seasonal migrations, limiting farming activities, disrupting internal trade and human mobility and causing the loss of lives and livestock. This has resulted in already food insecure groups resorting to violence as their livelihood options shrink. These conflicts have the potential to degenerate, with regional and international implications, making community based conflict mitigation and investment in alternative livelihoods in pastoralist areas more important than ever.

**Figure 1:** Conflict zones in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist areas in the GHA



The GHA Food Security Bulletin is a collaborative initiative of the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), the Desert Locust Control Organization (DLCO), the Livestock Early Warning System (LEWS), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

<sup>1</sup>E S Kona quoting Fratlin (1994:2) in a draft research proposal to the Development Policy Management Forum, April 2005, Addis Ababa

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE STUDY ON RESOURCE BASED CONFLICTS IN THE KARAMOJONG CLUSTER

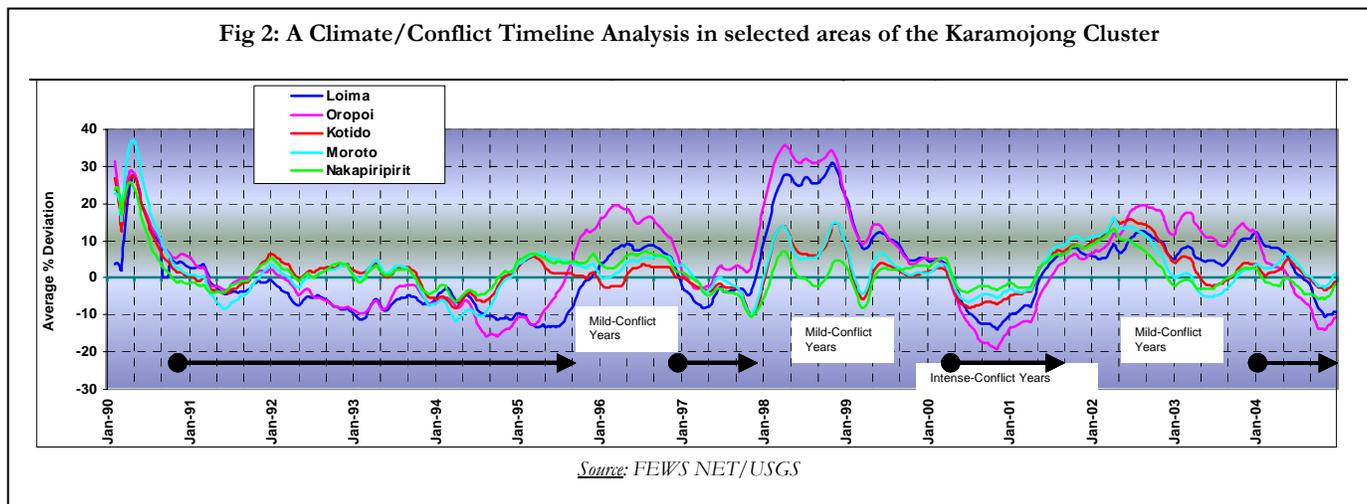
The Karamojong Cluster refers to the geographic area encompassing northeastern Uganda, northwestern Kenya, southeastern Sudan and southwestern Ethiopia where live pastoral and agro-pastoral ethnic groups, most of who share a common language and culture (see Figure 1).

The purpose of the USAID funded pilot activity was to determine the relationship between pastoral resource crises and pastoralist conflicts, as well as the usefulness of providing FEWS NET climate and other food security early warning information to local communities for conflict mitigation and prevention purposes. A second objective was to establish of community based networks to share relevant information, and to facilitate the search for common solutions to threats common to both sides. For the pilot activity, the assumption was that a root cause of pastoral conflicts was the increasing scarcity of pasture and water resources as well as perceptions by communities that their livelihoods were threatened. Two baseline surveys were conducted to verify that assumption. The first baseline survey was conducted in Oropoi and Loima divisions of Turkana, (Kenya) between June and July 2002. The second survey was conducted in March and April 2005 in four communities of the Karamoja (Uganda), including Dodoth, Jie, Metheniko and Pokot, and partly in two divisions of Turkana (Lopur and Lomelo). The methodology relied primarily on a questionnaire targeting key informants and focus groups in communities with cross border interaction, and the interpretation of historic resource variation through remote sensing data (for example, vegetation indexes and rainfall estimates), as well as secondary sources data.

