

Naitakwae Livestock market: Where cows and goats feed our families

In this market, we sell goats and cows to provide for our families. When we are hit by hunger or disease, we bring our cows here for sale. We get money to support the family and use the balance to buy another animal. Heifers are good now.

Naitakwae Livestock market, located in Nadunget Sub County of Moroto district is among the oldest livestock markets in the Karamoja region. It was set up in the early 1950s to provide opportunities for the colonial government to purchase cows and goats for meat and other livestock products. Now the market is facing pressure from other land uses and is poised for relocation from its current ground to another location near Nadunget Sub County Headquarters.

The market is along the main road from Moroto town and is neighbored by Naitakwae Primary School from the south, Uganda National Roads Authority Coordination Office and China Road and Bridge Corporation site premises from the north, private homes and buildings from the west and a river and open garden spaces from the south. One would say the livestock market space is shrinking as day sees night. The livestock herders and traders say relocating the market is good news and is welcomed by all traders and livestock herders.

Sometimes cars have knocked down our cows as they cross the road to the market. We are always disrupted by vehicles speeding near the market. Lomeri told KDF recently.

The livestock market is busy only on Mondays every week where livestock herders meet with traders to haggle over prices. Livestock drug sellers also come to the market to find sales for their drugs. The livestock traders come from within Karamoja and as far as Kampala, Mbale, Soroti, and Kitale in Kenya.

When we first met **Lomeri Paul**, a livestock herder and trader from Rupa Sub County of Moroto district, he indicated to Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) that this market supports their families to provide for money to buy cereals and medical needs. ``..... *In this market, we sell goats and cows to provide for our families. When we are hit by hunger or disease, we bring our cows here for sale. We get money to support the family and use the balance to buy another animal. Heifers are good now...*``

To the livestock herders and traders like **Lomeri**, Naitakwae livestock market provides a weekly opportunity to exchange livestock for money to access other necessities. ``....*to us, livestock is the source of our living. It is everything. This market provides a bank for us. We bring our cows and goats here, and we get the money we want..... yes!*``

LIVESTOCK SALE IS FAMILY AND SOCIETAL BUSINESS

Lomeri informs KDF that before he decides which cow or goat to auction, he is informed by a request and decision from his family; wife. The need from a family guides which animal to be auctioned. *“.....if my wife cries over to me and says, the father of so and so, these children are hungry. Please look around your herd and rescue this family. Who are you to refuse? Sometimes it’s about sickness, we choose the animal to auction accordingly.... Yes!”* Cows in Naitakwae livestock market range from Uganda Shillings 300,000/= (USD 90) to Uganda Shillings 1,500,000/= (USD 430). Heifers are cheaper than bulls. Goats range from Uganda Shillings 65,000/= to 120,000/= while donkeys go upto Uganda shillings 300,000/=. Camels are hardly sold in this market.

Family and friends help and support in negotiation. Women are instrumental in negotiating for a better price. **Lomeri** says, *“if your wife or sister is around, a trader is likely to add more money to a woman’s plea. Sometimes just for tea or transport for the woman...”*

CURRENT STATUS OF THE MARKET

This livestock market, unlike others such as Komuria in Kaabong, Kanawat in Kotido and Bartanga in Abim, has not received any tangible support and attention from local government or civil society despite its long stay. On a common day, one cannot notice the market because there is nothing to show. No physical infrastructure like cow loading points, no fence, no sign posts and no demarcations; just a small ram shackled revenue office meant to collect taxes and issue travel permits for livestock.

In this livestock market, local traders do not pay market dues as they think dues are to be paid by foreign traders who transport livestock outside the region. Every cow sold and transported outside Karamoja region is issued a travel permit of Uganda Shillings 10,000/= while a shoat is issued a permit of Uganda Shillings 2,000/=. At least 30 cows and about 40 shoats are sold weekly in this market. According to the veterinary officer in charge of this market, the number of livestock sold and transported out of the region from January to June 2016 were 1359 (shoats 698, cows 639 and 22 donkeys).

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The livestock market is planned for relocation to a better site. The district and sub county officials ought to consult the livestock herders and traders on the choice of the market site. This will be productive to the local government, herders and traders. The local government can plan well for the site location and institute infrastructural plan for the market. The traders should find the site accessible and herders should find the site suitable for livestock to cross without disturbances from vehicles and cultivable land.

Sensitize all traders (both local and foreign) on payment and use of livestock market dues. This increases the amount of revenue collected and ensures that it is put into proper use, planned for and monitored by all stakeholders.

Put in place a proper documentation system for livestock sales, tracking and sale of proper drugs. The veterinary officer in charge of the market has to be financially and technically supported to do the monitoring and documentation. The commercial office of the Sub County has to have a proper documentation system to manage information from the livestock market.

Recognize and appreciate the contribution of livestock kept under a pastoralist system to the economies of rural population and avail initiatives which support such a system such as improving livestock health facilities from where these livestock is fattened and managed, improve water facilities and create safe routes for easy access to markets.