

# “Even If I Have Land, Can I Eat It?”

## Perceptions of Poverty in Karamoja

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**Abstract:** Karamoja – Uganda’s poorest region – has become a major target of development and relief interventions, but little research has thus far focused on its inhabitants’ perceptions of their circumstances. This paper contains the voices and opinions of Karamojans from six communities in four districts of Karamoja. They share their concerns about the conditions in which they live and express their particular understanding of poverty. The paper finds that, following the loss of much of their livestock, Karamojans have devised new ways of coping with deprivation. Their strategies have not, however, been entirely successful and many continue to suffer from hunger. Karamojans are acutely aware of their desperate situation and have definite ideas about the actions which should be undertaken to alleviate poverty.

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## Introduction

Karamoja, the dry, sparsely populated region in the northeast of Uganda, is recognised as the country's poorest, with an estimated eighty-two percent of its population classed as living in poverty (McKinney, 2009; OCHA, 2008). Despite limited, unreliable rainfall, frequent droughts and rocky and poorly nourished soil of the regions, Karamojans were traditionally able to successfully cope with difficult conditions and periodic environmental shocks through the adoption of livelihood options suitable to their marginal habitat, primarily agropastoralism and pastoralism.<sup>1</sup> These livelihood systems have been compromised in recent decades and many Karamojans have been effectively forced to rely on alternative – and inadequate – sources of livelihood. Today Karamoja has the highest number of food insecure, malnourished people in Uganda and a mortality rate at humanitarian emergency levels. This situation has long been exacerbated by insecurity and violence.

The growing presence of development and relief actors in Karamoja indicates a greater appreciation of the scale of challenges faced by the region. Their efforts are compromised by inadequate understanding of Karamojans and their particular experiences. Karamojans can provide us with invaluable information about the complex, multidimensional character of poverty in Karamoja. This paper is a component of a research effort undertaken by BRAC to gain greater knowledge and understanding of Karamojans in order to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of its interventions in the region<sup>2</sup>. Its purpose is to provide Karamojans with an opportunity to voice their concerns about their difficult economic situation and the ways in which they have attempted to cope with it. The paper endeavours to answer the following set of questions: How do poor people in Karamoja understand and define poverty? What are their experiences of poverty? How do they cope with the challenges which they face?

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<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of Karamojans (as many as eighty-five percent) belong to the Eastern Nilotic Karamojong who are generally considered an agropastoralist people (Knaute, 2008a; Knighton, 2010). The Karamojong are divided into the Dodoth (in what is now Kaabong District), Jie (in Kotido District) and Karimojong (traditionally subdivided into the Bokora, Matheniko or Maseniko and Pian who inhabit the districts of Napak, Moroto and Nakapiripirit, respectively). All informants interviewed for this research project are Jie or Karimojong. In addition, the Karamojong share Karamoja with a number of other groups. The Southern Nilotic Pokot or Pökoot (formerly referred to as Suk) live in eastern Karamoja, primarily in Amudat District (as well as western Kenya). They have traditionally followed a more typical pastoralist lifestyle (Andiema et al, 2003; Österle, 2008). The Western Nilotic Ethur (who comprise JoAbwor and JoAkwa), whose lands in western Karamoja (Abim District) receive more reliable rainfall, and the small relict communities of the Ik (known to the Karamojong as Teuso), Soo (Tepeth in Njakaramojong) and Nyangyia, have relied on agriculture to a greater extent (Knaute, 2008a).

<sup>2</sup> Other papers in the series can be found at <http://oxford.academia.edu/karolczuba/papers/>.

The paper is based on group discussions conducted in six communities in Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak districts. The discussions were dynamic and wide-ranging; for the reader's convenience, their content has been organised by the author. The main body of the paper, which follows a chapter on methodological considerations, is divided into seven sections.