### *Causes and Triggers of Conflicts*

The first study confirmed a strong causal link between conflicts and natural resource scarcity, access and management. Though limited in scope, the baseline confirmed the premise that the conflict drivers in pastoral parts of Turkana District (Kenya) were similar to the ones noted in Karamoja Region (Uganda), an area that shares similar livelihood characteristics with Turkana. The second survey confirmed the findings of phase one but also stressed other factors: conflicts revolve around competition over the scarce natural resources, but are further influenced by traditional cultural values, drought, poverty, politicization, weak governance, distance from markets and territorial disputes.

This is supported by the observation that incidents of conflict such as livestock thefts (the most common manifestation of conflict) are conducted by small bands of raiders whose intention is to acquire livestock for wealth (for bride price, social status) even when the conditions of water and pasture are exceptionally good. Most respondents of the second survey clearly stated that present day conflicts are also driven by other considerations, in addition to the root causes of competition over water and pasture. The progressive decline of household assets among pastoralists is also related to the increased frequency of droughts, increased conflict during drought periods, and, to a lesser extent, endemic livestock diseases.

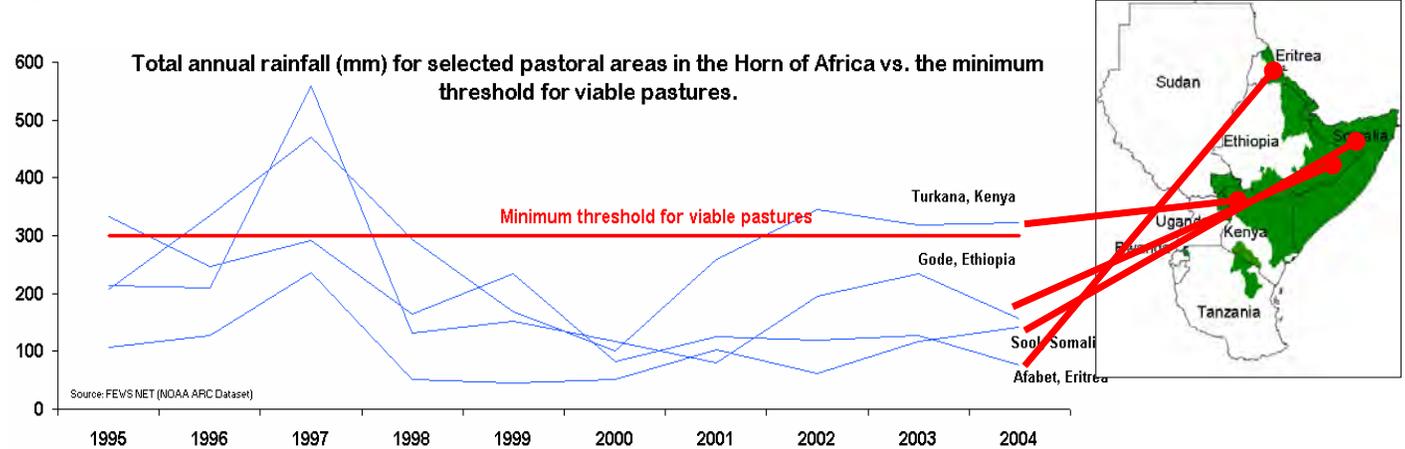


As illustrated by the climate-conflict timeline analysis in Figure 2, climate variability and natural resource scarcity do not create conflicts, but rather escalate them and increase their frequency. According to a recent baseline study, the drought affected years 1991-95, and 2000-2002, were intense conflict periods in terms of frequency and severity, across the Cluster. The "mild conflict" observed during periods of favorable climate might best be explained by other conflict drivers and triggers, such as cultural anomalies like the LRA and the commercialization of cattle rustling. This appears to have peaked in the period of the El Niño phenomenon (1997-98), which were more favorable years for the improvement of pasture and water resources.

In tandem with the 2002 conflict baseline study in Turkana District, the issues of grinding poverty, frequent drought and cultural aspects have also emerged as some of the core conflict causes within the Karamojong Cluster communities.

The climate and livelihood crises in Karamoja are made more volatile by the widespread presence and low cost of small arms among these communities. Other recognized resource related causes of conflicts, especially between the Turkana of Kenya and the Dassenach of Ethiopia, are tied to land use disputes over sections of the Omo Delta.

