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Vulnerability Assessment Report

Karamoja Strong: Community-led resilience in the face of climate-induced loss, displacement and conflict

October 2025





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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Anticipatory Action
APaD	Agency for Cross Border Pastoralists Development
ASTUS	Anti-Stock Theft Unit
AWR	African Women Rising
BOMA	BOMA Project (economic inclusion NGO)
BORESHA	Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (international NGO)
CBPP	Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia
CDRD	Community-Driven Recovery and Development
CDRM	Community Disaster Risk Management
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDR / DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FII	Financial Inclusion Initiative (or similar, check text)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IBLI	Index-Based Livestock Insurance
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KII	Key Informant Interview
LC1	Local Council 1
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPR	National Police Reservists
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
rCSI	reduced Coping Strategy Index
SMS	Short Message Service
ToC	Theory of Change
TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
UWEP	Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme
VA	Vulnerability Assessment
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHH	Welthungerhilfe





YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme
ZOA	ZOA International (NGO)

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Agro-pastoral Communities	Communities that practice a combination of agriculture and pastoralism (livestock herding) for their livelihoods.
ASALs (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands)	Regions characterised by dry climates and limited rainfall, making them vulnerable to extreme climate shocks, such as drought and floods, and environmental degradation.
Anticipatory Action	Acting ahead of predicted shocks to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold.
Child Marriage	Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.
Conflict Sensitivity	Conflict sensitivity involves developing understanding of the context in which activities are delivered; analysing the relationship between those activities and the context; and adapting the way activities are delivered accordingly.
Foresight Displacement Forecasting:	Machine learning model that has been developed by DRC to predict forced displacement (IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers) due to climate or conflict shocks at the national level 1–3 years into the future.
Gender Transformative Approach	Address root causes to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers, and empower disadvantaged populations by making changes in law and policy; adapting and improving systems and services; distribution of resources, and changing negative or harmful norms and beliefs (including stereotypes), behaviours, and practices.
IPC (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification)	The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a comprehensive, standardised system used to classify and communicate the severity and magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition. The system uses five distinct phases to categorise the severity of a crisis, ranging from Phase 1 (minimal food insecurity) to Phase 5 (famine/humanitarian catastrophe).
Karamoja Cluster	The Karamoja cluster refers to an area of land that straddles the borders between South-Western Ethiopia, North-Western Kenya, South-Eastern South Sudan, and North-Eastern Uganda. This cross-border area is a vast and ecologically fragile region occupied by at least 13 pastoralist and



	agro-pastoralist communities. Within this report, the Karamoja Cluster encompasses arid and semi-arid borderlands of northeastern Uganda and northwestern Kenya.
Land-use Change	Alterations in how land is used, driven by factors such as deforestation, mining, overgrazing, and expansion of cropland, leading to land degradation.
Pastoralist Households	Families whose livelihoods are primarily dependent on raising livestock, making them highly vulnerable to climate shocks and livestock disease.
Peace Committees	Local groups of community members supporting community-level conflict prevention and resolution through dialogue and reconciliation.
Participatory Scenario Planning	Collaborative process to strengthen agro -pastoralists' capabilities combining climate data with indigenous knowledge in seasonal forecasts for planning and implementing adaptation activities.
rCSI (reduced Coping Strategy Index)	The rCSI is an experience-based indicator measuring the behaviour of households over the past seven days when they did not have enough food or money to purchase food.
Triple Nexus	Integrated humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding action to reduce the humanitarian needs of populations affected by crisis by addressing key root causes and decreasing risks and vulnerabilities they face.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context and project overview

Climate-conflict interaction pathways in agro-pastoral contexts

In pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, secure access to natural resources, particularly land, water, and pasture, is essential for livelihood security and underpins broader socio-cultural, political, and economic structures. Given their critical importance, competition over these resources is both inevitable and potentially destabilising. If not effectively managed, competition can lead to conflict.¹ Climate variability, environmental degradation, human interventions, and population growth intensify these pressures by increasing the scarcity and unpredictability of key resources. Shifting rainfall patterns, recurrent droughts, and episodic floods disrupt traditional practices of resource sharing and mobility, forcing communities to adapt rapidly to changing environmental conditions.² These climatic extremes not only reduce resource availability but also degrade soil and diminish water absorption in arid and semi-arid lands, undermining long-term regenerative potential.³ Such conditions intensify tensions, particularly when pastoralists are compelled to access land and water outside traditional areas. This may lead to encroachment on neighbours' territories or farmers' croplands⁴ or contested use of vital assets such as wells, rivers, or dry season grazing areas. In densely populated zones or where access rights are unclear, competition escalates and the risk of violent confrontations become more frequent.⁵ Conflict manifests along a spectrum, from localised non-violent disagreements to large-scale, organised armed violence,⁶ often spiking after climate shocks. This is particularly evident where traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have eroded, or where mobility brings pastoralists into direct competition with sedentary farmers. These conflicts further weaken community resilience by disrupting livelihoods, fracturing social cohesion, and exacerbating marginalisation. They often result in displacements, deeper poverty, food insecurity and undermining local governance,⁷ thus reinforcing the climate-conflict feedback loop. Gender and generational inequalities deepen these dynamics. Women and youth disproportionately bear the impacts of displacement and resource loss, while their exclusion from decision-making limits collective adaptation and restoration of peace.⁸

The Karamoja cluster

The Karamoja cluster, covering the arid and semi-arid borderlands of northeastern Uganda and northwestern Kenya, is a vast and ecologically fragile region. Home to historically pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, such as, among others, the Karimojong⁹, the Turkana, and the Pokot, the region faces acute food insecurity, widespread poverty, limited access to basic services and low security.¹⁰ The cluster is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate variability, including rising temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, recurrent droughts, destructive flash floods, leading also to land degradation and livestock diseases. All of these shocks exacerbate resource scarcity of water, pasture, and arable land.¹¹ These environmental stressors intensify the competition over natural resources, which serve as the main basis of livelihoods and a key source of social identity within agro-

¹ Huho, J.M., Conflict Resolution among Pastoral Communities in West Pokot County, Kenya: A Missing Link", *Academic Research International*, 2012.

² IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability", 2022.

³ Conscious Planet, "The Nexus of Soil Degradation, Climate Change, and Food Insecurity", 2025.

⁴ Dr. Lilian Namuma S. Kong'ani, "Addressing climate change and conflict nexus in East Africa", Mashariki Research and Policy Centre (MRPC), 10 September 2024.

⁵ Adano, W.R., Dietz, T., Witsenburg, K., & Zaal, F., "Climate change, violent conflict and local institutions in Kenya's drylands", *Journal of Peace Research*, 2012.

⁶ FAO, "Guide to context analysis: Informing FAO decision-making - Approaches to working in fragile and conflict affected contexts", Rome: FAO, 2019.

⁷ Aloysious Tumusiime, "The climate, displacement and conflict nexus: a snippet on its impacts on livelihoods in East Africa", *Humanitarian Practice Network*, 2024.

⁸ World Bank Group. "Gender Dynamics of Disaster Risk and Resilience." World Bank, March 4, 2021.

⁹ In Uganda: Matheniko (Moroto District), Bokora (Napak District (formerly Moroto)), Pian (Nakapiripirit District), Tepeth (Mountainous areas around Moroto), Jie (Kotido District), Dodoth (Kaabong District). In Ethiopia: Nyangatom (or Dongiro), Daasanach (or Dessenech). In South Sudan: Toposa and Jiye

¹⁰ World Bank, "Educating Nomadic Herders Out of Poverty? Culture, education and pastoral livelihood in Turkana and Karamoja", 2001.

¹¹ Climate Diplomacy, "Communal Conflict in the Karamoja Region", n.d.



pastoral communities.¹² Climate shocks and environmental degradation drive cycles of intra- and inter-community conflicts and insecurity.¹³ Scarcity of vital natural resources like water, pasture, and arable land, intensified by climate variability and environmental degradation, fuels competition and recurrent violent clashes that transcends national borders.¹⁴ Cattle raiding and petty theft remains the most common form of violence,¹⁵ exacerbated by the widespread availability of small arms, weak governance, and low trust in state institutions. Communities report a history of alternating neglect and militarised interventions that fail to address the root causes of instability.¹⁶

Karamoja Strong

The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) is funding the cross-border project “*Karamoja Strong: Community-led resilience in the face of climate-induced loss, displacement and conflict*” (2025–2027), which aims to strengthen community resilience through regenerative agriculture, cross-border collaboration, conflict resolution, and anticipatory action. The project is led by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), in partnership with the Agency for Cross Border Pastoralists Development (APaD), African Women Rising, Samuel Hall East Africa and grassroots partners, across Kenya and Uganda.

The project aims to strengthen locally led resilience by promoting gender-transformative and climate-resilient livelihood practices, regenerative agriculture, and cross-border collaboration. It also seeks to improve the capacity of local authorities to monitor and assess climate risks, ensuring that information is timely, accessible, and useful for communities most affected. By equipping communities with reliable data and the means to act in advance of shocks, the project supports anticipatory and adaptive responses. These efforts are intended to reduce the risks of climate-related losses escalating into conflict, while fostering resilience and peaceful coexistence among communities across the Karamoja Cluster.

The Theory of Change (ToC) recognises that while long-term adaptation is essential, communities across Karamoja Cluster remain vulnerable to cyclical shocks (both climatic and conflict-related) which continue to undermine development gains. Anticipatory action is therefore critical for mitigating their impacts. Furthermore, the ToC acknowledges that resilience cannot be achieved without addressing the interconnected effects of climate change on livelihoods and mobility, factors that exacerbate protection risks, reshape gender dynamics (particularly for women), and intensify competition over scarce natural resources.

This ToC is operationalised through a results framework which guides the implementation across Kenya and Uganda:

Table 1: Karamoja Strong Results Framework

Overarching Objective: Communities and individuals, particularly women and girls, in the Karamoja Cluster can anticipate, prevent and adapt to climate- and conflict-related shocks and stressors		
Outcomes	Outcome 1	Communities are more resilient to impacts of climate change and conflict
	Outcome 2	Community-led anticipatory action reduces humanitarian impact of climate- and conflict-induced shocks
Outputs	Output 1.1	Vulnerable households adopt gender-transformative, resilient, design-informed livelihoods

¹² UNDP, “Karamoja Cluster: Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment (Kenya and Uganda)”, 2022.

¹³ Thomas Homer-Dixon, “Environment, Scarcity, and Violence”, Princeton University Press, 1999.

¹⁴ Climate Diplomacy, “Communal conflicts in the Karamoja Cluster (Uganda)”, n.d.

¹⁵ UNDP, “Karamoja Cluster: Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment (Kenya and Uganda)”, 2022.

¹⁶ Climate Diplomacy, “Communal Conflict in the Karamoja Region”, n.d.; Conciliation Resources, “Peace and security for pastoralist communities in African borderlands”, Accord Issue 5, May 2024.

