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# Karamoja Food Security Conference: Setting the Agenda

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## Conference Report



KARAMOJA DEVELOPMENT FORUM (KDF)

[www.kdfug.org](http://www.kdfug.org)

**February 14, 2015**

## **Abbreviations**

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|---------------|---|
| <b>BOD</b>    | Board of Directors                                    |
| <b>CBO(s)</b> | Community Based Organizations                         |
| <b>CSO(s)</b> | Civil Society Organizations                           |
| <b>FAO</b>    | Food Agricultural Organization                        |
| <b>IGA(s)</b> | Income Generating Activities                          |
| <b>ILO</b>    | International Labor Organization                      |
| <b>KDF</b>    | Karamoja Development Forum                            |
| <b>LCI(s)</b> | Local Council Ones                                    |
| <b>LG</b>     | Local Government                                      |
| <b>MFPED</b>  | Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development |
| <b>MP</b>     | Member of Parliament                                  |
| <b>NGO(s)</b> | Non-Governmental Organizations                        |
| <b>OPM</b>    | Office of the Prime Minister                          |
| <b>OSIEA</b>  | Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa            |
| <b>UGX</b>    | Uganda Shillings                                      |
| <b>UPS</b>    | Uganda Prisons Services                               |
| <b>US\$</b>   | United States Dollars                                 |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations  |
| <b>UWA</b>    | Uganda Wildlife Authority                             |

## Preamble



Figure 1: Section of Participants of the Forum

## Introduction

On February 14, 2015, close to three hundred stakeholders including rural youth and elders, as well as development professionals from all over Karamoja convened at the Cooperation & Development Conference Hall in Moroto to debate on 'Karamoja Food security: 'Setting the Agenda'. Initiated and organized by KDF, the conference provided an opportunity to share experiences and strategize future directions for people working on the development of Karamoja.

## Setting the Scene

Karamoja in North Eastern Uganda is a region with unique social, political and economic characteristics that distinguish the region from the rest of Uganda. The economy of Karamoja has traditionally been based on livestock complemented by opportunistic crop cultivation. The region, sitting on 27,000 square miles, is inhabited by approximately 1.4 million people, mostly diverse Nga'karimojong language speaking groups.

Karamoja has seen decades of conflicts arising from intertribal disputes, proliferation of weapons, and historical injustices dating back to the colonial era. However, the last five years have seen an improved security situation following internal and external peace building efforts and the initiative of the government through various disarmament programs. The new climate of greater security in Karamoja over the last few years has brought with it

new challenges; more specifically, conflicts over land. For instance, land conflicts have arisen in conservation areas for the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forestry Authority, both of which are estimated to have about half of Karamoja's land under gazette. The stability of the region at the current time has also increased interests in mining activities. Five mining licenses as well as more than 130 exploration licenses have been issued to mineral companies covering over 60% of Karamoja's total area. This situation is particularly alarming considering that mining deals in the region are generally characterized by lack of transparency and insufficient consultation and involvement of affected communities. Other potential conflict areas include disputes over borders and administrative boundaries; and conflicts arising from dual land management systems – formal and traditional, in addition to each of these systems having legitimacy, structural and implementation problems.

Pastoralism, which until now has been the main economic activity of the region, is now facing a crisis given that there has been a steep decline over time in animal production related to decades of cattle rustling, and also following the disarmament era in which cattle were put in a 'protected kraals' system, overseen by the Ugandan Army, that led to the rapid spread of diseases, as well as disappearance of a large number of livestock under mysterious circumstances.

Given its low ranking on Human Development Indicators, Karamoja is also a beneficiary to a host of development initiatives such as PRDP/KIDDP, NUSAF, NAADS, PMA, and others. These interventions openly disclose challenges faced, but lack of proper strategy and capacity to implement them frustrate their impact. Most of these development programmes are often inappropriate, uncoordinated and fall short of success. Policy-making and development initiatives tend to favor sedentary populations and marginalize semi-nomadic Pastoralism, which is periodically threatened by drought, encroachment and fragmentation of grazing lands, restrictions on mobility, and poor access to basic services.

Following the historical unfolding of events, Karamoja now finds itself at a defining moment of extensive natural resource exploration and outside investment. The population's future trajectory, however, remains shrouded in mystery. While the government pursues its economic agenda, widely marketed to open Karamoja to investors, the local population has been left in the dark and is ill-prepared for the ensuing challenges. Most importantly, the herders and cultivators, the rightful citizens/owners of Karamoja land, have been given little say in the large-scale interventions that will determine their future and livelihoods.

### **Objectives of the Conference**

The conference on *Karamoja Food Security: Setting the Agenda* was organized by Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) in partnership with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) and the German Cooperation's Civil Peace Service (CPS).

The conference brought together participants from Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak Districts. Participants included; civil society organizations, donor agencies, research organizations, political leaders, public servants, policy makers as well as local community representatives comprising elders, youth and women.

The objectives of the conference were the following:

1. To reach out to youth, kraal leaders and elders and involve them in discussions and information sharing in Karamoja
2. To generate a set of short term and long term goals for Karamoja in the areas of land and Pastoralism
3. To support KDF in running a peoples'-driven advocacy campaign in the next three years and to further strengthen their network of local communities in Karamoja

## **Observations and Outcomes**

KDF envisioned to reflect these objectives through a peoples'-driven process for the realization of an integrated, people-centered, prosperous Karamoja. Attaining this vision was seen as vested on collective involvement, advocacy and capacity building of the Karimojong as well as the establishment of institutions grounded in principles of ownership, commitment and shared values.

This forum was a pacesetter for the generation of development interventions from within rather than from outside to address all the components of human security affecting the region.