**Figure 3**



As shown in Figure 3, the rainfall amounts in key pastoralist areas in the region remained well below the threshold needed for viable pasture generation for the past ten years. The below normal rainfall also resulted in decreased availability of water, leading to stiff competition for other dwindling resources, escalating the frequency and intensity of conflicts between 1999-2005. This is consistent with the longer-term trends shown in Figure 2.

#### **Addressing Resource based Conflicts in the Karamojong Cluster**

Responding to conflict threats in the Karamojong Cluster is a daunting task by all standards, given the remoteness, wide geographical distribution and the diversities of the parties, as well as the complexity of interests and issues involved. In December 2004, the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) in the IGAD region produced baseline updates, which indicated that a least 42,000 heads of cattle were stolen as a result of violent pastoral conflicts in the previous twelve months alone. With cattle prices in East Africa at \$60 per head, a total of \$2,520,000 has been lost in just one year - more than the total amount of development aid channeled to pastoralists over the same period.

Broadly speaking, conflict mitigation activities within the Cluster can be categorized into three classes: *community driven initiatives*, *civil society interventions* (consolidated into the Riam Riam<sup>2</sup> model) and *government interventions*.

##### *a) Community Driven Initiatives at Local Levels*

Before the advent of the contemporary conflict resolution mechanisms, communities had their own means of resolving local level conflicts. Dispute resolution rested on solid traditional institutions like the council of elders where long practiced, time-tested approaches were employed and decisions respected by all communities. There were sets of penalties for the improper use of other people's land, the theft of stock, murder, etc. Capital punishment for serious offences was not uncommon.

With the growth of civil society and introduction of central government initiatives, the authority of the council of elders has been generally diminished. Some on the other hand have been co-opted into the peace and development committee framework, which is a new approach to local mitigation in the Cluster.

##### *b) Civil Society Interventions*

Local civil society activities in peace-building have only recently begun in earnest within the pilot project area. Until recently, matters of security and conflict resolution were mainly viewed as a government domain as the state moved to exert its power through military purges of the "erring" communities. With time, however, it became apparent that peace building and the resolution of conflicts was not just a matter of maintaining law and order but had a socio-economic dimension, given threatened livelihoods, displacements and the wanton loss of lives and property. Governments then began to recognize the great value of local civil society interventions that at first began with religious institutions.

<sup>2</sup> "Riam Riam" means, in the language of the Cluster, coming together for a common purpose. It is currently active in Karamoja and Turkana districts as a peace building co-ordination nucleus within the respective regions. Its members include members of the civil society, government representatives, elders and local politicians, women and youth representatives. At the village level, Riam Riam is constituted as the Adakar Peace and Development Committee, with members drawn from the classes given above. This is how Riam Riam connects directly with the communities.

Civil society organizations in the Cluster focus mostly on facilitating and conducting peace dialogue between communities as well as advocacy for pastoralist issues intended for the national and regional platform. Other interventions currently undertaken by the civil society networks include conflict early warning and the recovery and return of stolen livestock.

Local communities and international NGOs have now recognized the synergy of working as a network, as opposed to individual ventures, which characterized previous interventions. Currently, cluster peacebuilding interventions revolve around Riam Riam, a peacebuilding coordination model that is run by communities, civil society and government representatives working as a committee. While individual member organizations of Riam Riam conduct individual resource mobilization, these resources, once obtained, are put to the disposal of Riam Riam for use in cases of rapid response and other peacebuilding interventions. Organizations that have directly supported Riam Riam activities include Oxfam GB, VSF-Belgium and recently, USAID/REDSO.

#### *c) Government peace building interventions*

Government interventions mainly consisted of the belated restoration of law and order by forceful means. While within government's mandate, this approach caused a lot of resentment among the communities, who witnessed human rights abuses and community suffering attributed to these military operations.<sup>3</sup> The late 1990's saw a softening of government position as it opened up to civil society overtures for an all-inclusive multi-partner approach. Currently, the emergence of the network based interventions (of which government representatives are key members) means that the government, which has the advantage of an on the ground presence and acceptance, can mobilize the civil society towards an intervention. Riam Riam supports government rapid response activities (through the provision of fuel and allowances) in times of need. This newfound collaboration has been a major incentive to peace building, but it needs to recognize and integrate measures to address natural resource shortages and to invest in alternative livelihoods in the most conflict prone areas.

