

Income Generating Activities and Savings Behaviour of Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Karamoja

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Abstract: A series of crises which Karamoja experienced in recent decades has compromised the viability of livelihood strategies on which its largely agropastoralist and pastoralist population had traditionally relied. The paper investigates the effects which this development has had on some of the region's most vulnerable inhabitants: adolescent girls and young women who participate in BRAC's Youth Development Programme (YDP). It uncovers the scale of livelihoods transition which has eroded previously well-defined gender roles and forced Youth Development Centre (YDC) members, and many other Karamojans, to become involved in the newly-emerged monetised economy through small-scale income generating activities (IGAs). The paper also considers participation in BRAC's savings scheme targeted at YDC members who – given the recent emergence of cash economy in Karamoja – currently have little experience of managing financial flows and insufficient capital to expand their economic activities.

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Introduction

Karamoja receives poor and erratic rainfall which limits the range of reliable livelihood options available to the region's inhabitants. Economic activities of most Karamojans were traditionally centred around migratory cattle rearing, a particularly dependable livelihood in a region where crops regularly fail. Karamoja's inhabitants developed livelihood strategies which ensured their survival in times of drought and other environmental crises, but were not prepared for a series of shocks which the region experienced in recent decades. A combination of ethnic strife, ill-conceived developmental and military interventions, intense environmental crises and exponential population growth fundamentally challenged these strategies as livestock was lost and agriculture became increasingly unreliable. This paper investigates how these developments have affected the livelihoods and social position of some of the most vulnerable people in Karamoja: adolescent girls and young women who are members of the network of Youth Development Centres (YDCs) which BRAC established in five districts of Karamoja (Amudat, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak) in 2011. As traditional sources of livelihoods have been compromised, YDC members have been forced to find alternative economic activities in the cash economy which has begun to emerge in recent years. The paper addresses the extent of livelihoods transition and the effects which it has had on YDC members' economic behaviour. It provides a concise outline of their lives and social relations and presents the strategies which they have adopted to cope with the loss of traditional livelihoods, the costs and benefits of these strategies, and the ways in which they have affected YDC members' position in society, in particular in relation to men. Because of the recent emergence of monetised economy in Karamoja, YDC members have little capital at their disposal; BRAC has established an Income Generating Fund (IGF) as part of the Youth Development Programme (YDP) to stimulate members' savings with the intention of opening new business opportunities. The paper considers YDC members' participation in IGF and other savings and microcredit schemes, their motivations and hopes and the constraints to saving which they face.¹

¹ This paper is a component of a research effort undertaken by BRAC to gain a better understanding of the communities which it serves in Karamoja. Other papers in the series can be found at <http://oxford.academia.edu/karolczuba/papers/>.

Methods

The purpose of this paper is to enrich our knowledge of the livelihoods transition which Karamojans, especially YDC members, have experienced in recent past. This development is not well documented and its understanding is dependent on information revealed by the people whom it affected. The paper is, therefore, mostly based on participatory, qualitative research methods which emphasise community-level interviewing and prioritise open-ended methods to reveal local knowledge and understanding (Martin et al, 1999).

Fieldwork consisted of twenty semi-structured focus group discussions and fifty-five individual interviews which were conducted in all five Karamojan districts in which BRAC is present (Amudat, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak) in November and December 2011. Nearly all respondents represented the locally-dominant ethnic groups: the three sections of the Karimojong – Bokora, Matheniko and Pian (in Napak, Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts, respectively) – the Jie (in Kotido District) and Pokot (in Amudat District); some, especially in towns, represent immigrant populations (Acholi, Baganda, Bagisu and Ethur) (A list of research sites is included in Appendix I). In addition, one hundred and ninety-one YDC members were asked to complete a questionnaire which focused on the importance of particular economic activities to their personal and household budgets and assessed the scale of livelihoods transformation (Appendix II).

Literature Review

Karamojans inhabit an inhospitable, challenging environment which offers few livelihood options. Poorly distributed, unpredictable and limited rainfall ranges from 400 mm in the east of Karamoja to 1,000 mm in the west. Droughts are frequent (Dyson-Hudson, 1966; Gray, 2000; Irish Aid, 2007). As many as five out of every six crops are bound to fail (Mamdani, Kasoma and Katende, 1992). Agriculture is, consequently, an unreliable livelihood strategy and most Karamojans have traditionally depended on migratory rearing of cattle for their livelihood (Gray, 2000; Knighton, 2003).

The Karimojong – a family of related ethnic groups (the Dodoth, Jie and Karimojong; the latter are, in turn, subdivided into three main sections, the Bokora, Matheniko and Pian) which constitutes the vast majority of Karamoja's population (as much as eighty-five percent, mostly concentrated in Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak districts) – are

generally considered to be an agropastoralist people (Knaute, 2008a; Knighton, 2010). Cattle rearing has always formed the basis of their livelihoods (and culture), but agricultural activity – even though it has been accommodated to the demands of animal husbandry – would provide them with an important additional source of food (Knaute, 2008a; Novelli, 1999). The Pokot or Pökoot, small numbers of whom reside in the eastern part of Karamoja (Amudat District), have traditionally followed a more typical pastoralist lifestyle (Andiema et al, 2003; Österle, 2008). This paper focuses on these agropastoralist and pastoralist communities (with the exception of the Dodoth). In addition, the Ethur, whose lands in western Karamoja (Abim District) receive more reliable rainfall, have relied on agriculture to a greater extent. Small relict communities of the Ik, Soo and Nyangyia are also cultivators, although it has been suggested that their adoption of agriculture was the result of pressure from the larger and better-armed pastoralist groups and, indeed, the Soo became involved in cattle herding when they acquired guns at the turn of the 1980s (Knaute, 2008a).