The first section introduces the communities in which discussions were held and provides an overview of their efforts to cope with the radical transformation of their livelihoods which has occurred as a result of external shocks. It demonstrates the Karamojans' ability to adapt and expand the range of their economic activities and considers the relative lack of success of their efforts. The following section is concerned with Karamojan understanding of the conditions in which they live. It details the terms which different communities use to describe poverty. It notes the central importance of hunger. Although Karamojans own some assets, including land, their efforts to obtain food face grave challenges.

The third section expands on this information and considers the importance of various types of assets – physical, environmental and human capital – in Karamojans' lives. The fourth section focuses on psychological aspects of poverty and reflects on the importance of social cohesion and security as coping mechanisms. The following section introduces social divisions within Karamojan communities and considers the ways in which households and individuals are differentiated according to status and wealth. It also presents Karamojans' reflections on the causes of poverty in their communities. The sixth section records the measures which they believe are necessary to improve their situation. There is widespread expectation of assistance from multiple institutions present in the region and Karamojans do not think their poverty can be alleviated without external support.

## **Methods**

The purpose of this paper is to enrich our understanding of poverty experienced by the inhabitants of Karamoja. It is based on participatory, qualitative research methods which have been developed to help poor people to define, describe, analyse and express their understanding of their circumstances. These methods support the creation of a learning environment which enables the poor to take control of the space in which they express their views and experiences to the research team. They also help us to uncover the capacity of the poor to analyse their circumstances and allow them to participate in the formulation of

our understanding of their situation (Brock, 1999; Brocklesby and Holland, 1999; Laderchi et al, 2003; Narayan et al, 2000b; World Bank, 1999).

Participatory research places the emphasis on community-level interviewing and prioritises open-ended methods to reveal local knowledge and understanding (Martin et al, 1999). This paper is based on semi-structured group discussions and interviews which offered the opportunity to communicate freely about a broad range of issues. It was decided that semi-structured interviews were most suitable as they combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey (Schensul, 1999). The author created a set of guidelines which contained the key issues dealt with in each interview (Appendix I). The guidelines were based on the classification of aspects of poverty developed in the literature discussed in the following chapter. The author particularly benefited from the model created by the World Bank's "Consultations with the Poor" initiative (Narayan et al, 1999; World Bank, 1999). The research team followed the guidelines during the discussions, but questions were often modified during the course of an interview in order to capture the informants' knowledge more fully and enable them to express their views and opinions. This flexibility was instrumental in developing rapport with informants who were free to speak their mind and focus on those issues which they consider most important.

The discussions were held in six sites in four districts of Karamoja during the course of April 2011 (a map of research sites is included in Appendix II). One site – Iriiri in Napak District – was urban. Two sites – Katanga Township in Nakapiripirit Town, Nakapiripirit District and Nakayot, also in Nakapiripirit District – had peri-urban character. Three sites – Lokochil in Kotido District, Katanga in Moroto District and Kokeris in Napak District – were located in rural areas. Most informants belonged to the Karamojan ethnic groups of Jie (in Lokochil) and Karimojong, including all three sub-divisions of the latter group: Bokora (in Iriiri and Kokeris), Matheniko (in Katanga Village) and Pian (in Katanga Township and Nakayot). In line with Article 2 of the African Studies Association Guidelines, assent was obtained before each interview (African Studies Association, 2005). Informants were fully informed of the nature of the research in order to prevent response bias and any breach of ethical guidelines.

The discussions lasted for between an hour and two hours. The research team was aware that it was taking the valuable time of the informants. It is BRAC policy that informants cannot be remunerated. Informants were notified of this practice before the start of every interview and consented to share their time without any expectation of financial

compensation. Furthermore, in order to avoid raised expectations, every effort was made to ensure their appreciation of the fact that the study is intended primarily as a source of information for policymakers and that the discussions cannot be expected to lead directly to interventions by BRAC or any other organisation.