#### ***Appropriate economic and social investments in pastoralist areas***

The Karamojong Cluster is an area noted for lagging behind and not reaping the post-independence benefits as compared to other regions. In the Cluster, this is evident in the general lack of basic infrastructure like markets, schools, healthcare centers and communication. As illustrated in Table 1, the basic social indicators in districts where pastoralism is dominant, such as in Turkana, lag seriously behind national levels. Outsiders tend to demonize pastoralism as an activity with an intrinsic propensity to cause conflict. While the official figures for the contribution of pastoralism to national economies of the respective countries remain vague, the absence of pro-pastoralist development action plans have been (rightly or wrongly) blamed on decision-makers and those who control the formal production and financial systems who come from settled communities.

This has also been complicated by the refusal to accept pastoralism as a legitimate livestock production system, which if harnessed wisely and made more efficient, could enhance pastoralist livelihoods, as well as boost the rural economies of the respective countries. Pastoralism in West Africa has thrived and produces valuable exports of livestock because regional markets and mobility have kept it as a viable livelihood system despite similar weather conditions the last two decades.

**Table 1: Comparison of socio-economic indicators in Turkana district with national average**

District	% of the Poor	% undernourished children	% households (HH) with access to safe water	% HH without access to sanitation
Turkana	62	15.2	46.8	85
National	56	7.8	44.9	52.2

*Sources: "Geographic Dimensions of Well-being in Kenya: Where are the Poor?", Central Bureau of Statistics-2003; and "Welfare Monitoring Survey II", Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996*

There is an urgent need for injecting of social and economic capital into the Cluster for the purposes of promoting more parity in development investment, in ways that create suitable alternative avenues for pastoralists who are becoming economically disenfranchised by conflicts and frequent droughts. Investments in pastoralism, alongside sustained peace building activities should be able to change perceptions and attitudes among pastoralists themselves and between pastoralists and other communities. The hope of improved socio-economic well-being of a critical mass of households within a pastoralist community can serve as an alternative model to demonstrate that change can be beneficial.

<sup>3</sup> The disarmament exercise among the Turkana and Pokot communities in the 1980's and the two exercises in Karamoja (2001-02, 2004 to date) are cases in point.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of findings

The findings of the Karamojong Cluster Resource based Conflict Baseline can best be summarized as follows:

- Natural resource competition is still a major cause of conflicts within the Karamojong Cluster, but this is increasingly influenced by other livelihoods issues, including worsening poverty, limited mobility and the emerging criminal and commercial aspects of livestock raiding.
- Conflicts during this period of climate variability are becoming more frequent and unpredictable. Though open conflicts between communities are waning, the violent incidences attributed to small bands of marauding attackers could be the new face of conflict, which requires urgent intervention.
- The Karamojong Cluster has witnessed a multiplicity of peacebuilding efforts within the last decade. Though all the respondents agree that these have had an impact, the perception was that investments in peace-building cannot be said to be commensurate with the outcomes, given that the conflicts appear to be increasing.
- The future of pastoralism as a livelihood activity appears bleak given that recent trends and the communities' own admission indicates that there has been a general decline in terms of the pastoralist wealth status and the number of people and households depending on it. Pastoralist dropouts also do not seem to be keen on re-integrating into this livelihood practice, but alternatives are perceived as few.
- Inter-clan conflicts (especially in Karamoja) have a destabilizing effect on the gains previously made from mitigation efforts.

### Main recommendations

Based on the findings of the FEWS NET implemented Karamoja Cluster Pilot Study and on other studies consulted, the actions, which should contribute towards the sustainable resolution of these pastoral conflicts, include:

- Support for diversification of livelihoods in the Cluster. This may include exploitation of locally available natural resources (especially in Karamoja Region, Uganda) like *gum arabic*, *aloe vera* and limestone. Agro-pastoralism in parts of Karamoja needs to be encouraged especially for the cultivation of fast maturing drought resistant crops.
- Accompaniment of peacebuilding interventions with concrete development plans for the provision of health care and the development of education and other physical and social infrastructure in the region. In-depth community consultation and participation processes should precede these interventions.
- A regionally co-coordinated disarmament effort within the GHA, which is the only viable option since the source of arms used in these conflicts is mainly from within countries of the Horn.
- Support to community and civil society networks dedicated to conflict resolution and mitigation should be increased; government interventions to bring peace and order should also be stepped up but take place within a framework agreed upon with the community and civil society organizations.
- Continued provision of FEWS NET data to community networks, in ways that add to their knowledge of long term climatology threats and other information that can facilitate community dialogue and mitigation.

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