The agropastoralists and pastoralists' traditional dominance in Karamoja can be attributed to their ability to withstand frequent crop failure. It has been shown that even in a year with almost complete crop failure, most agropastoralist and pastoralist Karamojan households would be able to survive on resources available within the pastoral system (Levine, 2010). Pastoralism is, therefore, widely recognised – at least in academic literature – as the most viable livelihood option in Karamoja, as well as in other arid areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ekaya, 2005; FEWS NET, 2005; Knighton, 2005).

Karamojan agropastoralists and pastoralists have developed complex social mechanisms to support the economic basis of their existence. Pastoral production in Karamoja is structured by gender and age, following a pattern prevalent in most pastoralist societies (Hodgson, 2000). Traditionally, children begin to work at an early age. Girls and women are responsible for domestic duties, including gathering wild greens and fruits, collecting firewood, cooking food, fetching water and caring for children. Among the Karamojong, women are traditionally in charge of agricultural activity, although some farming practices are shared between the sexes (Stites et al, 2007a). Boys and young men are responsible for livestock, their families' most important assets. Boys herd livestock, while young men guard animals and protect them from raids (Stefansky Huisman, 2011; Stites et al, 2007a). Available information allows us to form a basic picture of traditional Karamojan livelihoods, but scholarly literature on the subject is highly limited: there are no studies of the livelihoods of Ugandan Pokot (their Kenyan coethnics have received more scholarly attention) and other

smaller Karamojan ethnic groups, while studies on the Karamojong tend to focus on non-economic aspects of their lives.

Karamojan livelihood systems were designed to cope with natural shocks such as disease and drought, but were not prepared for the developments of the twentieth century. In the early 1900s, political equilibrium in Karamoja was challenged by the arrival of a new political entity: the colonial state. The Ugandan Protectorate authorities sought to curtail practices which they considered to be undesirable: primarily unchecked migration and cattle raiding. It has been suggested that the policies intended to contain these perceived threats contributed to a succession of famines which befell the region in the course of the century (Mamdani, 1982 and 1986), but this thesis has been vigorously contested (Gartrell, 1985). Many Protectorate policies were continued by the postcolonial Ugandan state and enforced by threatened or actual violence (Gray, 2000; Mirzeler and Young, 2000; Olowo Onyango, 2010). Government efforts to promote alternative livelihood strategies (particularly sedentary agriculture) did not prove successful and the desire to impose military control over the restive Karamojan population backfired when, following the collapse of Idi Amin's government in 1979, arms depots at Kotido and Moroto were looted by local Karamojong (the former by the Jie, the latter by the Matheniko), precipitating a period of intensive raiding and a famine which killed as many as 50,000 people (Gray, 2003; Knighton, 1990 and 2006a; Mirzeler and Young, 2000; Olowo Onyango, 2010; Stites et al, 2007a).

The situation unraveled in the following decades as the fragile Karamojan livelihood systems were pushed out of equilibrium (Bevan, 2008). Incessant cattle raiding created a seemingly unbreakable cycle of violence and is controversially claimed to have undermined traditional governance structures structures, at least among the Karamojong (Eaton, 2008a; Gray, 2000; Mirzeler and Young, 2000; Mirzeler, 2007a and 2007b; Mkutu, 2010; Stites et al, 2007a; cf. Knighton, 2003, 2006a, 2007 and 2010). The Karamojong feared cultivating farmland away from settlements as it made them vulnerable to raiders (Nangiro, 2005). In an effort to contain raiding, cattle were concentrated in army-controlled kraals, potentially undermining the social status of young men who had traditionally been responsible for the protection of livestock (Stefansky Huisman, 2011). Many women and children fled Karamoja in the wake of the Ugandan government's brutal disarmament campaign, which has also been found to have negatively affected maternal resources, children's health and women's access to health care (Gray, 2010; Sundal, 2010).

These essentially political developments were accompanied by natural shocks. There is evidence that the climate of Karamoja is changing: annual rainfall – always limited – is decreasing, reducing the availability of grazing land and the crop growing period (Mubiru, 2010; also Oxfam, 2008; Stites et al, 2007a). Karamoja's livestock has been affected by diseases such as peste de petitis ruminants (PPR) and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP) (Mubiru, 2010). Recent years have seen significant reduction of livestock population – as a result of both disease and raiding – and the figures provided by the most recent census, which claims that there are 2.2 million head of cattle in Karamoja, may not (or no longer) be accurate (Stefansky Huisman, 2011; UBOS, 2008). In addition, staple crops such as sorghum have been hit by crop fungus (Mubiru, 2010). These challenges to Karamojan livelihood systems coincided with exponential population growth which the region has experienced in recent decades, especially since the 1980s (Knaute, 2009a). Estimates of the current population range from 700,000 to 1.2 million (Mburu, 2002; Stites et al, 2007a; cf. Knighton, 2010).

Agropastoralism and pastoralism are uniquely appropriate livelihood strategies in Karamoja and there is evidence that there should be no systematic need for humanitarian aid in the region, even when rains are poor, but this is only the case as long as households can depend on their livestock (Levine, 2010). The divergent trajectories which human and livestock populations have followed in Karamoja in recent past have likely contributed to the number of food insecure people in the region, which is the highest in Uganda. Twenty percent of Karamojan households are food insecure, and thirty-eight percent are moderately food insecure (McKinney, 2009). Little evidence is available on the consequences which the difficulties in acquiring food have had on economic activities of Karamojans, but there are clear indications of greater participation in cash economy, a move which they had long resisted despite multiple state initiatives intended to commercialise Karamoja's economy (Eaton, 2010; Ondoga, 2010; Stefansky Huisman, 2011). This development has resulted in the rise of individually (and not communally, as previously) defined economic relationships and has been linked to an increase in crime (Eaton, 2010; Stefansky Huisman, 2011). The precise character and extent of this transformation remain unclear, although it appears to have affected different ethnic groups to a varying degree: while many Karamojong have been forced to pursue alternative livelihood strategies, the Pokot have largely retained their pastoral lifestyle (Stites et al, 2007a). There is no information about whether the emergence of monetised economy has stimulated adoption of financial mechanisms such as loans and savings.