Participants were particularly interested in the synthesis and analysis of the unique elements of interventions to Karamoja looking at the social, economic and political factors that influenced them, or that contributed to their success or what seemed to hinder them. Ultimately, crosscutting issues and themes on land and natural resources, pastoralism and food security arising were gathered to inform policy-makers, civil society, development actors and local communities to design and focus on appropriate and effective interventions for sustainable livelihood security and the development of Karamoja.

Sustainability of action depends on cumulative impact resulting from an aggregation of efforts at many levels. However, it was observed, most food security and development interventions in Karamoja were haphazardly carried out, poorly planned and implemented, barely involving the affected Karimojong masses and were not 'joined-up' or interlinked. Similarly, while designers engaged people, used money, and made people feel they were implementing valuable and necessary programmes, their interventions very rarely succeeded. This is firstly due to the fact that the affected people were not initially involved in the process and secondly because those implementing did not work with integrity, dedication, authenticity and the responsibility needed.

During the conference, it was observed that local capacity, context, participation and ownership are vital for food security and sustainable development; hence, local partners need to be consulted and incorporated in finding solutions to issues affecting Karamoja. Attendants of the forum agreed to engage in the transformation of Karamoja and address its issues effectively through KDF and their collective support.

It was also recognized that sustainability and appropriateness of interventions is tied to the involvement of the missing voices. The 88 percent illiterate population has vast experience on the pressing issues of Karamoja and deserves to be included in the food security and sustainable development agenda.

Participants saw KDF as an appropriate all-inclusive and practical institution to help Karamoja address the problems affecting it in areas of natural resources and pastoralist livelihoods. KDF was tasked with carrying out manifold research and advocacy involving the local populace on critical issues as a tool to community participation, food security and sustainable development.

There was a general acceptance and approval of KDF as a truly indigenous, people-centred agency. Participants commended KDF for involving all sections of the inhabitants of Karamoja regardless of status, education, gender, age or disability. This characteristic distinguished KDF from other non-governmental organizations in Karamoja that focus on specific groupings.

### **An opening Session**

The objective of the opening session was to introduce participants to the theme of the conference in form of speeches and presentations and to give initial input to the upcoming panels and discussions.

After the welcoming note for participants and partners, Mr. Loruk Peter (Chairperson, Board of Directors of KDF) gave a key note speech on the background of KDF. Karamoja Development Forum started in 2010 as an online social media advocacy platform. It attracted volunteers who were interested in Karamoja issues and accumulated over eight thousand (8,000) online followers in five years. It gradually developed into a not-for-profit NGO registered in 2014 with the National NGO Board.

KDF was initiated to create a space for the Karimojong to engage in decision-making due to lack of such spaces in the outside fora. This required joining different groups of the Karimojong society together to raise issues affecting them at all levels.

KDF is currently working on three thematic areas: Land where we cultivate, build and settle, and also find various mineral resources; Pastoralism as a sustainable livelihood option in Karamoja; Governance, which entails policies and strategies by the government and NGO actors.

In 2014, KDF secured a grant of US\$ 83,149 from OSIEA to fund a two-year project called 'Information Sharing on Pastoralism and Food Security in Karamoja', running from 2015 until 2016. Funds from this grant, as well as a contribution from GIZ, were used for organizing the conference.

Mr. Longoli Simon Peter (Associate Executive Director, KDF) gave an introduction and presented the objectives of the conference. He clarified KDF's role as a forum bringing different sections of the Karimojong society together. Such a space is especially critical in a region where the majority (88%) of the population is pre-literate and has not attained formal schooling, which has a significant effect on the internal power structure and on the development of policies and processes.

In order to prevent further exploitation of the disenfranchised populace by the government and the Karimojong minority that has attained formal schooling (12%), KDF's aim is to

reverse the trend by giving a voice to the affected Karimojong communities on issues related to land, governance, and pastoralism. With the conference, KDF officially launched its networking, advocacy and lobbying agenda for Karamoja. Above all, the conference was the result of the search for a clear strategy for the development of Karamoja.

## **Session 1:**

**Land and Natural Resources: Challenges and opportunities– Perspectives from KDF Research**–Jointly presented by Mr. Longoli Simon Peter (Associate Executive Director, KDF), Mr. Lowanyang Nathan and Mr. Amnon Obwoch (Representative elder, Abim Miners).

The objective of the presentation was to update participants on findings of the recent research undertaken by KDF on land, natural resources and development in Karamoja. A summary of the presentation is given below.

The presentation started with video clips on mining, which highlighted the appalling working conditions of casual laborers, the low wages of UGX 5000 (US\$ 1.8) per day as well as the lack of First Aid kits and protective gear.

### **Summary of presentation**

Land is a limited resource. The rise in population vis-à-vis an increase in human activity has increased the pressure on land. This calls for sustainable use and management of land and natural resources. For example, during exploitation of natural resources, every activity or production undertaken on land should be done sparingly to ensure land and natural wealth continue to exist for future generations.

The increasing diminution of land and natural resources in the face of variable climate patterns has necessitated the diversification of livelihood activities. The rapidly changing weather patterns make sole reliance on rain-fed productions vulnerable to shocks from climate change such as unreliable rainfall, pests and long dry spells. Diversifying production systems requires that Karamoja focuses on minerals and extractive industries and its people assertively partake in determining the agenda.

Opportunities and challenges affecting the development of mining and extractive industries in Karamoja were portrayed and listed below.

### **Opportunities available to enable Karamoja benefit from mining sector**

- Existence of political will on mining and extractive industries.
- Increasing national and international interest in Karamoja.
- Strong traditional land and natural resource management systems in Karamoja ensure sustainable use of natural resources.
- Mineral surveys indicate availability of mineral resources in Karamoja and have attracted mining companies and provide prospects for better opportunities for Karamoja.
- Improved road infrastructure is opening up Karamoja to outside market and investors.
- Capacity building and support from national and international NGOs, CBOs and NGOs has increased awareness and stimulated local communities to take interest and demand their stakes in mining and development in the region.