This effort was especially important given that, in order to ensure the relevance of the study for BRAC, the discussions were held in sites where BRAC branches and centres are located. The research team depended on local BRAC staff and other gatekeepers, such as LC 1 chairmen, to gain access to informants. As a consequence it did not always have control over who participated in the study. While every attempt was made to ensure representativeness, the very poor are likely to have been underrepresented in the study because of their marginalisation within communities (cf. Narayan et al, 2000a; Narayan and Petesch, 2002). With the exception of the very poor, the informants were deemed to present a representative sample of their communities.

The representativeness of the sample does not necessarily imply the honesty or objectivity of responses (Brocklesby and Holland, 1999). It is widely recognised that, in Karamoja, “all information is suspect and getting past the superficial narratives is a trying task” (Eaton, 2008a). This study explicitly and deliberately seeks perception data which, despite the aforementioned benefits, can be biased as a result of limited information, social conditioning or subject to interpretive or strategic bias.

## **Literature Review**

Poverty is increasingly recognised as a dynamic, complex phenomenon which cannot be defined exclusively in monetary terms. It has psychological as well as material dimensions and finds expression in powerlessness, voicelessness, dependency, shame and humiliation. Poverty is location-specific and embedded in societal patterns, including gender and institutions. Consequently, different poor people experience their circumstances in very different ways. The understanding of these particular experiences requires careful study of cultural, social, economic, political, historical and ecological contexts (Brock, 1999; Narayan et al, 2000b; Narayan and Petesch, 2002; Sen, 1999).

This recognition has twofold ramifications. Firstly, research into poverty must not perpetuate the powerlessness and voicelessness of the poor who deserve to be given a voice. Secondly, the context-specific and complex character of poverty cannot be fully

captured through quantitative measures. The most reliable sources of information about many aspects of poverty are the poor themselves. They are, as a World Bank publication states, “the true poverty experts” (Narayan et al, 2000a). Poor people reveal hidden and hitherto frequently ignored dimensions of poverty. Unlike the academics and policymakers who have long dominated public discourse about poverty, they rarely consider income as a primary indicator of their condition but focus instead on the multiple assets which they possess or lack (Narayan et al, 2000b).

These assets can be categorised as various kinds of capital. Capital, defined as any stock capable of being stored, accumulated, exchanged or depleted and used to generate income or other benefits, can take various forms which encompass multiple aspects of poverty (Martin et al, 1999). Capital can be physical, for example land, water, animals, crops, buildings, vehicles, machines or tools in the possession of a poor individual or group, as well as physical infrastructure which they use (roads, markets). The related notion of environmental capital refers to the frequently difficult natural conditions faced by the poor, such as lack of rain or limited soil fertility. Capital can be also manifested as human capital, comprising health, physical and intellectual capabilities, acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes. Social capital, in turn, refers to the social position of the poor and is concerned with issues such as social cohesion and benefits of membership in social networks. Control over sufficient capital determines the material and psychological well-being of the poor. This classification informs this paper and is used to convey various aspects of poverty experienced by Karamojans (Ibid., Narayan et al, 2000b).

This multidimensional nature of poverty is not captured by the existing literature on Karamoja. The only perception-based study of poverty in Karamoja has been part of a country-wide government project known as the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP). UPPAP research was limited to a few communities in Kotido and Moroto districts and one of its stated objectives was to “dispel the critics’ view that, as a result of the present Government policies, poverty has increased”. Although the project provides valuable information on experiences of the poor, its political purpose compromises the validity of many of its findings (MFPED, 2000a; MFPED, 2000b; MFPED, 2003a; MFPED, 2003b). With the exception of UPPAP, previous studies of poverty in Karamoja have followed conventional non-participatory practices and offer a wealth of statistical data on various aspects of poverty.