The erosion of the traditional basis of Karamojan livelihoods has challenged the previously well-defined gender roles. Women's position in Karamojan societies had always been weaker than men's, and it appears to have been further compromised in recent past as a result of insecurity and violence (Oxfam, 2000). As the importance of cattle herding – the traditional domain of men – has decreased, women have had to assume greater responsibility for household food security (Stites et al, 2010b). Available literature suggests that women have retained their traditional control over agricultural production, even though its importance has increased due to loss of cattle (Stites et al, 2007a). There is no information, however, on the extent to which women have become involved in cash economy or the effect it has had on gender roles and their position in society.

Many men have been unable or unwilling to provide their wives and children with necessary support, contributing to female outmigration from Karamoja (Stites et al, 2007b). Men have also suffered as their traditional role as herders and protectors has been undermined. Norms of masculinity have been compromised as men cannot marry or take up positions of authority. An increase in rape has been attributed to this development. Men youth are also reported to spend their cash income – increasingly derived from livelihood strategies previously restricted to women, such as the sale of charcoal or firewood – on alcohol and prostitution (Stefansky Huisman, 2011).

The transformation of Karamojan livelihoods is a very recent phenomenon and has not yet been adequately studied. Similar developments have, however, affected agropastoralist and pastoralist societies elsewhere and they offer valuable insights into the trajectories which Karamojans' economic behaviour may follow. Several strategies, such as mobility, diversity, flexibility and reciprocity and maintaining reserves, which had allowed pastoralists to survive in difficult low-productivity environments, have been compromised in recent decades, at least in part due to the failure of colonial and postcolonial 'development' policies to recognise the value of pastoral production (Fernandez-Gimenez and Le Febre, 2006; Forstater, 2002). With growing human populations, decline in the ratio of livestock to people and increasingly difficult access to grazing resources, African pastoralist societies are in transition (Barton et al, 2001).

Pastoralists have traditionally been more inclined to value livestock as a source of income in kind (blood, milk and reproduction), rather than of cash (Barton et al, 2001). The Ethiopian Borana, for example, have continued to operate in a largely unmonetised economy, but their livelihood system – once viewed as the epitome of sustainable pastoralism – is now

confronting multiple challenges which are forcing many to obtain food from markets, leaving them vulnerable to volatile market prices and exchange rates (Berhanu and Fayissa, 2010; Desta and Coppock, 2004; Helland, 2000). Many other pastoralist peoples have followed a similar trajectory: with the erosion of traditional livelihood options cash becomes necessary to obtain food, as well as previously unavailable services such as Western education and medicine (Barton et al, 2001). Commercialisation forces people to become involved in economic activities, such as the sale of charcoal and firewood for the Karrayyu of Ethiopia, which are considered as inappropriate or demeaning (Tolera, 2000). It also encourages a shift from traditional communal control of resources to private ownership (Tache, 2000).

Private ownership inevitably leads to socioeconomic stratification (Fratkin, 2001). Following commercialisation, temporal dependencies between stock poor/labour rich households and stock rich/labour deficient households in subsistence production are transformed into permanent relationships (Sikana and Kerven, 1991). The wealthy elevate their pastoral status, while the poor become employed as wage herders or leave pastoral economy altogether as they lose access to livestock, grazing and water (Bernstein, 2007; Homewood et al, 2006; Sato, 1997). Even the Borana, a relatively traditional people, have recently witnessed the emergence of private pasture enclosures erected by richer households, potentially leading the way for increased social stratification previously observed in societies such as the Maasai or Rendille of Kenya (Helland, 2000; Sato, 1997). Economic stratification is deepened by frequent crises which affect pastoralists, such as droughts. While the wealthy can successfully diversify and weather crises, small pastoral producers have limited abilities to weave effective safety nets (Hogg, 1986; Starr, 1987). This vulnerability is compounded by many pastoralists' preference to hold their assets exclusively in livestock form (Berhanu and Fayissa, 2010). Scholarly literature on the subject is essentially non-existent, but financial instruments tend to be unavailable in pastoralist areas and there is consequently little exposure or interest in banking or other financial institutions among pastoralists, although some herders in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia are reported to use trusted friends or shopkeepers as savings or credit institutions (Barton et al, 2001).

Increased commercialisation has been accompanied by two developments which have effectively transformed the livelihoods of many (formerly) pastoralist peoples. Firstly, the previously central importance of cattle herding has declined in favour of keeping more small ruminants. This 'Maasai model' is an effective method of diversifying holdings: cattle are large indivisible units and substantial amount of a herder's wealth is stored in only a few

animals; smaller animals offers herders greater flexibility and security (Desta and Coppock, 2004; Ekaya, 2005; Hutchinson, 1996; Österle, 2008). This phenomenon has been particularly pronounced among the Kenyan Pokot; their northern neighbours, the Turkana, closely related to the Karamojong, have also embraced small stock (Ekaya, 2005; Fernandez-Gimenez and Le Febre, 2006; Fratkin et al, 2004). Secondly, as prolonged droughts, population growth, expanding crop agriculture, conservation policies and insecurity have affected the ability of mobile pastoralists to maintain their herds and access grazing areas, there has been a sharp shift towards sedentarisation and cultivation (Ekaya, 2005; Fernandez-Gimenez and Le Febre, 2006; Fratkin et al, 2004). Even the Borana have become involved in agricultural production and it has become a central element of household economy for other groups which have partly withdrawn from pastoral production (Fernandez-Gimenez and Le Febre, 2006; Lynn, 2010).