	Output 1.2	Cross-border authorities have strengthened collaboration on policies and monitoring on the impact of climate change
	Output 1.3	Community peacebuilding initiatives and conflict management capacities are strengthened
	Output 1.4	Evidence-based climate and conflict resilience initiatives under the program are driven by participatory and applied research
	Output 2.1	Communities have access, capacity and resources to act upon early warning systems

1.2. Objectives and methodology

Key contributions

The vulnerability assessment explores the broader climate and conflict resilience landscape of the region. Its core objective is to identify and analyse key vulnerabilities and exposures, with particular attention to women and girls, in relation to climate- and conflict-related shocks and stressors. The assessment examines socio-economic conditions, livelihood strategies, demographic factors (including gender, age, and disability), as well as historical patterns of drought, food insecurity, and conflict resolution. In doing so, it provides nuanced evidence to guide the design and implementation of programming. More specifically, the assessment seeks to inform context-specific, inclusive, and anticipatory interventions that strengthen resilience, promote peaceful coexistence, and safeguard livelihoods in the Karamoja region. The analysis is structured around four themes, which guided the research questions and data collection tools:

1	2	3	4
DRIVERS OF CLIMATE VULNERABILITY	CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND PEACEBUILDING STRUCTURES	LIVELIHOOD RESILIENCE IN THE CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT	ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

This vulnerability assessment provides evidence on the evolving dynamics of the Karamoja Cluster. Its contributions are threefold:

- **Comparative analysis across countries and clusters:** The assessment undertakes a two-level comparative analysis, across Kenya and Uganda as well as across sub-clusters and cross-border contexts (Loima, Lokiriamia, North Pokot, Amudat, Moroto, and Napak). By examining climate, conflict, governance, and livelihood characteristics and responses, it identifies both shared challenges and spatial differences that directly shape programme implementation.
- **Granular insights on groups and local dynamic:** The research highlights how climate and conflict pressures are reshaping gender roles, with women and youth playing an increasingly central role in resource management and conflict resolution. It documents social structures, localised drivers of conflict, and specific climate vulnerabilities, amplifying the perspectives of marginalised groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

- **Evidence on governance, peacebuilding, and adaptation practices:** The assessment captures community perceptions of governance and peacebuilding, revealing gaps in institutional legitimacy and trust, shaped by historical marginalisation and inconsistent state engagement. It also records recent livelihood adaptations, evolving cross-border interactions, and the use of both traditional and modern early warning systems.

Image 1: Karamoja Strong area of study.



Methodology

Conducted in July–August 2025, the assessment provides findings that situate vulnerabilities within current climatic and security realities. By combining comparative and local perspectives, it offers a clearer understanding of where and how programmes should adapt, enabling the Karamoja Strong consortium to design interventions that are both context-sensitive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable, particularly women and youth. Samuel Hall conducted in-person data collection using a mixed-methods approach and triangulated findings with secondary data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current conditions affecting communities across the Karamoja Cluster and associated vulnerabilities. The vulnerability assessment adopted a participatory approach, guided by four core principles:

1. **Localisation Lens:** The vulnerability assessment centres the voices, experiences, and knowledge of local communities across the sub-clusters. Continuous engagement with local stakeholders has ensured that community members have been active participants and that the analysis reflects differentiated community realities.
2. **Intersectional Approach:** The analysis explores how intersecting identities influence inclusion, exclusion, and access. It foregrounds power dynamics, social inequalities and evolving norms that overlap and shape climate resilience.
3. **Ecosystemic and Historical Lens:** Recognising that resilience is shaped by interrelated social, institutional, economic, and ecological systems, the assessment offers a holistic analysis of the programme context. It situates vulnerabilities within broader historical legacies, regional disparities, and evolving environmental stressors.
4. **Conflict Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations:** The assessment examines how project interventions interact with local dynamics to mitigate harm and enhance peacebuilding. It identifies key conflict drivers and recommends strategies to address them through programming. All activities have adhered to Do No Harm principles.

Data collection involved an in-depth secondary data review and in-person qualitative and quantitative fieldwork in six sub-clusters: in Kenya, Loima and Lokirima and North Pokot County sub-counties and in Uganda, in Amudat, Moroto and Napak districts targeting sub-counties of Rupa, Tapac and Lopei. A total of **43 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** were conducted at the cluster and regional levels; five KIIs were conducted across each sub-cluster. Respondents included: (1) community leaders, (2) peace committee members, (3) environmental and climate stakeholders, (4) disaster risk reduction stakeholders and (5) youth representatives. At the regional level, 14 KIIs were conducted. Respondents included: (1) governance and policy stakeholders, (2) agro-pastoralist representatives, (3) cross-border authority, (3) environmental and climate stakeholders, (4) disaster risk reduction stakeholders, (5) conflict and peace committee members, and (7) women's group association members. The interview tools were semi-structured and tailored to each respondent group. **24 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were conducted to capture lived experiences and perceptions within communities. Each cluster hosted four FGDs, with (1) women, (2) youth, (3) peace and conflict committee members and (4) community members. All FGDs were conducted in local languages, with trained facilitators to ensure cultural sensitivity.

Samuel Hall conducted **378 household surveys**, with male and female household members, aligned with the DRC results framework. The survey employed a stratified, three-stage probability-proportional-to-size cluster sampling design, with 60 households targeted per cluster across six clusters in Kenya and Uganda: Loima, Lokirima, North Pokot, Moroto, Amudat and Napak. Stratification by cluster enabled community-level disaggregation, while gender quotas (50/50) ensured an even split between adult male and female respondents. Information on disability status within households was also recorded and tracked. Of the total, 203 were female and 175 were male respondents. This survey served to (1) generate baseline indicator values for the Karamoja Strong project result framework and (2) to provide insights into the social dynamics.

Table 2: Summary research sampling

Tool	Country	County/District	Sampling	Total
Cluster-level KIIs	Kenya	Lokirima, Loima, North Pokot (Sub-) Counties	6 Community Leaders 6 Peace Committee Members 6 Environmental and Climate Focal Persons	29
	Uganda	Moroto, Amudat, Napak Districts	5 Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Persons ¹⁷ 6 Youth Community Representatives	
Regional-level KIIs	Kenya	N/A	2 Governance and Policy Focal Persons 2 Agro-pastoralist Representatives	14
	Uganda	N/A	2 Cross border Authorities 2 Environmental and Climate Focal Persons 2 Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Persons 2 Conflict and Peace Stakeholders 2 Women's Group Associations	
FGDs	Kenya	Lokirima, Loima, North Pokot (Sub-) Counties	6 FGD with Women	24

¹⁷ The Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Person in Kenya-Turkana was responsible for Loima and Lokirima. Only one interview has been conducted.