### **Challenges affecting the mining and extractive sector in Karamoja**

- Weak laws and policies on land and minerals. Constitution, 1995 and Mining Act, 2003 indicate land belongs to the people whereas minerals belong to the government. This creates confusion and conflict in regard to ownership of mineral resources between government, communities or surface rights holders and mining companies.
- Disproportionate percentage of sharing of royalties is detrimental to the land owner – 80% goes to central government, 17% goes to local government and 3% to the owner of the land.
- Appalling working conditions of artisanal miners and poor payment compared to amount of labor invested in production.
- Violation of women's and children's rights at the mines. Women do heavy work with children on their backs yet get paid only UGX 5000 (US\$ 1.8) at the end of the day.
- Respiratory health infections caused by the dust from the mines. There are hardly any reliable and efficient health facilities nearby.
- Land waste and degradation and lack of Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Lack of transparency from mining companies and commitment to the community. The terms and conditions of mining and miners are not clear.

### **Panel/Plenary Discussion 1:**

Panelists: Mr. Longoli Simon Peter, Mr. Lowanyang Nathan and Mr. Amnon Obwoch. Responses of the panelists to the questions are summarized against each question.

### **What do the local communities living in mining areas reap from Mining Corporations as Corporate Social Responsibility?**

It was emphasized that corporate social responsibility is not a legal obligation, but a voluntary venture by business corporations. The state, on the other hand, has the obligation to regulate and control corporate activities including the licensing, setting up, operation, security and supervisions of dangerous activities and the provision of essential information about any dangerous activities to the general public so that such enterprises do not directly exploit or indirectly infringe on the rights of indigenous communities. Adding to that, the

state is obliged to provide for public participation and ensure an informed decision-making process, preventing the manipulation of the local populace, investigating allegations of abuse and punishing or providing redress for such abuse through effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication.

### **Why don't the NGOs support migrant laborers to stay within Karamoja, rather than going out to provide labor outside the region?**

It was stated that it may be difficult to restrain labor-related out-migration from Karamoja as there are only few opportunities for employment within the region. Although some NGOs do already try to engage Karimojong youth in income-generating activities, further action on the part of government and NGOs is required in this regard. It was furthermore mentioned that local governments at district and sub-county levels are trying to discourage out-migration, inspecting buses and preventing young men and women from roaming the streets in urban centers. However, in view of lack of alternative employment opportunities and unaddressed push-factors triggering out-migration, this is mostly a futile action.

### **Can prices for sale of mineral be standardized?**

The ILO Declaration 1998 on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as well as the Constitution of Uganda 1995 guarantee decent payment and favorable conditions of work. However, government has not taken stand to ensure that mining corporations provide a just remuneration to the local miners.

KDF has advocated for the increase of royalties to 35% for local government and 20% for the land owner. In other KDF research, mining companies have said they regularly submit royalties for local government to the MFPED but the Ministry has not expeditiously disbursed these funds to local government. Moreover, discussants pointed out that payment of royalties to land owners holding surface user rights is hardly effected. This is mostly due to the fact that payment of royalties is tied to possession of a land title or certificate of customary ownership which most land owners under customary and communal land management systems prevailing in Karamoja do not have. CSOs have prepared a position paper on the amendment of the Mining Act 2003 to submit to the Committee of Parliament on Natural Resources and also made efforts to raise surface rights holder royalty from 3% to 5%. It was furthermore pointed out that mining communities do not have the power to bargain prices for the marble or gold they extract; rather prices are dictated by the buying mining companies. Artisanal and local community miners should therefore be empowered so as to be able to collectively bargain for better wages and mineral prices. A great need for KDF and other CSOs was expressed to advocate for government to meet its responsibilities to protect local mining communities from exploitation and ensure that mining companies respect the rights of indigenous communities.

## **Why is the government silent and not clear on issues of land grabbing and transactions in Karamoja by mining companies, private individuals, and UWA?**

The demand for land in Karamoja is steadily rising. This has put a lot of pressure on people, with some being forced to involuntarily dispose of their land and others forcibly evicted from their land by government agencies. Discussants brought forward the example of Namalu (Nakuyon) in Nakapiripirit District, where inhabitants were displaced by UPS Namalu to make available land for the OPM School Feeding Project and left impoverished, without any land for settlement or cultivation. In Nabwal and Nakayot in Iriir, Napak District, as well as in Kobebe in Moroto District, people were forcefully evicted from their lands and had their settlements and harvest destroyed by UWA. In Kautakou, Napak District, local inhabitants were duped to sell a small proportion of their land to a profiteer who eventually crafted out a huge chunk of land beyond the amount that he had been given during the survey.

KDF has been monitoring and investigating different cases of land grabbing in Karamoja. It has furthermore opened an online forum to generate and exchange ideas and develop possible solutions and advice to affected communities. This culminated into the report “Take anything, leave our land” launched during the conference.

In view of the precarious situation, discussants called for increased advocacy and research on natural resources so as to effectively protect the rights of the preliterate and vulnerable land owners or groups and guarantee the free access of the Karimojong herdsmen to grazing areas in game reserves. KDF and other CSOs should embark on sensitizing local communities on land laws and the need for prior and informed consent prior to land transactions.

## **Session 2:**

**Pastoralism: Challenges and opportunities – Herders’ perspectives** – Jointly presented by Mr. Apaakoima (Elder and Pastoralist from Jie, Kotido), Mr. Lolem William (Elder and Pastoralist from Jie, Kotido), Mr. Ngoya John Bosco (Member BoD, KDF), and Mr. Peter Loruk (Chairperson BoD, KDF).

This presentation sought to discuss the viability of pastoralism as a sustainable livelihood option, addressing contradictory views held about pastoralism and challenging common assumptions about its alleged ecological destructiveness, economic inefficiency and social backwardness.