These developments have largely taken place in the post-independence era, a relatively short period of time compared to centuries of the successful operation of African pastoral systems. These systems are highly dynamic and allow pastoralists to adjust their livelihoods to short-term shocks (Desta and Coppock, 2004). The Maasai, for example, traditionally reverted to agriculture for brief periods when epidemic disease caused stock losses, only to return to full-time pastoralism once they have built up their herds again (Forstater, 2002). More recently, some Nigerien Ful'be have given up cultivation for a purely pastoral, mobile livelihood, while Mongolia experienced a return to traditionally practiced extensive livestock herding system following the collapse of communism and the state farm system orientated towards intensive cultivation and livestock production (Greenough, 2006; Johnson et al, 2006). Although some groups, such as the Tanzanian Simanjiro Maasai, have embraced cultivation to the extent that it has become part of cultural identity and a key measure of wealth, others, including the Samburu of Kenya, appear to have simply taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the livestock market to reconstruct the pastoral systems on which their culture is based (Konaka, 1991; Lynn, 2010).

Although not necessarily irreversible, the transformation of pastoralist livelihood systems in East Africa has had significant impact on the people whom they serve. It has been shown that women are the primary victims of social differentiation generated by commercialisation in Africa (Berry, 1993). Among the Maasai in colonial Tanganyika, commoditisation and colonial policies facilitated men's appropriation of women's rights, while much more recently Borana women have only been able to establish control over as little as ten percent

of the cash generated by their household, although their command over household cash earnings has been on the rise due to their growing involvement in non-pastoral activities (Berhanu and Fayissa, 2010; Hodgson, 1999). Simultaneously, sedentarisation strongly affects health indicators: there is little information about women's health, but evidence from Kenya demonstrates that pastoral Rendille children are uniformly heavier and taller than their sedentary counterparts, while settled Turkana experience reduced fertility and greater child mortality and morbidity (Fratkin et al, 2004).

The experiences of other pastoralist societies, in East Africa and elsewhere, allow us to position Karamoja as an element of a broader livelihoods transition. They suggest that the emergence of monetised economy is set to radically reshape Karamojans' economic behaviour and, by extension, the very fabric of their societies. In fact, because Karamoja has been affected to a much greater degree by developments such as insecurity and loss of livestock, it is possible that phenomena observed in other areas may occur in Karamoja more rapidly or impact people's lives more markedly. Because commercialisation has been shown to weaken women's position in (formerly) pastoralist communities, it is of particular importance to understand what effect recent developments have had on Karamojan women, their economic role and social position. Commercialisation potentially offers women an opportunity to improve their socioeconomic situation through new mechanisms of income acquisition and reduce risks through participation in credit or savings services, but it can also encourage men to take over newly profitable activities which had traditionally been controlled by women. Available literature on Karamoja does not consider the effects which economic transformation in Karamoja has had on women's socioeconomic position; this paper aims to address this gap. The following sections investigate the extent of economic change in Karamoja and the impacts which it has had on women, in particular YDC members, and their economic activities and social roles.

The Livelihoods Transition and Income Generating Activities in Contemporary Karamoja

Karamojan women's economic activities used to be largely restricted to their households. Although women have sold produce in towns and trading centres for a long time, this practice was long limited by the small size of Karamoja's urban centres, their distance from most homesteads in the sparsely populated region, minimal use which Karamojans had for cash, and the sustainability of subsistence pastoralism and – in some areas – agriculture. As the

reduction in the size of herds and multiple droughts compromised Karamojans' previously successful livelihood strategies, however, women had to expand the range of economic activities in which they engaged. Commercialisation provided an opportunity to use cash to acquire food for their households. Because of Karamoja's aridity, most women could not become commercial agricultural producers and had to find alternative methods of income generation. The adoption of monetised economy was an uneven process and remains more advanced in close proximity to towns and trading centres, but respondents in some Karamojong areas report that women's involvement in income generating activities (IGAs), or *elejilej* in Nkaramojong, began some decades ago, most likely following the disastrous famine of 1980. As many communities gradually lost their livestock and agricultural production became difficult due to successive droughts, women's reliance on *elejilej* increased. The generation of women examined in this paper (currently between 13-22 years of age) appears to be the first one nearly universally involved in IGAs. This development is reflected in Tables 1 and 2, based on questionnaires completed by YDC members. They demonstrate the declining importance of animal husbandry and greater participation in alternative activities.

Most adolescent girls and young women have no choice but to depend on *elejilej*. Interviews indicate a radical reduction of livestock in nearly all Karamojong communities; many men no longer own cattle at all. The Pokot appear to have retained their livestock in considerably greater numbers. Agricultural activity (among the Karamojong) has proved more successful

Table 1. YDC members' perceptions of the importance of economic activities in their communities.

	Is more important	Is less important	No change
Cattle herding	48	116	2
Goat herding	49	109	9
Poultry rearing	49	107	3
Brewing alcohol	132	32	8
Charcoal burning	87	35	2
Other cash-based activities	135	11	2

Table 2. The importance of particular economic activities for individual households (“1” stands for the most important activity, “2” for the second most important, and so on).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Agriculture for subsistence	20	46	6	10	0	3	0	0	0	1
Selling agricultural produce	16	16	10	3	7	1	2	0	1	0
Selling animals	3	8	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Selling local brew	53	37	15	6	4	0	0	0	0	0
Charcoal burning	6	0	12	8	6	1	0	0	0	0
Washing clothes	30	13	18	9	1	1	1	0	0	0
Quarrying	7	8	13	11	6	2	0	0	0	0
Cutting grass	4	3	13	13	5	6	1	1	0	0
Weeding gardens/harvesting	13	13	10	20	18	7	3	1	0	0
Fetching water	11	18	11	16	16	5	0	2	1	0
Selling firewood	2	4	9	4	14	8	0	1	0	0
Collecting poles	0	3	2	5	5	6	1	0	2	0
Other IGAs	4	13	13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

in recent years, as greater rainfall brought relatively bountiful harvests. Except for emergency, most Bokora Karimojong, Matheniko Karimojong and Jie households never sell their agricultural produce; in most areas, teenage girls begin cultivation on their own plots, although they also continue to work in their mothers' gardens at least until they marry. Agricultural activity has followed a different trajectory among some Pian Karimojong (in the relatively fertile area around Namalu) where most agricultural land seems to have been taken over by men (this matter is considered in more detail in the following sections). Agricultural production among the Pokot remains, at best, highly limited, although some women cultivate on small plots of land. Agricultural production among the Pokot remains, at best, highly limited, although some women cultivate on small plots of land. Karamojong and Pokot women cannot own larger animals, be it cattle or goats, but many, including young women, have chickens. The latter are usually kept for household consumption, although some respondents intend to sell their chickens once they have increased their – currently in most cases very small (between one and three chickens) – number. Chickens in Karamoja frequently die from disease, however, and the unreliability of agricultural production in the region is well established (Gray, 2000; Knighton, 2003; Mamdani, Kasoma and Katende, 1992).