	Uganda	Moroto, Amudat, Napak Districts	6 FGD with Youth Participants 6 FGD with Peace and Conflict Committee Members 6 FGD with Community Members	
Households survey	Kenya	Lokirama, Loima, North Pokot (Sub-) Counties	Around 60 respondents per cluster, including female and male household members.	378
	Uganda	Moroto, Amudat, Napak Districts		

Total: 581 participants

Gaps and limitations

The survey covered 378 respondents providing overall precision but wider margins of error at the country ($\pm 7\%$) and cluster level ($\pm 11-13\%$). As a baseline without a control group, findings serve as a starting point for tracking change but cannot establish causal impacts. Men were harder to reach, as many were away grazing or working, and their perspectives may be underrepresented. Gender distribution reflects challenges in accessing female informants within sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction, governance and environmental management. Finally, the survey's limited scope and length may have led to missing detail on seasonal livelihoods and to respondent fatigue toward the end of interviews.



2. DRIVERS OF CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

2.1 Climate shocks and land degradation

Key Findings

Shocks are cumulative and self-reinforcing. Drought and heat weaken recovery, erratic rains and pests destroy gains, and degraded land can no longer buffer shocks. This leaves households, livestock, and crops chronically vulnerable.

Climate shocks and environmental change combine to erode resilience across the Karamoja Cluster, with drought as the defining risk compounded by land degradation, secondary stressors, and country-specific patterns of vulnerability.

- **Drought**¹⁸ is the defining shock, now more frequent and prolonged, reported at critical levels in Loima (100%), Moroto (100%), and Lokirima (93%).¹⁹
- **Secondary stressors** include livestock disease (highest in Loima), extreme heat (highest in Moroto), erratic rainfall (highest in Loima and Napak), and crop pests (highest in Napak). Flooding is less frequent but significant in localised areas like Amudat.
- **Land degradation** is severe, with major shifts from tree cover to shrubland (43%) and bare/grassland (33%), driven by logging, charcoal production, and overgrazing. Cropland expansion and urban growth further accelerate environmental stress.
- **Desertification and vegetation loss** are ranked as key concerns in the survey, with soil fertility decline (Napak 74.1%, Moroto 67.7%) and erosion (highest in North Pokot 64.8%) also significant.

Shock profiles differ by country:

- **Kenya:** prolonged drought, flash floods after dry spells, locust invasions, overgrazing, charcoal, and mining degradation.
- **Uganda:** Flash floods, landslides, deforestation from mining and fuelwood, wildfires, and poorly designed infrastructure increasing vulnerability.

Predominant climate shocks

Turkana in **Kenya** and Karamoja in **Uganda** are arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) exposed to drought, irregular rainfall, floods, and extreme heat, particularly between April and July. Among these, drought is the predominant shock. It occurs more frequently, lasts longer, and has eroded both household and herd resilience. Survey data confirm its prevalence: as shown in Figure 1, drought is the most widespread shock across all clusters, experienced by all or nearly all household surveys in Loima (100%), Moroto (100%), and Lokirima (93%).

¹⁸ Drought, as used in the survey, was based on respondents' own experience of an abnormally prolonged period of low rainfall and water scarcity.

"100% drought" indicates that all surveyed households in that cluster reported having experienced drought conditions within the past year.

¹⁹ Percentages presented in the quantitative analysis refer to the share of surveyed households reporting exposure to a given shock or condition within the 12 months preceding the survey.

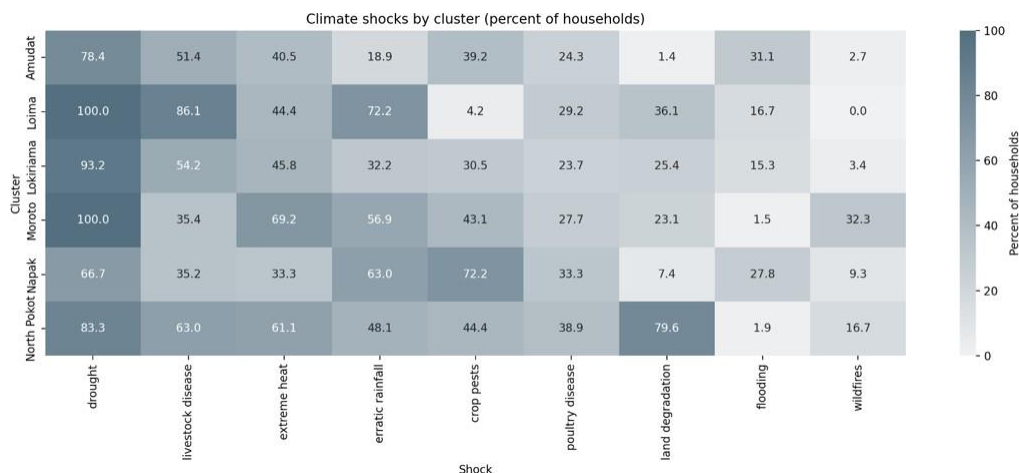


Figure 1: Climate-related shocks survey respondents reported being exposed to in the past 12 months, by shock and cluster.

Community interviews highlight the disproportionate impact of drought on vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, children and elderly. Women walk long distances to fetch water and climb hills to gather grass for construction. Boys are drawn into cattle herding and exposed to risks during conflicts and children face protection risks, with childmarriage used as a coping strategy. Elders, meanwhile, are often left behind when families migrate in search of resources, leaving them without support.²⁰

Prolonged dry periods reduce pastures and water, leaving cattle weakened, prone to disease, and often dying in large numbers, along migration corridors such as Torekinai. As a result, outbreaks of livestock disease spread quickly through already fragile herds. When rains return, they fall in short and intense episodes. Because soils are dry and compacted, they cannot absorb the water, leading to flash floods that erode topsoil, damage crops, and cause further livestock losses. Communities describe these floods with terms such as “*ekaru angakipi-arengak*” (the year of the water that carried away)²¹ and “*ekaru a aitingit*” the (year of suffering).²²

Secondary stressors include erratic rainfall, extreme heat and livestock disease and exacerbating the effects of drought. They vary per location, with erratic rainfall being most reported in Loima and Napak, extreme heat in Moroto and North Pokot, and livestock disease in Loima and North Pokot (Figure 1). Crop pests, like birds and armyworm, appear more variably, with Napak recording the highest frequency. Flooding, though less common, is a major local shock in Amudat. Together, these factors reinforce chronic aridity and highlight the uneven distribution of risk across the borderlands. Communities note that the seasons have become unpredictable, with rains arriving late, ending early, or falling in destructive bursts.²³

²⁰ FGD12, Community Leaders, North Pokot.