Such studies help us to understand the scale of challenges faced by Karamojans. Estimates of the current population range from 700,000 to 1.2 million (Mburu, 2002; Stites et al, 2007a; cf. Knighton, 2010). As many as 82 percent of them are classed as living in poverty. Only 46 percent Karamojans have access to safe drinking water, while having no sanitation units has been reported by virtually all households (91 percent; McKinney, 2009; OCHA, 2008). Infant mortality rate is 179 per 1,000, compared to the Ugandan average of 88. Maternal mortality stands at 750 per 100,000, compared to 505 elsewhere in the country. The global mortality rate of 1.12 people per 10,000 per day is at humanitarian emergency levels. Ninety percent of deaths in Karamoja are attributable to preventable diseases, mainly related to water, personal hygiene and nutrition (Ministry of Health, 2008; OCHA, 2008). The malnutrition rates are particularly striking: it affects 12.1 percent of the population (15.6 and 15.1 percent respectively). The rate for stunting stands at 35.5 percent, wasting – 10.9 percent and severe child malnutrition – 1.6 percent (GOU and OPM, 2007; Ministry of Health, 2008; OCHA, 2008). The high levels of acute malnutrition in children are combined with food insecurity. Twenty percent of Karamojan households are food insecure, and thirty-eight percent are moderately food insecure (McKinney, 2009). Karamojan report much fewer meals (for all ages) than other Ugandans: on average 1.6 times for adults and 1.8 for children. Overall, 44.8 percent of children live in households that only eat one meal a day. Of all food items in Karamoja, 36 percent are obtained from food assistance (McKinney, 2009; OCHA, 2008).

These data offer a glimpse into conditions of life in Karamoja, but we learn little from them about the ways in which Karamojans experience their situation. Statistical data and externally-imposed categorisations may prioritise areas which Karamojans do not consider important while ignoring less tangible challenges. This approach is particularly dangerous in a region which has been the target of crude misconceptions and stereotypes which have undermined the effectiveness of development efforts in the region<sup>3</sup>.

This paper attempts to fill some of the gaps in the literature identified in the preceding paragraphs. It gives poor Karamojans an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns and share their experiences. They offer us a perspective on the conditions of life in Karamoja which is not mediated through externally-imposed categorisations but unveiled by the poor

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<sup>3</sup> These issues are considered in the paper on aspects of governance in Karamoja by the same author, available at:  
[http://oxford.academia.edu/karolczuba/papers/1489163/Governing\\_the\\_Karimojong\\_Tradition\\_Modernity\\_and\\_Power\\_in\\_Contemporary\\_Karamoja/](http://oxford.academia.edu/karolczuba/papers/1489163/Governing_the_Karimojong_Tradition_Modernity_and_Power_in_Contemporary_Karamoja/).

themselves. They paint a picture of poverty as a highly complex phenomenon and demonstrate the multiple coping strategies which they have devised in an attempt to weaken the grip of poverty.

### **Coping with Change in Karamoja: Economic Profile of the Research Sites.**

Poverty overshadows the lives of many Karamojans. Discussions in all six research sites reveal the damaging impact of the phenomenon on informants and the scale of desperation and distress which people experience as they are unable to provide for themselves and their families. Simultaneously, however, they demonstrate the ability of Karamojans to radically refashion their economic life as a result of external shocks.

Economic activity and cultural life of most Karamojans (with the exception of Ethur and the small relict communities) was traditionally centred around cattle and (among the Karamojong) cultivation – undertaken by women who would tend to small gardens to provide a balanced diet for their households – was accommodated to the demands of animal husbandry. In recent decades, however, Karamojan agropastoralists and pastoralists (mainly Karamojong and Pokot) have lost much of their livestock to disease and raiding (Mubiru, 2010; Stefansky Huisman, 2011; UBOS, 2002). The Pian inhabitants of Nakayot, for example, report that most of their cattle has been raided by the Pokot from Kenya, leaving only twelve cows in the whole village. The Jie of Lokochil only have fifty heads of cattle left, while the other interviewed communities claim to have lost all their cattle. More people have chickens, ducks, goats, pigs and turkeys. Following this dramatic upheaval, Karamojans have been forced to adjust their economic lives to the transformed conditions. Crop cultivation has emerged as the main economic activity. While it remains dominated by women who are in charge of the fields, men frequently assist them, especially during the wet season. The cultivated crops vary depending on location. In the relatively fertile Katanga Township and Nakayot local inhabitants grow cassava, ground nuts, maize, sorghum and sugarcane, as well as vegetables such as cabbage, onions and tomatoes. In Lokochil, cassava, ground nuts, maize, millet, onions, simsim (sesame), sorghum and yams are planted, while in the drier Katanga Village and Kokeris local residents are only able to cultivate ground nuts, maize, sorghum and sunflower.