Women are, therefore, effectively forced to undertake IGAs in addition to multiple other activities. In most communities, women are responsible for cultivation; they need to take care of their poultry and play a limited role in livestock rearing; they clean houses, wash clothes, cook food. Adolescent girls have to look after younger siblings and frequently go to school; young women take care of their children and are usually – and increasingly – responsible for the provision of food for their households. Such a combination of responsibilities puts considerable strain on women, especially between February and September (wet season), when most agricultural work takes place. After cultivation, the primary source of food, IGAs are of greatest importance, and are undertaken nearly every day. During the wet season, agricultural work is usually done between 6 am and 12 pm and *elejilej* follow it (until the evening) or are undertaken on alternate days. During the dry season, many women – at least those who are not in school – spend most of their time on IGAs, with household chores relegated to early morning or evening. Table 3 presents relative importance which interviewed YDC members attach to economic activities in which they engage.

YDC members are involved in a relatively limited number of IGAs, which usually tend to be labour-intensive and time-consuming but bring little income. There is considerable ethnic variation: nearly all activities undertaken by Pokot women are widespread among the Karamojong, but the number of IGAs which the Pokot consider appropriate is much smaller. It is also likely that, since the Pokot have retained more cattle than their neighbours, there is less need for women among them to become involved in IGAs. Pokot YDC members collect stones (1,500 Ugandan shillings for half a wheelbarrow – usually a day's work for a girl or young woman), firewood (UGX700-1,000 for a small bundle, up to UGX1,500 for a big one), wooden poles used for fencing (UGX1,000-1,500 for a bundle), grass for thatching (UGX1,000 for a bundle) and aloe vera (a five litre jerrycan of aloe vera, collection of which takes about a week, is sold for UGX2,500-2,700). They also sell eggs (UGX300 per egg), milk (UGX500 for a cup); if they have gardens and the harvest has been good, they may also sell some agricultural produce. In addition, Amudat, the largest settlement in the Pokot area of Karamoja (and district headquarters), offers opportunities to sell *waragi* (generic Ugandan term for domestic distilled beverages) imported from Jinja (UGX5,000-10,000 per day) and, for local non-Pokot inhabitants, wash clothes for other people (the Pokot consider this activity to be demeaning; it may also bring between UGX5,000-10,000 per day). Respondents from rural areas of Amudat District estimate their weekly income at between UGX3,000 and 8,000, although it may occasionally reach UGX20,000. Incomes in Amudat Town Council area (where not all residents, and YDC members, are Pokot) tend to be somewhat higher, with estimates ranging from UGX2,000 to 30,000 per week.

Most Karamojong YDC members seem to be much more dependent on *elejilej* than their Pokot counterparts and the number of activities in which they are engaged is much greater. Interestingly, prices tend to be comparable throughout the region, despite different weather patterns (the Bokora Karimojong around Iriiri and Pian Karimojong inhabit more fertile areas than the Bokora Karimojong further east, Matheniko Karimojong and Jie) and indications that some groups (particularly the Bokora) have lost more cattle than others (Knighton, 2010). Nearly all interviewed Karamojong YDC members fetch water (one twenty-litre jerrycan of water is sold for between UGX100 and 200, depending on distance from the source of water), collect firewood (UGX400-3,000 for a bundle, depending on size and distance from nearest trees, which in drier parts of Karamoja can be very considerable), wooden poles for building (one pole is sold for between UGX200-1,000; a bundle costs up to UGX7,000), thorns for fencing (UGX1,000) and grass for thatching (between UGX500-1,000

Table 3. The importance of particular economic activities for individual YDC members (“1” stands for the most important activity, “2” for the second most important, and so on).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Cattle	10	3	2	5	5	2	2	2	0	0	0
Other animals	5	7	6	4	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
Subsistence agriculture	25	16	9	6	2	3	2	2	0	0	0
Selling agricultural produce	22	13	5	6	7	3	3	0	1	0	0
Selling animals	0	6	3	8	2	1	5	2	0	0	0
Selling local brew	56	32	18	8	6	0	1	0	0	0	0
Charcoal burning	1	4	11	8	7	2	0	2	2	1	0
Washing clothes	8	4	15	12	9	6	3	0	0	0	1
Quarrying	3	2	11	13	14	6	6	2	2	0	0
Cutting grass	2	9	9	6	4	11	6	3	2	0	2
Weeding gardens	19	17	13	12	15	5	12	2	1	0	0
Fetching water	12	9	6	11	13	13	3	3	1	1	0
Selling firewood	1	7	5	2	3	6	7	2	2	0	0
Collecting poles	1	4	5	6	4	4	3	4	4	1	0
Other IGAs	9	16	10	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1