²¹ Ngakarimojong or Ekaru ng’akipi ne rengech in Pokot

²² KII18. Ngakarimojong or Ekaru ne lting’a in Pokot

²³ KII12, KII18, FGD1, FGD14, FGD20

Image 2: Cows moving in search of water in Kokiriamet, Turkana.



Beyond drought and floods, locust outbreaks devastate agro-pastoral systems by destroying both pasture and crops, leading to simultaneous losses in milk and grain. In Moruita, for example, locusts devoured sorghum and acacia leaves, leaving the land bare even after the rains returned. Finally, widespread soil degradation further compounds these shocks, undermining the land's capacity to recover and increasing community vulnerability to future shocks.²⁴ This link between shocks and environmental decline is explored in the next section on land degradation and land-use change.

Land degradation

Land degradation in the region is driven by the interaction of climate shocks, unsustainable land-use practices, and poorly designed infrastructure. Overgrazing, charcoal production, bush clearing for farming, and unregulated mining contribute to gully formation, falling water tables, and shrinking safe grazing areas. Deforestation results not only from fuelwood collection but also from land clearance for new cultivation. In areas such as Chemulunjo in Alale, grasslands that once supported herds have been stripped bare. For households that shifted into commercial farming or mining, recurrent drought has undermined these investments and exposed them to new risks.²⁵

Remote-sensing evidence confirms the scale of these changes. Map 1 shows that there has been extensive vegetation loss between 2002 and 2024,²⁶ most notably:

- Tree cover to shrubland (43%), concentrated in southern highlands and mountain areas.
- Tree cover to bare/grassland (33%), particularly prominent in Napak and along the Turkwel River in Loima, largely driven by logging for fuel and construction. The loss of tree and grass cover forces families to move their animals as far as 80 kilometres in search of pasture. Elders in Loima recall wells drying completely and vegetation disappearing.²⁷
- Shrubland to cropland (15%), in trading centers dominating towns and highlands in Amudat, Moroto, and Napak. Approximately 25% of natural vegetation cleared for cropland is found in low-productivity pastoral zones which are occupied by free-range livestock herders. These are potential conflict zones due to resource competition and the risk of farm invasion by herders. Conversely, herders may also encroach on farms in the marginal areas of medium-productivity zones that border low-productivity pastoral zones, particularly during droughts.

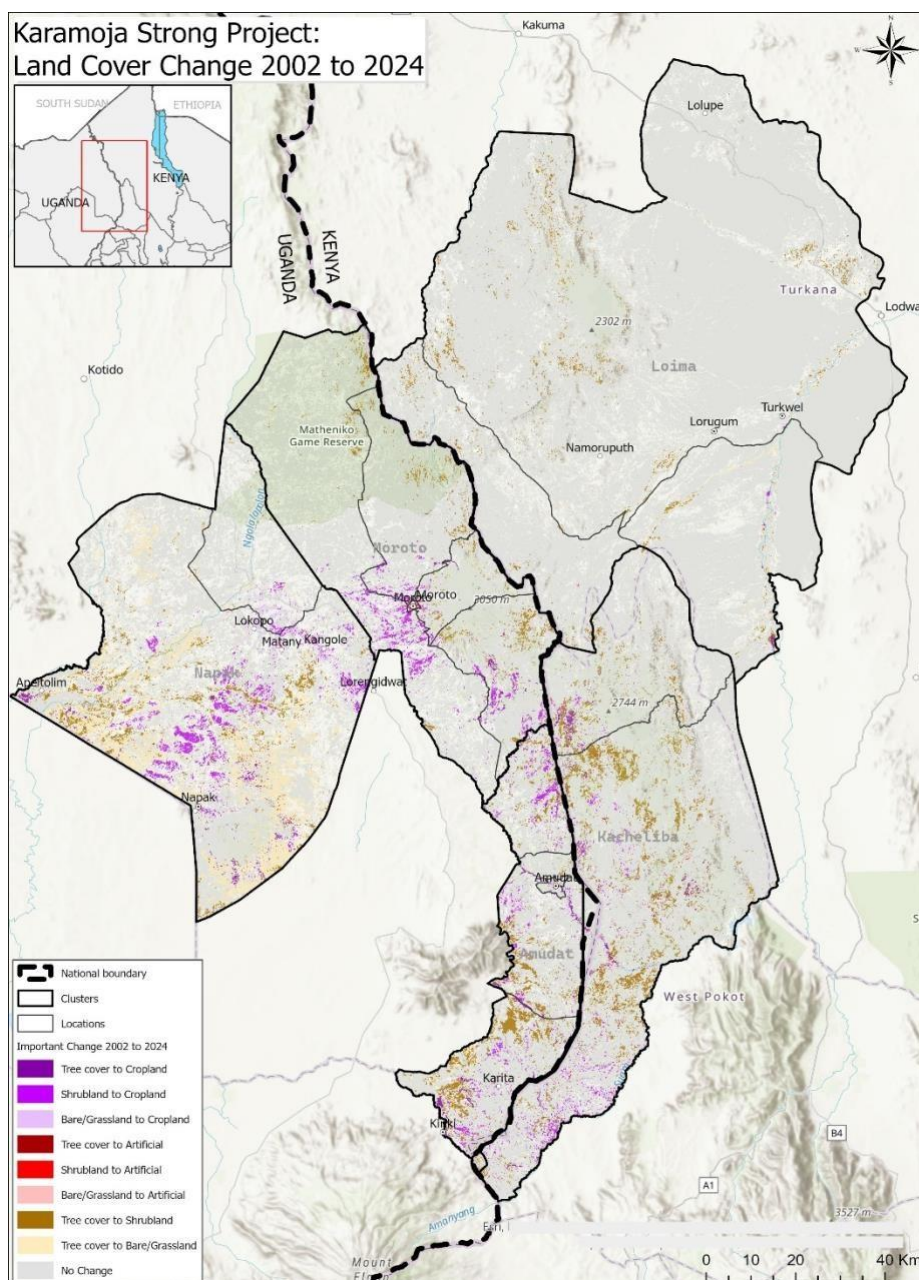
²⁴ KII20, KII35, KII39, KII43, FGD7, FGD15, FGD21, KII23.