Crop cultivation is highly seasonal and little work is required on the fields for much of the year. As a result, people have to look for employment outside their villages. Opportunities



vary depending on proximity to the nearest urban centre. In Kokeris, which is situated approximately five miles from the nearest town, Matany, the residents' options are limited to fetching firewood and water and collecting grass for sale for thatch. Because of the location of Kokeris near an important crossroads, some men have been employed in road construction. In Katanga Village, despite its relative proximity to Moroto Town, residents report that the only employment opportunities available to them are fetching water and firewood for sale in town. In Lokochil, a rural community located within the walking distance of Kotido Town, people are employed to dig latrines, slash bushes or lay bricks; they also collect thorns for fencing, burn charcoal and sell their produce in town. Even favourable location does not necessarily enable greater access to employment. In Katanga Township and Nakayot, both peri-urban communities, people report lack of employment opportunities. In Katanga Township all land, which used to be communal, has been declared state property and residents face penalties for cutting trees and charcoal. Many Karamojans are involved in the production of local brew which can bring considerable income. Appendix III provides an overview of the economic activities undertaken at the research sites.

### **Local Definitions of Poverty**

The limited opportunities offered to interviewed Karamojong cannot counterbalance the loss of their traditional livelihoods which centred around livestock. The communities report inadequate food supply at all times except for the harvest season. Hunger frequently dominates their perceptions of their circumstances. In some discussions, when asked to describe their socioeconomic situation, informants initially focused on *akoro*, or hunger, before revealing a more general term for poverty. During the meeting in Iriiri, a woman interrupted the discussion with repeated cries: *Akoro! Akoro! Akoro!* According to a middle-aged woman in Katanga Village, "one who is poor has no food". The interviewed Karamojong equate ill-being with material poverty. The Bokora of Kokeris and Matheniko of Katanga Village focus on the condition itself, *ɲican* (poverty), respectively. The Pian of Katanga Township and Nakayot emphasise the people affected by it, the poor or *ɲulu a ɲican*. The Jie of Lokochil use a more dynamic term, *ɲulu araut ɲulu aɲican* ("those who have become poor"), contrasting current times with the more prosperous past. Despite the multiple terms in use, all informants focused their attention on material aspects of poverty, primarily hunger, which are caused by the lack of material assets.

## **Assets of the Poor: Perceptions of the Importance of Physical, Environmental and Human Capital in Karamoja**

Complaints of the interviewed communities revolve around the lack of physical, environmental and human capital. The loss of livestock has had a particularly pronounced effect on the Karamojong who, despite their attempts to devise alternative sources of income, remain attached to the culturally important idea of cattle ownership. The assets which they own, including other animals and their land and crops, are subject to environmental pressures. The lack of rain in Karamoja has greatly affected people's sense of security. Ownership of capital does not provide immunity from poverty. One elderly woman in Iriiri expressed this succinctly, stating: "even if I have land, will I eat this land?" The environmental capital on which people depend is depleted by drought. Furthermore, due to specific environmental conditions, herders have to travel far to access grazing areas. There are no defined grazing rights and the movement of cattle can contribute to inter-ethnic strife. The herders of Lokochil have to take their cattle west to Abim District, causing friction with local Ethur. People do not have the means to acquire tools or other equipment which could be used in economic activities, ensuring their dependence on the aforementioned livelihood strategies. The importance of cattle and other forms of physical capital is further strengthened by the lack of employment opportunities. Wage employment itself is valued chiefly as a means to acquire goods, particularly food, but it is becoming an increasingly central element of Karamojan livelihoods. For this reason, the interviewed Karamojong are acutely aware that they do not possess skills valued by employers. Hunger which they experience weakens them and sometimes causes illness, further limiting the amount of human capital in their possession.