for a bundle), wash clothes (anything UGX200-3,000) and work in other people's gardens (usually UGX1,000-2,000 for half a day's work, between around 6 am-12 pm). Many women are involved in the sale of charcoal: because production of charcoal requires considerable physical effort, in some communities they do it with their husbands; in other places, a woman may hire a man to burn charcoal. A small sack or basin of charcoal is sold for UGX1,500-3,000, a big sack costs UGX5,000-10,000 (charcoal is more expensive during the wet season). Only a portion of this amount is profit, as the producer has to buy sacks (UGX1,300 for a big one; UGX700 for a small sack) and – where necessary – pay assistants (UGX2,000 for a day). Others do not burn charcoal, but buy it and sell it on for a small profit (not more than UGX1,000 on a big sack). Production of local alcohol (from maize and sorghum; *ngawe*, for example *ekwete* or *epurot*) is the most profitable activity widely available to women (and restricted to them; no men make local brew in interviewed communities; cf. Stefansky Huisman, 2011). An *abukubuk* (or twenty-litre jerrycan) of alcohol is sold for between UGX4,000 and 10,000 (UGX100-400 for a cup sold to an individual customer). In addition, residue left from the fermenting process can be sold to poorer households (one *abukubuk* is sold at around UGX500) or, alternatively, dried and used (after addition of sorghum) to brew more alcohol. The brewer can make a profit of UGX2,000-4,000 per *abukubuk*. Women who do not have enough capital to invest in brewing can be employed to help the brewer (and paid UGX500 for a few hours of work) or can sell someone else's alcohol (for a commission of up to UGX1,000 per *abukubuk*). Some women also make chapattis (a profit can reach UGX6,000 in a day), make *mandazi* (fried bread; they can make a profit of UGX15,000 on ingredients bought for UGX10,000), plait hair (UGX1,000-15,000, depending on hairstyle) or participate in house construction or maintenance (a traditional female activity; these days done in return for cash, usually around UGX5,000 for a day's work on a hut of typical size). YDC members who live in the vicinity of mountains collect and/or break stones (they can sell a basin of small stones for UGX200-300 and a wheelbarrow for UGX2,000); there is gold on Mount Moroto and some women look for it in mountain streams, although it is a highly unreliable livelihood option.

Pian YDC members are usually involved in the aforementioned IGAs, but their range of *elejilej*, particularly in the area around Namalu, is much broader. Namalu receives relatively reliable rainfall and is, consequently, one of the most fertile parts of Karamoja. Local Pian seem to have taken advantage of favourable conditions and engage in commercial agriculture, a phenomenon which remains very rare (if not non-existent) elsewhere in the region. Many YDC members in Namalu buy and sell agricultural produce: cassava (they can

buy a bag for UGX30,000 and sell it for UGX35,000), potatoes (UGX3,000->5,000 per basin), mangoes (UGX2,500->5,000 per basin), tomatoes (UGX12,000->15,000 per basin), sugarcane (UGX500->1,000 for a single cane), cabbage (UGX300->400 for a cabbage), onions (UGX5,000->7,500 for a bag), sorghum (UGX50,000->57,000 for a bag). Some of them have enough capital to buy food after harvest and keep it in storage until they can sell it profitably in the dry season. They sometimes travel to Moroto in Karamoja's arid east, where they can sell agricultural produce for up to three times as much as in Namalu. They make beads, clothes and tablecloths and sell them for considerable profit. While in other Karamojong areas local brew is usually the only available type of alcohol, women in Namalu also sell *waragi* (they buy a three-litre jerrycan for UGX12,000 and sell it for UGX15,000).

This greater variety of IGAs is reflected in YDC members' estimates of their income: interviewed Jie believed their weekly income to average UGX2,500-25,000; among the Bokora the figure stood at UGX2,000-10,000; their Matheniko neighbours estimated their earnings at UGX5,000-7,000 per week; the Pian in Nakapiripirit put their income at UGX5,000-10,000; in YDCs around Namalu, the average was estimated at UGX7,000-15,000 and in Namalu Trading Centre, it reached UGX20,000-45,000.

No men were interviewed for this research project, but information provided by YDC members offers a glimpse into how they perceive men in their communities and their economic behaviour. Many Karamojong men appear to be involved in IGAs to the same extent as women. Fewer men possess cattle or other livestock these days and traditional responsibilities of younger, unmarried men, such as protection of livestock, have been eroded by the introduction of military-controlled kraals. Men usually engage in the *elejilej* which require greater physical strength, because they offer them an advantage over women. Key IGAs include charcoal burning and construction of houses (traditional domain of women which, however, appears to have been taken over by men at least in larger settlements) or latrines; some men are also involved in activities dominated by women, such as fetching water, but it seems to be unusual and restricted to poorer men. In Namalu area some men also fish and sell produce from their fields. Activities in which men are engaged tend to bring more money, but they also take more time to complete; it is typical for a man to only receive his wage following the completion of a project and construction activities may take many days to conclude. Men usually do not disclose their income to their wives, but YDC members believe that in most localities their incomes are higher than those of women. Unlike women, who spend all or nearly all of their money on food or other household

necessities, many men use their incomes to purchase alcohol. Alcohol consumption, although not restricted to them, is prevalent among men, many of whom appear to be suffering from alcoholism. According to YDC members, it is due to alcohol dependency that many men (and, in a few places, most men) have lower incomes than women. In Pokot areas, men do not engage in IGAs to the same extent and their involvement in cash economy – with the exception of men who reside in the town of Amudat (some of whom are not Pokot) – seems to be limited to sale of livestock. Pokot men have retained more livestock than their Karamojong counterparts and usually spend most of their time tending to their animals.

Widespread engagement in IGAs has inevitably led to economic stratification as some Karamojans have been able to take advantage of new opportunities more fully than others. YDC members claim that they are largely representative of their communities and most women, especially of their age, have comparable incomes. There are also much poorer women, some of whom do not participate in IGAs at all. This is the case especially for older women, for whom recent livelihoods transition remains an alien phenomenon. Individual interviews with poorer YDC members suggest that even those women who do work encounter a variety of barriers. The number of dependents (children as well as disabled or sick parents or other family members) and disability, in particular, limit women's ability to engage in IGAs, due to both smaller amount of time which can be spent on IGAs and greater expenditures. There is, however, no correlation between education level or family status and YDC members who have completed more years of schooling or have richer parents are unlikely to earn more than other young women.