²⁵ KII12

²⁶ Degradation of natural vegetation is shown in brown, while conversion to cropland and built-up areas is represented by purple and red hues, respectively.

²⁷ KII20, FGD6, FGD7.

Map 1: Land cover change from 2002 to 2024.



Survey findings as well as geospatial analysis further confirm these patterns. **Desertification and vegetation loss were most reported forms of land degradation by households in both Kenya and Uganda.** In Kenya, desertification is particularly acute in Lokiriamia (81%) and Loima (79%), while vegetation loss is most pronounced in Loima (67%). Exposure to soil erosion was reported by 65% of households surveyed in North Pokot, and 42% in Loima, with geo-spatial analysis revealing particularly high erosion levels in Western Loima. In Uganda, vegetation loss is most reported in Amudat (57%), while desertification is highest in Moroto (49%). Soil erosion is less prevalent overall, with less than one-quarter of households citing it across all clusters, yet a pocket with high soil erosion levels exists around Napak.

Land-use change is shaped more by deforestation and mining. For instance, in Tapac, Moroto District, communities identified marble and limestone extraction as major drivers of forest loss and climate degradation. Deforestation is also linked to fuelwood collection and construction. Other practices that further degrade the ecosystem include wildfires, sometimes set intentionally to



control ticks, and burning in the belief that vegetation will regenerate more strongly after rains. Moreover, the overgrazing of large herds accelerates soil erosion and reduces grassland quality.

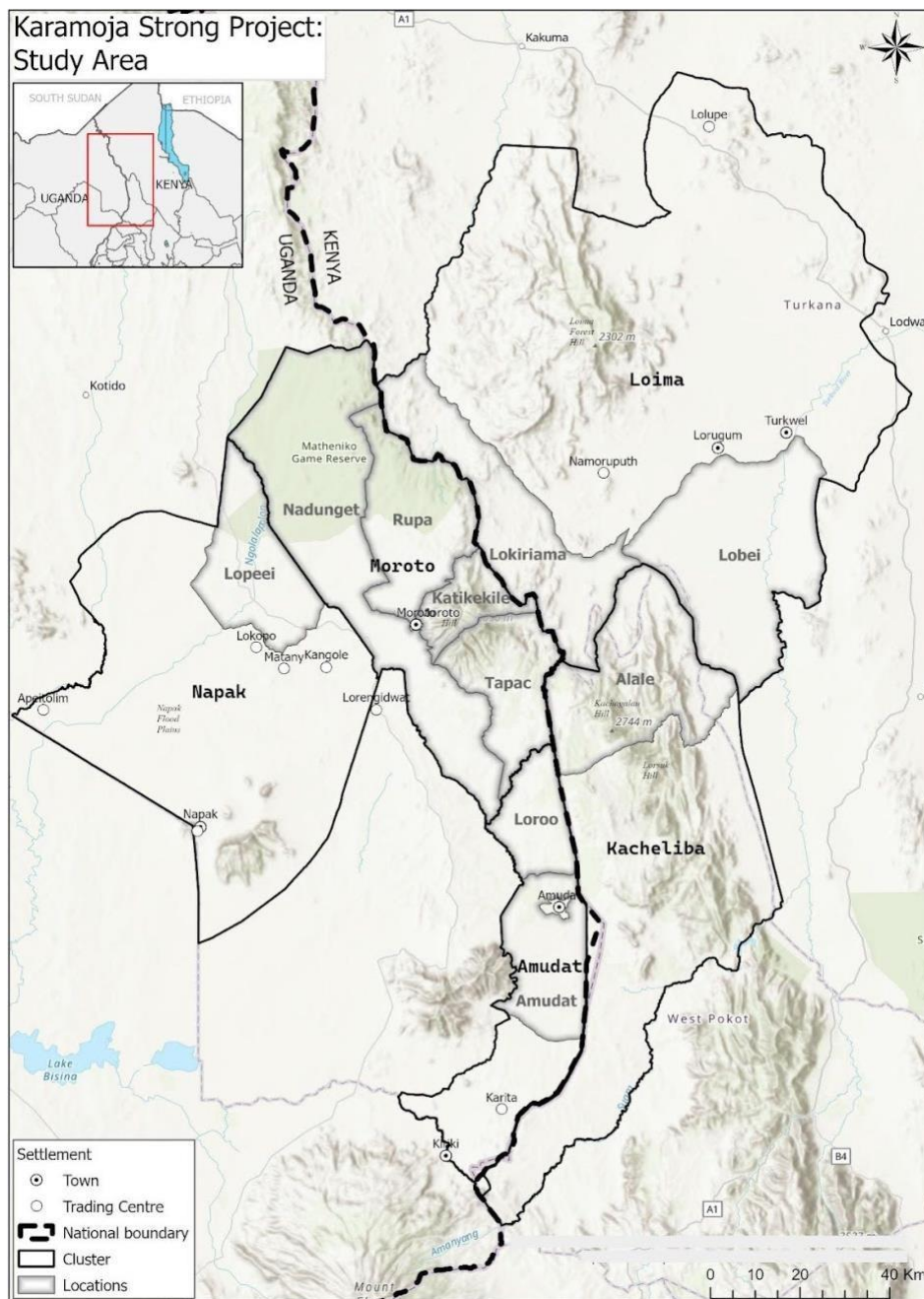
Infrastructure intended to address these challenges has often been poorly designed. In Tapac, residents pointed to the Nakonyen dam as an example, which was built without community consultation. It is poorly positioned and fails both to store water during dry periods and to reduce runoff during rains. As a result, households have seen little benefit despite the significant investment.²⁸ Together, these trends reveal a self-reinforcing cycle: repeated droughts and erratic rainfall accelerate vegetation loss and desertification, while human pressures such as overgrazing and logging prevent natural regeneration. Communities recognise the environmental damage, yet livelihood needs sustain these practices. As soil degrades and fertility declines, crop yields fall and grazing lands shrink. As a consequence, reduced soil capacity limits water retention, making floods more destructive and dry periods more severe. Households are therefore forced to migrate further in search of pasture and arable land, heightening the risk of conflict over scarce resources.²⁹