The constraints placed on the Karamojans' ability to access crucial infrastructure further limit human capital growth. With the exception of Kokeris, which is situated in the catchment area of a good Catholic hospital in Matany, the communities report that they are not provided with adequate medical services. There is no health clinic in the vicinity of Nakayot and informants consider the nearest clinic, in Namalu Town, to be prohibitively expensive. Government clinics in the area frequently have no medicines in stock, a situation mirrored in Katanga Township, Katanga Village and Lokochil. Access to education is equally difficult. The communities do not have access to the popular ABEK<sup>4</sup> centres and the quality

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<sup>4</sup> Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja, a Save the Children Norway (Redd Barna) programme which has adapted the curriculum to provide a more relevant education, including lessons in livestock management, crop production and peace and security.

and relevance of teaching at other schools are not rated highly. The primary school nearest to Nakayot is private and unaffordable for many residents. Many parents also find it difficult to meet the costs of sending their children to government schools. Those who send their children to the government primary school in Namalu are expected to pay 5,000 shillings per year and purchase uniforms for their children, a cost which many find prohibitive. The situation in Katanga Village is similar: “There are good schools, but there are fees. Some parents cannot afford them, so their children stay at home. Many children stay at home” (middle-aged man, Katanga Village). People also find it difficult to obtain water as boreholes are either distant or broken-down. In Nakayot, some have to get their water from a swamp, raising health concerns, while the residents of Lokochil have to walk for as much as three hours to access the nearest borehole.

### **Social categories: Status and Wealth in Karamojan Communities. Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty**

All informants were either reluctant or unable to talk about psychological dimensions of poverty. This fact is remarkable given their importance identified in perception-based research on poverty conducted elsewhere (cf. Narayan et al, 2000b). The lack of trust for the research team is one potential explanation. On the other hand, however, the team encountered little difficulty persuading people to divulge other aspects of their situation. Furthermore, other perception studies identify the breakdown of social networks as an important cause of stress and emotional suffering among the poor (cf. Narayan et al, 2000b). This is not the case in Karamoja where communities have remained cohesive and indigenous culture continues to be a central element of life. Indigenous dispute resolution framework and governance structure headed by elders have endured in all communities and enable them to achieve remarkable levels of social unity. Internal conflicts and theft are usually dealt with swiftly by each community. These community interventions appear effective and the police are only informed in exceptional circumstances.

Social cohesion has not thus far been compromised by the gap between the richest and poorest community members. In contrast to the authors of the UPPAP report on Moroto District who claim to have identified multiple and well-defined socioeconomic categories, the research team did not uncover any fundamental intracommunal economic disparity (MFPED, 2003b). There are *nyulu a ejuwak*, “those who are well”, in every community, but their economic position is generally not much stronger than that of the general population.

Very few people are thought to be *ɲikabarak*, or rich. Those isolated individuals “have everything”, including cattle, goats, poultry, good gardens and houses. There are no rich people in most communities and their most prosperous members are referred to as *ɲulu aɲican kori ɲulu ebarito*, “those who are neither poor nor rich”. Some of them own animals and their gardens give good yields, allowing them to sell their produce in urban centres. The majority of Karamojans is positioned between those people and the very poorest. They suffer from hunger during the dry season or after a bad harvest, but their gardens and employment usually enable them to provide food for their families. They are poor but their position is superior to that occupied by people who have “nothing” (*emam*). The very poorest are frequently old or disabled and have no family and no assets. Such people survive on residue from local brew which they obtain in return for fetching water for brewers (brew residue is also frequently consumed by other community members, including children, in times of scarcity). There is no systematic intracommunal provision of welfare for such people as most of the population is barely able to provide for themselves. The very poor interviewed for this study do not, however, report social isolation. They participate in the life of their community and receive occasional assistance, usually in the form of employment, from their better-off neighbours.