Gender Relations

The livelihoods transition in Karamoja has had a pronounced impact on traditionally well-defined gender roles. Agriculture, which used to be of secondary importance, has assumed a much more important role in Karamojans' lives as cattle herds declined radically. Because of the unreliability of agricultural production in the region, some food needs to be acquired from other sources, resulting in the introduction of cash economy. Various Karamojan communities have responded to the changed circumstances in different ways. The Pokot appear to have retained their traditional lifestyle to the greatest extent and, according to YDC members, women's greater involvement in agriculture and IGAs has not affected gender roles radically, although there is increased intracommunal opposition to some

traditional practices such as early marriage, polygyny and female genital mutilation. The impact of economic changes on the Karamojong has been far greater and, because traditional economic practices were reflected in gender roles, the relationship between sexes has been significantly altered. In most communities (the Jie, Bokora Karimojong, Matheniko Karimojong and at least some Pian Karimojong), women have retained control over agriculture; in addition, they need to participate in IGAs. This situation has put significant pressure on women who often struggle to combine multiple responsibilities; as men's ability to provide food has decreased, women have also emerged as primary breadwinners. This development may potentially improve women's position in Karamojong society, unless men – whose traditionally dominant position has been weakened – take over agricultural production, a phenomenon which has taken place in some Pian communities, particularly around Namalu. Men there control nearly all agricultural land (and women only own land given to them by men, for example their fathers) and, consequently, production. Some Pian men from Namalu work in their fields, but most agricultural work continues to be done by women.

No such development has occurred in relation to the IGAs, even though some of them – in particular alcohol and charcoal production – can be highly profitable by local standards. Although some IGAs are seen by Karamojong as inappropriate for women, this is usually based on grounds of security. Collection of wooden poles used in construction and burning charcoal are limited to men in some areas because they take place in isolated places where a lone woman exposes herself to the danger of rape. In addition, this restriction appears to have become weaker in recent years as women's (and their households') dependence on IGAs increased and men's ability to enforce their control over women weakened in most areas.

Women are also usually able to keep the money which they have earned through IGAs. Most YDC members report little pressure by other family members to share their income. Because their parents, older relatives or husbands' cash income acquisition efforts may not be as successful, many women would, however, share their money with them nonetheless as they do not want them to be hungry. Other women jointly calculate household spending with their husbands and share expenses. Pressure to share money seems to be an issue in few households, although some younger girls who live with their parents are expected to contribute their income to the household budgets and some husbands may demand money from their wives. The latter scenario is usually related to the husband's alcohol abuse: YDC

members report cases of domestic violence resulting from a woman's refusal to give money to her drunken husband.

When women are able to retain their earnings, they are usually spent on basic household necessities. Following the harvest, expenditures in rural areas are likely to be limited to clothes, cooking oil, salt and soap. Food is added to this list in the dry season when households run out of crops harvested in the previous year. In some communities in trading centres where little arable land is available (particularly in larger urban centres – by Karamoja's standards – located in drier areas, such as Kotido and Moroto), food purchasing plays an important role in household spending all year round. In most places, women have assumed nearly exclusive responsibility for obtaining food for their households. Although some men share their IGA income with their wives, it appears that most of them spend their money elsewhere (often on alcohol consumption); for this reason, there are women who only prepare food for themselves and their children, leaving their husbands to fend for themselves. In addition, in what is a very recent development, many YDC members have begun to save some of their earnings through the YDP Income Generating Fund (IGF).

Loans and Savings

The vast majority of interviewed YDC members participate in IGF. Nearly all the money saved in this way is collected through IGAs, although YDC members' husbands or parents may occasionally complement IGA earnings and, in the case of some girls who are still in school, parents pay the total contribution. Saving cash earnings is largely a new development stimulated by the introduction of IGF by BRAC. Very few YDC members had saved previously or have loans, largely due to entry barriers imposed by the only financial institutions present in most communities, the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs). Saving at SACCOs requires a registration fee which many YDC members cannot afford. In addition, these institutions have acquired a bad reputation due to perceived high interest rates and heavy-handed approach to loan repayment. YDC members are afraid that, should they default on a loan from a SACCO, they would be arrested. Four interviewed YDC members (out of two hundred who participated in this study) take part in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), but their geographic reach is highly limited.

The opportunity to save money through IGF has sparked a lot of interest among YDC members and their majority have signed up to participate in the scheme. Because of their

difficult economic situation, many women are not able to contribute to the Fund on a regular basis. The amount contributed by those who do is usually limited and most of them pay in between UGX500 and 2,000 per week, although there is a small number of members who save much more considerable sums of money. In some branches, there are members who have been consistently contributing as much as UGX200,000 per month. In addition, it is not unusual for a member to make a significant deposit following a successful business venture.

IGF is intended to help YDC members to expand the range of the IGAs in which they participate and interviewed groups have some ideas about the businesses which they would like to start when they receive their savings and additional funds which BRAC will provide. These ideas tend to be limited to activities which they can observe in their communities. Among the Karamojong, alcohol production is, as the most profitable IGA commonly undertaken by women, by far the most frequently considered business model. Food production (of chapattis or *mandazi*) is also mentioned. Most other ideas involve trade in goods popular in their communities, primarily food: cassava, eggs, maize, salt, small fish, sorghum, sugarcane. Many YDC members would like to take advantage of considerable start-up capital which IGF will provide to their groups and buy agricultural produce after the harvest and sell it during the dry season, when food prices increase considerably. The sale of other items, such as decorative beads, clothes, shoes and – in Namalu – *waragi*, is also mentioned. A group in Namalu is considering opening a small restaurant (*simama hotel*, or “standing eatery”). The number of IGAs available to Pokot women is limited by lower (compared to the Karamojong) alcohol consumption rates. Consequently, alcohol brewing is not mentioned by Pokot YDC members. Businesses based on trade in food are most frequently discussed.