Discussants stated that in view of the harsh climatic conditions prevailing in Karamoja, pastoralism constitutes the most reliable and resilient livelihood option in the region. Crop cultivation, though practiced on an opportunistic basis, cannot be exclusively relied on due to frequent dry spells and erratic rainfall, as has also been indicated by studies carried out by Welthungerhilfe and FAO. Although pastoralism is vital for the economic wellbeing of the Karimojong, policy makers at higher echelons of government have long considered pastoralist livelihood systems as old-fashioned, backward and in need of change, which explains the low investment in the livestock sector in Karamoja. In that regard, it was noted by one discussant that the value and importance of pastoralism in Karamoja is increasingly being recognized which is evident in the government restocking programme in the region.

Although the current climate of relative peace in the region has greatly improved Karamoja herders' freedom of movement and access to grazing areas, pastoralist livelihoods are nevertheless severely threatened by a number of different factors including land grabbing, fraudulent land sales, restricted access to grazing lands in conservation areas, the need to seek permission before crossing district borders, modern ranching, as well as policies promoting sedentarization and crop cultivation.

Panelists stressed the need for a paradigm shift and reallocation of resources towards pastoralism. Government and other stakeholders need to recognize the fact that the Karimojong life is essentially centered on livestock, with crop cultivation being practiced only on a complementary basis. It was further reiterated that one of the most pressing issues in need of immediate attention is the loss of traditional lands to protected areas and mining. It was emphasized that affected communities need to be consulted and adequately informed on land- or mining-related issues. Lacking community consultations has led many Karimojong to perceive government and its agencies as unwelcome intruders and enemies to their livelihoods, which explains the sometimes violent reactions on the part of affected communities. Panelists furthermore called on UWA to allow herders to graze their cattle in conservation areas, alongside wild game as they used to do in the past.

## **Panel/Plenary Discussion 2:**

Panelists: Mr. Apaakoima, Mr. Lolem William, Mr. Ngoya John Bosco, and Mr. Peter Loruk. Their responses to the questions are summarized against each question.

### **How did boundaries and sale of land originate?**

Among the Karimojong, land ownership used to be largely communal. There were no boundaries and livestock would graze freely alongside wild game. No one had the right to sell land, since it was considered to belong to everybody. The concept of communal landownership was vital to ensure the social wellbeing of the people and to support pastoralist livelihoods that are crucially reliant on high levels of mobility and extensive land use.

Over the past decades however, pastoralist livelihoods and land tenure systems in Karamoja have been severely threatened by a number of different factors including the

drawing of territorial and/or ethnic boundaries, the opening of settlements on former grazing lands as well as the progressing monetization of land and associated increase in land sales, private land ownership and land fragmentation.

In response to this situation, KDF offered to draft briefs so as to guide people on issues pertaining to land management and land sales that will be made available online or in the KDF office.

Finally, panelists called for concerted efforts on the part of CSOs and local government to increase local community awareness on land legislation. It was furthermore stated that KDF and other CSOs need to strongly represent pastoralists' interests and advocate for the survival of pastoralism through policy debates, advocacy, fora and partnerships.

### **Is there a weigh bridge for the people of Karamoja to take stock of quantities/tonnage of the marble-limestone being taken away from Karamoja?**

It was observed that no weigh bridges exist in Karamoja that would help local governments to track the tonnage of the region's mineral wealth. Consequently, there are no records pertaining to the quantity of the mineral wealth that has been taken out of Karamoja to this day. Even host sub-counties that are responsible for monitoring and recordkeeping of the amount of tonnage of minerals leaving Karamoja have no records. Representatives of local government indicated that weigh bridges are too expensive to afford with the current level of revenue generated by the districts in Karamoja.

It was concluded that in order to address the challenge, KDF and CSOs working in areas of mining and extractive industry need join local government in advocacy for the establishment of weigh bridges to track the tonnage of marble-limestone leaving Karamoja. Local government authorities of the sub-counties where mining takes place should take record of the number of vehicles and quantity/tonnage of raw wealth leaving their sub-counties. Similarly, local government and CSOs should make monthly monitoring visits to loading sites and stations to establish records of mineral quantities taken out of Karamoja every month.

### **Do the district land management institutions do their work?**

Lots of doubts were expressed as to whether the land management institutions at district level actually executed their mandate.

It was pointed out that the district land offices acting as custodians of community land on behalf of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and central government are easily manipulated by land grabbers. Hastily approving and providing necessary documentation sometimes without verifying the application or without the land owners' knowledge, with district land offices and land boards assisting crafty land purchasers in depriving the ignorant land owners of their land. Moreover, the land office hardly plays its role of sensitizing local communities and land owners on their land rights and laws, land acquisition

and ownership procedures. In view of this, it was recommended that the local government provides effective guidance to communities on land ownership, titling, disposal of land and land laws. Adding to that, the land office staff should commit to their code of conduct and professional ethics as well as scrutinize and censor suspicious land purchases rather than rush to approve and survey disputed land.

### **Session 3:**

#### **Pastoralism, Land and Natural Resources: the Legal and Policy Frameworks**

The objective of this presentation was to raise awareness on the available policies and legislations on land, natural resource and pastoralism and their relevance to the situation in Karamoja. It involved presenting the position of some legal and policy instruments relevant to the thematic priorities of KDF. The session was mainly held by Hon. Achia Remigio (MP Pian).

**Pastoralism:** According to the presenter, the government views the kind of pastoralism practiced by the Karimojong as a source of insecurity. There are no clear laws protecting pastoralists in Uganda. Not even the Constitution of 1995 which is considered as the supreme law in Uganda-makes any reference to pastoralism. Unsurprisingly, the legal and policy in environment is not particularly favorable to pastoralism. Examples of unfavorable legislation include the Mining Act, 2003, section 80(1), indicating that pastoralists can retain grazing rights in mining areas provided that grazing does not interfere with prospecting, exploration or mining. Another piece of legislation inimical to pastoralism is the Uganda Wildlife Act, 1996 (sections 21&26) restricting pastoralists from grazing or allowing domesticated animals to stray into wildlife conservation areas.