²⁸ KII24, KII26, KII32, KII33, KII38, KII43, DRC, "Legacy Review/; 10 years of the Danish Demining Group's Karamoja Programme 2010–2019, 2020"

²⁹ Trocaire, "Policy Brief No.3. The Nexus Between Climate Change and Land Conflict in Turkana County", September 2020.

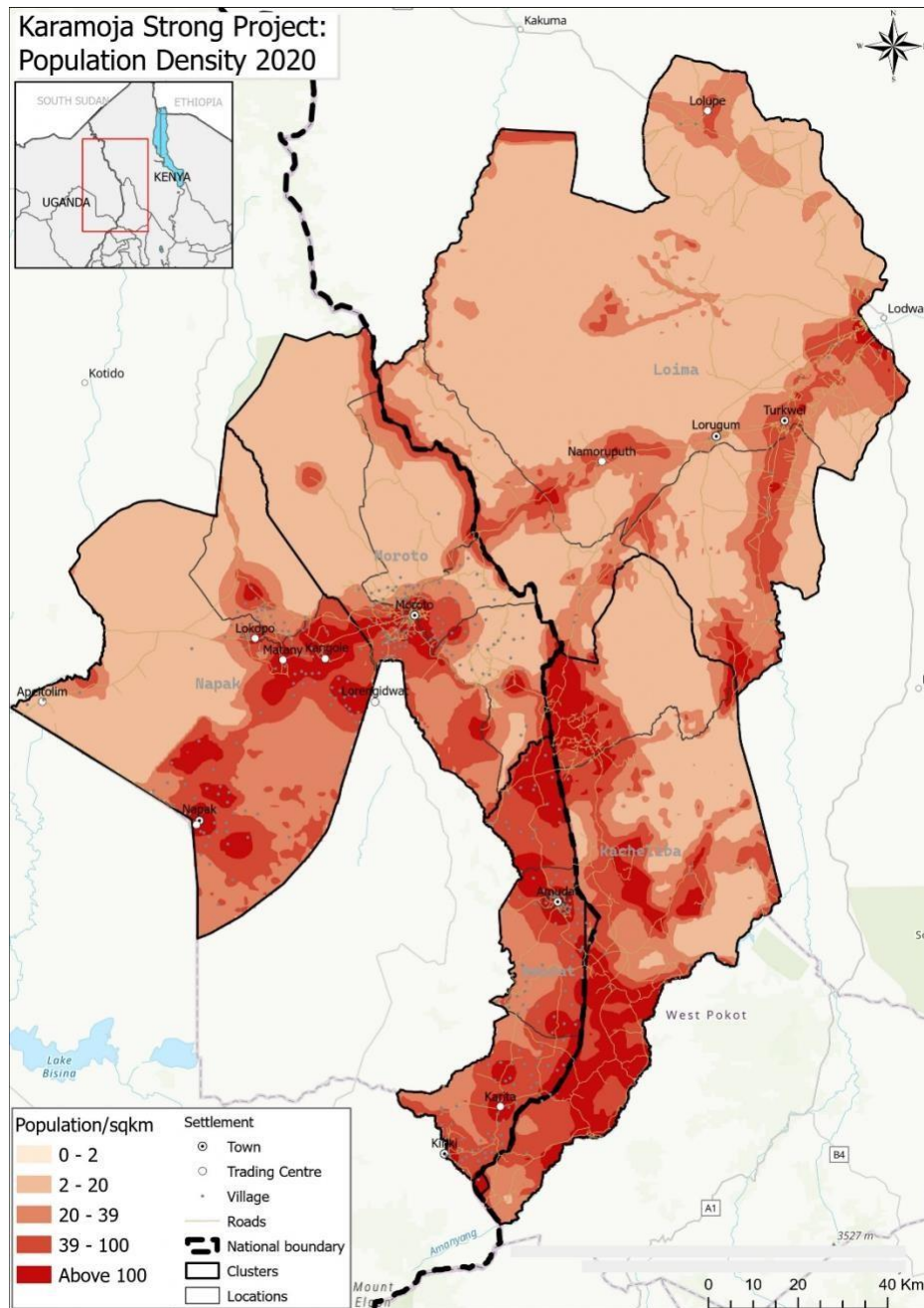


Map 2: Settlement Area



These maps show the geographical scope of the Karamoja Strong project study area, covering bordering sub-counties in Kenya (Loima, Kiriama and West Pokot) and Uganda (Napak, Moroto and Amudat).

Map 3: Population Density



The left figure shows the overall project boundaries of the six study locations we focused on, while the map to its right shows the population density map, highlighting the concentration of people within these locations, and further indicating the pressures on land and resources experienced by the residents.

The map shows that population density is higher along the Kenya-Uganda borderlands than in the more inland areas, suggesting

- Greater settlement concentration near the border
- Greater population density around the main cities
- More similarities between areas close to the border

The **national border is not the defining feature** of people's lives or risks. Districts often have more in common with their cross-border neighbors than with communities further inland in their own country.