There is a small number of women who have chosen not to participate in IGF in nearly every YDC. Their decision is usually based on structural constraints which they face, rather than lack of desire to save. Some YDC members are very young girls who do not yet participate in IGAs and, consequently, have no money. At least in Karamojong areas, many of the younger girls are in school and do not have time for *elejilej* and even if they do, their parents may expect them to contribute the entirety of their earnings to household budgets. Older YDC members often have families to feed and a large proportion of those who do not save attribute their decision to unusually large families. Some of them have to support old parents or other family members who cannot provide for themselves. A husband’s

behaviour and his willingness to contribute to the household budget is also an important factor. In addition, there is a small number of YDC members who do not participate in IGF due to long-term disability or sickness (their own or other household members') and consequent medical expenses.

Conclusion

The developments of recent decades have fundamentally transformed the livelihoods of many Karamojans, including BRAC YDC members. They continue to be engaged in traditional activities such as agriculture, but because of the widespread loss of cattle, agropastoral and pastoral production is no longer sufficient to provide food for them and their households. The small-scale income generating activities in which YDC members participate offer little return on the significant investment of time and labour which they require. Although they allow YDC members to generate cash which they can use to buy food and other household necessities, in combination with other more traditional responsibilities such as agricultural production and household duties, they also place a considerable burden on young women. In addition, the erosion of traditional livelihoods systems has weakened traditionally well-defined gender roles: as women's burden and responsibility for food provision for the household has increased, men – who have been effectively emasculated by the loss of their traditional position as cattle herders and protectors – have tended to become less involved in the provision of food and other necessities for their households. Men's takeover of control over agricultural production, thus far restricted to some Pian communities, is a potentially worrying development as it encroaches on women's traditional sphere of responsibilities, but women's greater involvement in cash economy offers opportunities for social advancement. It is unlikely, however, that Karamojan women can radically improve their economic and social position through their involvement in relatively unprofitable IGAs in which they currently engage. In this respect, savings schemes such as IGF may be successfully used to build up capital necessary to start new businesses and expand existing ones. Such advancements are likely to be limited by Karamoja's small and unsophisticated cash economy which offers few opportunities and by its population's lack of exposure to more advanced, and potentially more profitable, business models. Future consequences of livelihoods transition in Karamoja on its population are impossible to predict at this stage, but experiences of pastoralist groups elsewhere suggest that – assuming recent developments are not reversed by reintroduction of cattle herding as a key and universally

practiced activity – YDC members, and other Karamojan women, will require significant resources to cope with negative effects of economic changes on their social position and ability to provide themselves and their families with food and other necessities.

Appendix I: Research Sites

Godown A, Iriiri Sub-county, Napak District, 22/11/2011

Iriiri Trading Centre East, Iriiri Sub-county, Napak District, 22/11/2011

Busiya, Aleklek Village, Iriiri Sub-county, Napak District, 23/11/2011

Nakapelimen, Moroto Municipal Council, Moroto District, 24/11/2011

Acholi Inn, Rupa Sub-county, Moroto District, 24/11/2011

Entebbe Area, Kotido Town Council, Kotido District, 28/11/2011

Lodipidip, Kotido Town Council, Kotido District, 28/11/2011

Dodoth College, Kotido Town Council, Kotido District, 29/11/2011

Lopedur, Kotido Town Council, Kotido District, 29/11/2011

Lobuniet, Nakapiripirit Town Council, Nakapiripirit District, 8/12/2011

Katanga A, Nakapiripirit Town Council, Nakapiripirit District, 8/12/2011

Namorotot, Katamongole Sub-county, Nakapiripirit District, 9/12/2011

Kopedur, Moruita Sub-County, Nakapiripirit District, 9/12/2011

Jumbe A, Amudat Sub-County, Amudat District, 10/12/2011

Napao, Amudat Sub-County, Amudat District, 12/12/2011

Loburin, Amudat Town Council, Amudat District, 12/12/2011

Nakiloro, Namalu Sub-county, Nakapiripirit District, 13/12/2011

Nakwanga, Namalu sub-county, Nakapiripirit District, 12/12/2011

Nakuyon, Namalu sub-county, Nakapiripirit District, 14/12/2011

Namalu Trading Centre B, Namalu sub-county, Nakapiripirit District, 14/12/2011

Appendix II: Questionnaire

1. What change has there been in the economic behaviour of people in your community in the last few decades. Do you agree that:

	This activity is more important	This activity is less important	There has been no change
Cattle herding			
Goat herding			
Poultry			
Brewing			
Charcoal burning			
Other activities, for example: fetching water and washing clothes for other people, cutting grass for thatch, selling firewood			

2. What economic activities do you engage in? Place an X in the first column next to the activity in which you are engaged. Please rank these according to importance for your income in the second column.

Agriculture for subsistence		
Selling agricultural produce (for example: maize, sorghum, greens, beans, cabbage)		
Selling animals and animal products (for example: milk, eggs, hens)		
Selling ekwete		
Charcoal burning		
Washing clothes for other people		
Quarrying/mining		
Cutting grass for thatch		
Weeding gardens or harvesting		

for other people		
Fetching water		
Selling firewood		
Collecting poles for fencing		
Other		

3. What economic activities does your household engage in? Place an X in the first column next to the activity in which your household is engaged. Please rank these according to importance for your household's income in the second column.

Cattle herding		
Keeping other animals (for example: goats, chickens)		
Agriculture for subsistence		
Selling agricultural produce (for example: maize, sorghum, greens, beans, cabbage)		
Selling animals and animal products (for example: milk, eggs, hens)		
Selling ekwete		
Charcoal burning		
Washing clothes for other people		
Quarrying/mining		
Cutting grass for thatch		
Weeding gardens or harvesting for other people		
Fetching water		
Selling firewood		
Collecting poles for fencing		
Other		

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