The National Land Policy (NLP), 2013, however, recognizes that pastoralists have suffered significant land losses to conservation and government projects, as well as private individuals. Still, despite this recognition and statements such as “land rights of pastoral communities will be guaranteed and protected by the State” (pg. p2, 23), the government lacks commitment and capacity to implement respective policy directives.

It was further pointed out that the government has no mechanisms to ensure pastoral lands can be held, owned and controlled by the pastoral communities as common property under customary tenure; and to protect pastoral lands from appropriation by individuals or corporations under the guise of investment.

The presenter also stated that the Draft Rangeland Management and Pastoralism Policy, 2010 clearly delineates the different land uses such as grazing, crop growing, human settlement and wild life or forest reserves. According to the presenter, this policy appears favorable to pastoralism, guaranteeing secure and effective participation of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and other stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation processes. In fact, the policy ensures the protection of rights of pastoralists by emphasizing the importance of seeking “free, prior and informed consent” from communities dependent on natural resources before any

infringement is made on their land. The policy moreover accentuates the need to enact a pastoral code providing general principles and rules to govern pastoral activities in Uganda.

**Is the National Irrigation Plan a suitable development measure for pastoralism in Karamoja?**

According to the National Irrigation Master Plan for Uganda (2010-2035), potential irrigable areas listed and to be brought under agricultural irrigation in the districts of Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, and Abim include:

- a) 11,170 hectares of Type 'A' land (land close to surface water resources and not requiring storage),
- b) 5,972 hectares of Type 'B' land (land close to surface water and requiring storage),
- c) 791 hectares of permanent wetland, and
- d) 49,784 hectares of seasonal wetland

The potential irrigable land areas identified within Karamoja in the national irrigation master plan are principally wetland areas. These areas are also prime grazing areas and their development for irrigated crop agriculture will invite conflict. The benefit of crop agriculture needs to be balanced against the loss to livestock. Whereas commercial agriculture is often promoted these days, no detailed feasibility studies have been done for Karamoja thus far.

**Land** – In accordance with article 237(1) of the Ugandan Constitution, "land belongs to the citizens of Uganda." The management of land in Uganda shall be done in accordance with the land tenure systems provided for in article 237(3), that is freehold, mailo, leasehold and customary ownership. Article 26 of the constitution explicitly protects any person from the deprivation of their property and holds that expropriation is only justified in cases where this is "necessary for public use or in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health" and "prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation" is provided.

According to the Land Act, 1998, section 27, customary land is governed by rules generally accepted as binding and authoritative to the people to which it applies; such people can dispose of it in accordance to local rules, customary regulations and customs. Section 4 stipulates that "any person, family or community holding land under customary tenure on former public land may acquire a certificate of customary ownership in respect of that land in accordance with this Act." As provided for under section 15, the Land Act furthermore empowers any group of persons to form communal land association(s) for any purpose connected with communal ownership and management of land, whether under customary law or otherwise.

Section 3 (b) of the Uganda Wildlife Act 1996 allows individuals holding property rights on land to carry out activities for the sustainable management and utilization of wildlife if the activities do not adversely affect wildlife.

Regardless of the provision that land in Uganda is vested in the people, land in Karamoja is increasingly going into the hands of government and religious entities. 36% of Karamoja land

has been gazetted by UWA as game reserves and game parks including wild game corridors. 19,922km<sup>2</sup> of Karamoja's total area is gazetted as restricted hunting areas. This covers the whole of Amudat and Nakapiripirit districts. In controlled hunting areas, people generally hold access rights but are not allowed to hunt wild game. Upon presentation of the land rationalization report in July 2014, the President pronounced that people in Karamoja should be allowed to remain in the gazetted areas where they have settled and lived under containment without any disturbance by UWA. Such containment areas include; Kalosarich, Nakayot, Opopongo and Poron among others.

In view of the increasing number of land-related conflicts in Karamoja, it was recommended that the government should always provide adequate compensation and resettlement to the communities affected. Moreover, LCIs, parish and sub county leaders as well as area land committees should take responsibility and monitor land deals in their areas of jurisdiction in order to avoid instances of land grabbing and theft.

**Minerals** –The Mining Regulations, 2004 & Mining Act, 2003 (section 3) hold that the entire ownership and "control of all minerals in, on or under any land or waters in Uganda are the exclusive right of Government, notwithstanding any right of ownership of or by any person in relation to any land in, on or under which any such minerals are found."

However, the Act grants some protection to rights of lawful owners. It restrains rights of miners or corporations in areas dedicated for burials, places of religious significance, cattle dips, tanks, or similar bodies of water, except with the written consent of the owner or lawful occupier or the duly authorized agent of the respective land owner. The Act further restricts corporations or investors from occupying land which is held communally for cultural rites without the written consent of the community concerned (section 78).

Similar protection of the land owner's rights is granted under section 83a which guarantees compensation to land owners. The Law furthermore provides that anyone whose land is subject to mining activities is entitled to compensation (section 82) or to a share of royalties (section 98).

This is also anchored in the Constitution of 1995, article 244(2), stipulating that minerals and mineral ores shall be exploited taking into account the interests of the individual land owners, local governments and the National Government. Individual land owners are entitled to 3% in the form of royalties.

### **Panel/Plenary Discussion 3:**

Panelists: Hon. Achia Remigio (MP, Pian Constituency), and His Worship Lochomin Peter Fred (Magistrate, Nakapiripirit District Court).

Their responses to the questions are summarized against each question.

#### **Why are land laws that allow for community land titling generally not widely or sufficiently implemented?**

It was pointed out that government is increasingly granting large-scale land concessions to investors, frequently leading to the dispossession of whole communities. Given that communities generally lack formal documentation of their customary land rights, they have little power to contest the concessions or demand or receive adequate reparation for their loss.