Overall, however, socioeconomic variation is small. Even those who are considered *ɲikabarak* are generally poor by Ugandan standards. Many communities do not find any rich people in their midst. Instead, they consider outsiders, frequently members of non-Karamojan ethnic groups who conduct trade in urban centres, to be *ɲikabarak*. There is also significant social mobility within the communities. Many individuals are able to accumulate capital over time, but it can be easily lost due to illness, injury, raiding, crop failure, animal disease or other shocks. Consequently, the income gap does not jeopardise social cohesion, especially that the external conditions which are believed to have led to poverty affect all community members. All informants unanimously identified the lack of rain and ensuing drought as the primary cause of poverty in their communities. Only in Katanga Village did they add insecurity and disease to the list.

### **Priorities of the Poor**

Informants were also in broad agreement regarding the measures necessary to alleviate poverty. They do not believe that they are in a position to improve their situation through their own actions and expect external support. In Katanga Village, Kokeris and Nakayot, they

expressed preference for the form of support which Karamojans have been receiving from external actors for decades: food. The Lokochil community was, however, vehemently opposed to food assistance. Instead, the Iriiri, Katanga Township and Lokochil communities hope for external support which will stimulate their ability to provide for themselves. According to a young woman in Katanga Township, “we do not need anything, just seeds and chickens so we can start”. Apart from this demand for initial capital to commence economic activity, their expectations are limited to the provision of services which are elsewhere normally supplied by the state. They want external actors to improve security so that they can live without fear for raiders and thieves. They would like medical services in their areas to be improved. And, fundamentally, there is widespread desire for education in various forms. They express support for the ABEK model but the demand is mostly proclaimed through the desire for particular skills, irrespective of the nature of education provider. Literacy and vocational training were emphasised in all communities. Furthermore, in Katanga Township, a peri-urban area with high migration rates, entrepreneurial skills and access to information (including the Internet) were also mentioned. The general feeling is that education should not be restricted to young children, which is currently usually the case, but should also be made available to the youth and adults.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The voices of Karamojans contained in this study demonstrate the creativity of people who – following a series of external environmental and political shocks – have had to adjust to a radically changed economic landscape. The paper shows how many Karamojans have attempted to cope with economic change through an increased reliance on crop cultivation and involvement in new economic activities outside their communities. This adjustment has not been entirely successful and the paper uncovers the scale and impact of poverty which pervades social structures and dominates the lives of informants, many of whom continue to suffer from hunger. The loss of cattle, previously a central element of their cultural and economic life, has affected them deeply and they perceive their poverty largely in material terms. The informants are also concerned about their inadequate human capital, including education, skills and health. In contrast to many other poor communities across the world, poverty does not appear to have weakened social cohesion in Karamoja. The paper argues that this fact can be at least partly attributed to the lack of significant economic disparity in Karamojan communities which tend to define all or the vast majority of their members as

poor. The informants have very clear ideas about the kind of support which they require from external actors and their demands go far beyond the food assistance with which they are most commonly provided.

The paper demonstrates the necessity of assistance for Karamoja and the widespread public support for external interventions in the region. It offers a glimpse into the expectations of Karamojans and illustrates the necessity of greater engagement with them. At the same time, policymakers need to bear in mind the dangers of excessive reliance on the opinions of those whom they target. Karamojans' perceptions of their situation and expectations for the future have been shaped by their particular experiences which may limit their ability to assess their circumstances accurately and conceive of the most promising solutions to their predicament. Perception-based research has inherent limitations which can be only offset by triangulation with results of studies conducted with the use of alternative methods. Much more research is necessary before we obtain sufficient knowledge to effectively target Karamojan poverty.