There are a number of reasons for why land laws allowing community land titling have not been well implemented including: lack of awareness on the part of the communities of their land rights under the law (and how to pursue them); lack of access on the part of individuals to necessary legal or technical supports, complex administrative processes, lack of capacity or resources on the part of state officials to sensitize local communities, government emphasis on investment rather than welfare of traditional land owners and, finally, lack of political will.

In order to address these challenges, the forum acknowledged the need for increased awareness on land laws and legislation, which should be addressed by CSOs and LG. It was also emphasized that KDF should spearhead Karamoja land issues and insistently bring them to the attention of the government. In light of this, KDF was encouraged to carry out extensive research and create an information center for Karamoja which would keep and provide reference or archives of relevant histories and anecdotes of the Karimojong.

#### **To what extent were local communities involved in identification of areas released for community containment by UWA?**

A discussant pointed out that the local communities suspected to have encroached into areas gazetted by UWA were included in a consultation process carried out in view of the increasing number of land disputes between communities and UWA in 2013. During this consultation process, the inter-ministerial committee on natural resources together with the local leaders, UWA and community leaders met the affected populations and explored remedies to address the problem. The tracks of land that have now been returned to the affected communities were identified and approved of during joint consultative meetings.

### **Session 4:**

#### **Group work/discussion**

During this session, participants were split into five groups. The objective of the presentation was to actively engage and evoke views relevant to land, natural resources and pastoralism

from participants. The group discussions were centered on a set of questions meant to generate information and possible actions for advocacy. The excerpts of the discussions are attached below.

1. **(a) Explain the contemporary challenges/problems facing pastoral production systems in Karamoja**  
**(b) What appropriate measures/interventions can be undertaken to address the challenges sighted?**  
**(c) What should be the role of government, civil society, UN agencies, KDF in ensuring the interventions are implemented?**

Some of the main challenges currently faced by the Karimojong pastoralists include: rampant livestock diseases and epidemics, inadequate delivery and availability of services such as water resources, veterinary services and road infrastructure as well as conflicts over land between pastoralists, state agencies, business corporations and private investors among others. Additionally, pastoralists are adversely affected by climate change and restriction of livestock movement to traditional pastures in neighboring districts.

In order to address these challenges, it was suggested that Community Animal Health Workers be trained with established mobile veterinary services, improve the delivery of appropriate livestock services and infrastructure such as water reservoirs, roads and mobile veterinary services, prioritize the management and alleviation of natural resources conflicts affecting pastoralism and recognize the importance of pastoralist mobility and provision of access rights to pastures and grazing rangelands.

Another key challenge mentioned was the inadequate understanding and misrepresentation of pastoralist livelihood systems in Karamoja resulting from the insufficient use of research findings and evidence in policymaking processes, unavailability of simplified, standardized and easy-to-use data/information on pastoralism, as well as negative perceptions and myths about pastoralism and little interest and investment in pastoralism and pastoralists' areas.

In order to improve this situation, it was suggested that research findings and evidence be simplified, disseminated and made accessible to policy-makers. In addition, build consensus and develop standardized data on pastoralism across the region and establish a data bank for easy reference, documentaries be produced to inform and challenge the perceptions and myths about pastoralism and document pastoralists' contribution to the economy.

Lastly, the limited influence of pastoralists over policy and decision-making processes affecting them was addressed. Key challenges in this regard include; the inadequate capacity of pastoralists to effectively represent themselves and to present a compelling articulation of the rationale of pastoralism, weak organizational and institutional structures for engagement in policy and development processes and inadequate integration of pastoralists and pastoralism into national systems, hence weak alliances with non-pastoralist communities.

Interventions to adequately address these challenges need to build pastoralists' organizations' capacity on advocacy, research and communication, improve institutional governance of pastoralist organizations and other structures for effective representation, establish effective networks among pastoralist organizations and groups and with other communities and groups, develop and present a business case for pastoralism to advocate for the need to increase investment in pastoral areas.

Participants were also encouraged to discuss the role of government, civil society; UN agencies and KDF in ensuring that the above mentioned interventions are actually implemented. It was suggested that these actors formulate policy and legal frameworks favorable to pastoralism, lobby and advocate for pastoralism to encourage and support value-addition and diversification, consult and link pastoralism to better services to protect and enhance livestock trade and secure pastoral livelihoods. CSOs were also called upon to lobby for the establishment of a bigger pastoralists' advocacy platform such as Karamoja Livestock Marketing Council or Pastoralist Development Network of Karamoja or Karamoja Pastoralist Forum, or simply a Karamoja Pastoralist Newsletter, to highlight issues affecting pastoralists in Karamoja.

- 2. (a) Why has Karamoja lagged behind and remained poverty stricken despite numerous development and food security interventions from both government and NGOs?**
- (b) What has to be done by the local community, government, NGOs, KDF to address the issues you have identified?**
- (c) Identify safeguards that can be put in place to ensure strategies/interventions suggested in**
- (b) are executed to prevent relapse or stagnation in progress.**

The main reasons mentioned for why Karamoja has lagged behind and remained poverty stricken were; unclear development policies sidelining relevant local priorities in which development priorities are controlled by central government, social exclusion and marginalization resulting in poor participation, the design and implementation of development interventions is top-down development initiatives and strategies. Participants further listed the high illiteracy rate and slow pace of adaptation to change among Karimojong pastoralists, protracted social conflicts and political instability as well as climate change and waning of environmental coping and adaptation strategies as key challenges to development and food security in the region.

In order to address these issues, participants identified the following strategic measures: There is need to mobilize and sensitize communities on any development initiatives. It is furthermore important to involve local development actors in development planning; placing emphasis on bottom-up approaches to needs assessments and development. Both CSOs and government should consult local groups on development priorities to ensure ensuing interventions reflect community needs. KDF should conduct research, document and take lead on issues affecting Karamoja through networking and in partnership with other CSOs working in the region.

Adding to that, safeguards were discussed that should be put in place to ensure strategies and interventions suggested above are executed so as to prevent relapse or stagnation in progress. In this regard, it was stated that every development initiative should be backed by comprehensive and clear implementation policy guidelines. Further, there is a need for strong political will with more transparent and accountable leadership. It is crucial to build the capacity of local communities through the enhancement of skills and appropriate institutional frameworks. Finally, efficient mechanisms for information sharing and flow, monitoring and evaluation of progress should be developed.

3. (a) **Why is Karamoja in abject poverty when it has abundant natural resource wealth:– land, mineral exploitation, gum arabica, aloe vera, etc**
- (b) **What are the critical challenges/problems affecting land rights, natural resource use and governance in Karamoja?**
- (c) **What appropriate measures should be adopted by government, local community, and NGOs to strengthen land rights and natural resource governance?**

Participants traced the causes of continued abject poverty in Karamoja despite abundant natural resource wealth back to a lack of information on quantity, reserves and location of available natural resource wealth. They also pointed out the lack of respective industries and the consequent wasting of resources through informal and non-taxable extraction processes which has led to exploitation of the local populace and loss of revenue. Other challenges include; poor infrastructure and facilities such as good roads and electricity supply to stimulate the manufacturing sector and low government support and commitment to the development of extractive industry in Karamoja. Furthermore, it was mentioned that current business corporations and investors operate as shrewd brokers who scrupulously evade the negligible local taxes levied.

Critical challenges affecting land rights, natural resources use and governance in particular also include the lack of favorable land policies for contexts like Karamoja where almost 66% of land has been gazetted for wildlife, forest reserves and mining. In fact, numerous cultural heritage sites such as *ngakiriketa* (traditional shrines), sources of herbs and traditional medicinal plants, wild foods and fruits have been gazetted.

As appropriate measures to be adopted by government, local community, and NGOs to strengthen land rights and natural resource governance, it was suggested that strong communal land associations be formed to protect people's rights over land and other natural resources. Additionally, government should degazette more land to support pastoralism and other essential livelihoods suitable to Karamoja and create an independent Ministry responsible for pastoralism given that pastoralism as a livelihood system has so far been overshadowed by a focus on agriculture and modern livestock keeping in the mainstream Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. Participants also called for active involvement of the local communities in land and mineral wealth planning and decision making processes. Moreover, it was stated that area land committees and district land boards should transparently protect the land and mineral wealth in Karamoja on behalf of the people. Business corporations and investors should be given probationary licenses for a period of at least five years, renewable and based on their adherence to the protection of people's rights and their honesty in dealing with local communities and local government.

4. (a) What are some of the laws and policies affecting Karamoja?  
(b) What are major legislation and policy issues/challenges which place the Karimojong in a situation of worsening vulnerability?

Some of the key issues regarding policy and legislation that the group shared with the plenary involved the lack of laws supporting pastoralism, government interventions emphasizing agriculture and the lack of a coded law or policy allowing cross-border grazing during disaster as well as little recognition of rights of natural resource users under mining laws. Participants expressed concerns about crafty and elitist exploitative tendencies seizing rights of traditional natural resource users or owners. They also pointed out the existence of many un-enacted laws and policies on natural resource use and management such as the Climate Change Policy. In addition, it was mentioned that predatory investors and business corporations are not sensitive to environment conservation.

5. (a) What do you envisage KDF to be?  
(b) What would you expect KDF to do in Karamoja?  
(c) How would you expect KDF to do what you have stated above?  
(d) What role should the rest of Karimojong play in KDF?

KDF, perceived as an all-Karimojong people's movement, was encouraged to spearhead the discussion of food security and development-oriented issues affecting Karamoja and to hold development actors accountable to the people affected by their interventions.

Participants suggested that in order to meet the above expectations, KDF should establish a physical coordination office in Karamoja to be conveniently available to local community members, carry out civic awareness campaigns on laws and legislation affecting natural resources, food security and pastoralism and empower and build the capacity of the Karimojong, especially, the pre-literate community groups. KDF was furthermore encouraged to conduct advocacy on a number of issues affecting Karamoja region in areas of law and policy, food security, natural resource use, pastoralism, development, governance, environment and resettlement.

Specific strategies identified during the discussion and shared with the plenary include; research, documentation and information dissemination, advocacy and lobbying with strategic actors, partnership building and networking with other pastoralist organizations and groups such as Ateker Cluster, Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Commission on Nomadic Peoples, Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organizations (COPACSO). Furthermore, participants mentioned the possibility of organizing coordination or round-table meetings with other stakeholders as well as an Annual General Meeting bringing together a breadth of the Karimojong society to discuss progress and issues affecting Karamoja.

#### **Role and place of the Karimojong in KDF**

The forum recognized the centrality of the entire Karimojong populace in the existence of KDF. The rest of the Karimojong community was thus seen as the backbone of KDF. Their role could involve; active participation in information provision, attendance of open meetings

called by KDF and other stakeholders, participation in fundraising drives, active support for the ideals of KDF, involvement in debates, lobby and advocacy in meetings in which Karamoja issues are debated as well as actively participating in Annual General Meetings or forums convened by KDF.

## **Future Agenda for KDF**

This section brings to light some of the recommended actions put forward for KDF to execute.

It was observed that for the past decades, Karamoja region has continued to grapple with climatic, economic and conflict-related shocks which have subjected it perpetual poverty. This has left over 80 per cent of the Karimojong living below the poverty line with literacy levels as low as 12 per cent and malnutrition levels regularly higher than 10 per cent. The forum charged KDF to prioritize engaging in efforts aimed at reversing the status quo. KDF was asked to put rigorous advocacy to improved food security, counter economic and income inequality through inclusive participation of the Karimojong in its Food security Transformation Agenda.