## Appendix I

### DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK

#### I. SITE CHARACTERISTICS

1. Economic activity
2. Livelihood strategies

#### II. EXPLORING POVERTY

1. Local definitions of well-being, deprivation, ill-being, vulnerability and poverty. Local terminology. Include terms and phrases employed by different groups/social categories.

Possible elements of poverty: hunger, pain, discomfort, lack of assets, material lack or want, rejection, isolation, loneliness, bad relations, insecurity, vulnerability, wariness, fear, frustration, low self-confidence.

2. Components of poverty

##### A. Material poverty:

What material elements figure in people's definition of poverty.

E.g. Food security. Hunger. Exhaustion. Ill health. Access to water.  
Physical isolation.

##### B. Assets:

What assets are important to informants? Who has access to them/controls them? Who plays specific roles in economic and social activities? Who is excluded?

What opportunities are there for social and economic mobility?

Types of assets:

a. Physical capital.

Livestock. Tools/equipment.

b. Human capital.

Health. Education. Labour. Access to employment.

c. Social capital.

Informal networks. Benefits of membership in a network.

d. Environmental capital.

Access to commons. Grazing rights.

C. Psychological well-being:

a. Power and voice. Exclusion, rejection, isolation.

Networks of power relations in which people live and become disempowered.

Do some people feel left out of society, or looked down upon or excluded from active participation in community life or decision making? If so, who and on what basis and why?

b. Cultural and social norms.



Social solidarity

D. Security.

Lack of protection and peace of mind.

Does (in)security figure in people's definition of poverty?

How do they define security?

What are the main kinds of shocks that people have faced?

E. Access to infrastructure.

Health clinics. Schools.

F. Social cohesion.

Crime. Conflict. Intra-community tensions.

3. Social categories.

Criteria on the basis of which households or individuals are differentiated and placed in different well-being groups/categories.

Social categories.

Proportion of households/individuals in each group/category.

4. Causes of Ill-being.

III. PRIORITIES OF THE POOR

Measures which the poor believe to be necessary to alleviate their poverty.

## Appendix II

MAP: RESEARCH SITES



## Appendix III

TABLE: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH SITES

Research Site	Dominant Ethnic Group	Nearest Urban Centre (Distance to the Centre)	Economic Activity
Lokochil	Jie	Kotido (1 km)	Crop cultivation: cassava, ground nuts, maize, millet, onions, simsim (sesame), sorghum and yams. Fifty heads of cattle.

			Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment opportunities: digging latrines, slashing bushes, laying bricks, collecting thorns for fencing, burning charcoal, selling produce in Kotido, alcohol production.
Iriiri	Karimojong - Bokora	Iriiri (N/A)	Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment: WFP food for work projects.
Kokeris	Karimojong - Bokora	Matany (5 km)	Crop cultivation: ground nuts, maize, sorghum and sunflower. No cattle. Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment: road construction, fetching firewood and water and collecting grass for sale for thatch, alcohol production.
Katanga Village	Karimojong - Matheniko	Moroto (2 km)	Crop cultivation: ground nuts, maize, sorghum and sunflower. No cattle. Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment: fetching

			water and firewood for sale in town, alcohol production.
Katanga Township	Karimojong - Pian	Nakapiripirit (1 km)	Crop cultivation: ground nuts, cassava, maize, sorghum, sugarcane, cabbage, onions, tomatoes. No cattle. Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment: fetching firewood, charcoal burning, collecting wild fruits for sale, alcohol production.
Nakayot	Karimojong - Pian	Namalu (2 km)	Crop cultivation: ground nuts, cassava, maize, sorghum, sugarcane, cabbage, onions, tomatoes. Twelve heads of cattle. Some ducks, goats, hens and turkeys. Employment: alcohol production.

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