It was considered that to propel and institute change on such transformative Agenda, KDF needed elaborate and established institutional frameworks. It was observed that, ordinarily operating as an advocacy platform with limited capacity may not suffice to enable KDF to carry out the Agenda for change in its current form. The conference appealed that KDF formally transforms into a non-governmental organization with the mandate to spearhead issues affecting Karamoja with the support of the local communities who are the bulwark of the social-economic ideals and aspirations of the Karimojong. KDF was recognized as a representative voice of the Karimojong, the majority of whom are illiterate, less informed and least involved in the policy, legal and development decision-making processes for issues affecting them.

KDF should move from being wholly an online hub to a community resource and education hub. Interactions and community based forums/dialogues should be enhanced to increase trust and confidence; above all to distinguish KDF from other NGOs.

Some suggested strategizing and targeting advocacy at the most influential stakeholders. Targeting the inner-most circles such as Karamoja legislators, sessional committees of Parliament, local politicians and local governments through forums and policy briefs is more unequivocal to push for and institute the desired change. The next step entails engaging this circle on a one-on-one with others to develop causative relationships of trust.

KDF should seek and nurture spaces for influencing and learning. Several considered resistance as a significant strategic option. Conversely, many participants considered continued engagement and dialogue with target key stakeholders as more consistent with

reflexive practice, giving opportunities to learn and challenge one's own assumptions as well as space to push for more innovative or appropriate thinking.

Collaborations and collective efforts also figured in participant's discussions. KDF was thus expected to build collaborative relationships in which protocol and processes are meshed in networking relationships. This strategy should provide opportunities for KDF to offer effective upward and sideway accountability to development partners and government and downward accountability to communities. The promotion of a framework that allows linkages and coalitions strengthens ownership, success and sustainability of KDF's initiatives in the region.

KDF was encouraged to build the capacity of its management and staff. This proposition was based on assumption that establishment of collaborative relationships is dependent on improved institutional and personnel competence. This was perceived critical to enable KDF team to be clear about what it needs, the implications of information it requests or how to use the evidence it receives to push for the desired change.

KDF should put more focus on local community feedback. Local communities are increasingly demanding information from development partners and government. Information should trickle from the top to down. KDF could fill this missing link as conduit between the local communities and other stakeholders.

## **Conclusions**

Over 90% of the Karimojong rely on access to land for their livelihoods, but commercial investments are increasingly transforming access and control of rural land in Karamoja, leading to livelihood insecurity, conflicts, deprivation and non-participation of customary resource users. To make matters worse, access to justice in land-related matters is largely out of reach, particularly for the most marginalized groups such as the Ik, Tepes, and women.

Modern-day policies continue to allow appropriation of pastoral rangelands by various groups. Farmers take over rangeland where sedentary crop production and investor-driven development are seen as preferable to livestock production, Pastoral land is allocated to private companies for extractive industry or agriculture, especially in 'wet belt' areas which are a critical dry season resource for pastoralists and herders are excluded and displaced from wildlife conservation areas which have served as traditional rangelands for decades. These ventures perpetuate food insecurity and poverty among the Karimojong pastoralists.

There is a general lack of information and involvement of local pastoralists on various land and natural resource tenure and legislation issues ranging from title acquisition procedures, granting of mineral concession processes to gazettement and degazettement. Yet, measures to strengthen land rights and natural resource governance against encroachment, fragmentation and resource pressures are exclusively crafted by those in echelons of power rather than traditional holders, and are relatively lacking or weak where they exist.

The suffering of the Karimojong is overlooked under the misconception that their hardships are self-inflicted by an apparent choice for a 'traditional' lifestyle of livestock rearing, which inhibits their ability for innovation and adaptation to change. Pastoralism is perceived as an outdated, chaotic, economically irrational and environmentally destructive land use/production system. However, these criticisms are not new, and there exists enough evidence of the highly resilient and adaptive nature of pastoralists, who constantly respond to market pressures and climatic trends in ingenious ways. Therefore, rather than being sidelined, pastoralism deserves to be considered as a sustainable economic and development option in the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa.

Pastoralists reject institutional and legislative reforms which fail to take their views and aspirations into account, e.g. protected kraals, quarantine on livestock, etc.

There are relatively few CSOs working in Karamoja promoting the protection and promotion of pastoralism for example the Veterinarians Sans Frontiers - Belgium, UN FAO, Cooperation and Development. Most interventions aimed at improving crop production undertaken to address food security issues and poverty in Karamoja have failed to make a significant impact since the start of humanitarian action over 30 years ago.

The conference thus attempted to initiate the conversation on some of the highly pertinent and urgent issues facing Karamoja by bringing a variety of voices to the table. It was observed that local capacity, context, inclusive participation and ownership are vital for transformative development, hence, the importance of consulting and incorporating local partners and finding solutions to issues jointly.

The participants perceived KDF with its motive and modus operandi as a feasible institution to help the people of Karamoja address problems affecting them in areas of natural resources and pastoralism. KDF was tasked to undertake manifold research and advocacy involving the local populace on critical issues affecting them in food insecurity, and exclusion of the affected people in development processes as a tool to community participation, food security and sustainable development.

The participants generally approved of KDF as being truly indigenous, people-centered and oriented. The majority of participants commended KDF for involving all groups of the Karimojong regardless of status, education, gender, age, ethnic grouping or disability. This characteristic distinguished KDF from other non-governmental organizations in Karamoja that focus on specific groups. The acknowledgement of KDF as a homegrown organization dedicated to the promotion of pastoralism was crowned with the traditional launch and blessing of KDF at Kalokut traditional shrine (*Akiriket*). At the ceremony, KDF was sanctioned to champion, represent and advocate on issues affecting natural resource access and control, pastoralism and governance in Karamoja.