For example, Loima in Kenya shares pastoral dynamics and flood-prone lowlands with Amudat in Uganda, while Napak's fertile floodplains resemble parts of North Pokot more than distant Ugandan districts.

This underlines that resilience challenges and solutions are regional and cross-border in nature, not easily contained within national boundaries.

2.2. Existing vulnerabilities, amplified by climate shocks

"So some of these practices of preservation of nature have been abandoned, and it's not surprising that nature is reacting the way it is."

KII42 DDR Moroto

Existing vulnerabilities in the region are multiple and interlinked. Food, water, health, education, shelter, and mobility are all undermined by poverty and recurrent climate shocks, leaving households in chronic stress.



Key Findings

- **Food security** is the most affected dimension of wellbeing. High rCSI scores show severe stress across Kenya (Loima, Lokirama, North Pokot) and in parts of Uganda (Moroto, Napak). Households cope by reducing meals, skipping food, or relying on single food types, driving malnutrition. Women and children are disproportionately affected, with breastfeeding, reproductive health, and child growth severely compromised.
- **Water scarcity** is acute on both sides of the border. In Kenya, 60.5% of households rely on unsafe surface water, exposing families to disease and sparking competition at limited boreholes. In Uganda, boreholes predominate, but water levels in Napak and Moroto have dropped sharply, forcing reliance on unsafe sources. Women face protection risks when walking long distances to collect water.
- **Health outcomes** remain closely tied to climate shocks. Malaria, cholera, pneumonia, and malnutrition rise during floods and droughts, exacerbated by livestock diseases. Access to services is higher in Kenyan clusters than in Uganda, but poor infrastructure and weak service provision limit effective care.
- **Education access** is generally higher in Kenya than in Uganda, but schooling is frequently disrupted by migration, poverty, and early marriage which can all be linked back to climate shocks at least to some extent.
- **Shelter** is fragile across the region. In Kenya, households are evenly split between mud houses and straw huts. In Uganda, mud houses are more common. These structures provide little protection against floods, winds, or extreme heat, and rebuilding places further strain on households.

- **Mobility patterns** reflect seasonal migration, disaster-related displacement, and rural-urban migration. Mobility patterns are diverse, shaped by both climate stress and insecurity. In Kenya, droughts and floods repeatedly displace families, while cross-border grazing into Uganda often leads to tension with host communities. In Uganda, households rely on seasonal migration, but are also impacted by disaster-related displacement, particularly in Moroto and Napak. Across both countries, rural-urban migration is increasing, especially among youth. Yet, these movements frequently result in precarious urban livelihoods, with limited prospects for return.
- **Poverty and marginalisation** constrain household resilience. In Kenya, 83% households live below the poverty line, with 421,000 in extreme poverty. Household data show widespread financial stress, especially in Lokiriama, Loima, and North Pokot. In Uganda, poverty is more uneven: Amudat shows relative stability, while Napak and Moroto reflect mixed or polarized conditions.
- **Most vulnerable groups** include women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pastoralist families. Their vulnerabilities differ but converge on limited coping capacity, exposure to violence, and exclusion from decision-making.

Food Security

Food insecurity and malnutrition are key challenges due to natural resource scarcity and economic vulnerability. In 2024, 600,000 people were facing acute food insecurity (IPC 3 or above), or 45% of the Karamoja's population (IPC, 2024).³⁰ On the other side of the border, Turkana county is also considered as facing acute food insecurity (categorised IPC 3 or above), with the South sub-county in an extremely critical phase (IPC 5).³¹ Confirming these statistics, food security is identified as the most affected dimension of wellbeing across the clusters. Drought and floods exacerbate food insecurity by simultaneously reducing household production, constraining market access, and eroding coping capacity.³² For instance, households in **Kenya** rely mainly on markets for food, with their own production only partly buffering and some reliance on foraging. This market dependence leaves them exposed to price shocks and trade disruptions. As shown in Figure 3, rCSI scores confirm high stress across the Kenyan clusters, with most households in the high stress (10+) band. The vast majority of households in all three Kenyan clusters are under high food insecurity stress: families frequently cut portions, skip meals, or restrict adult intake, clear signs of entrenched food consumption pressure.³³

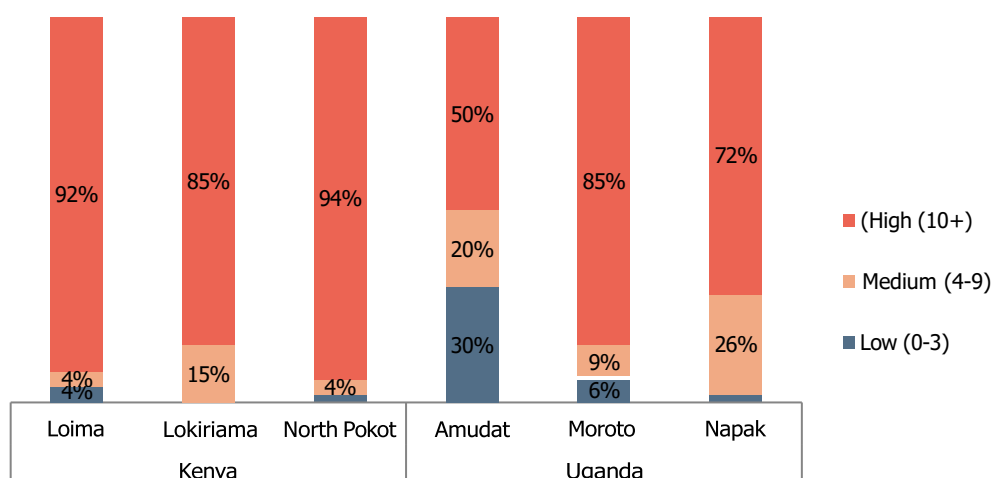
³⁰ IPC, Uganda, "IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis for Karamoja", 12 June 2024.

³¹ NDMA, "The 2023 Long Rains Season Assessment Report", July 2023.

³² Thenjiwe Sisimayi, "The Impact of Climate Change on Gender: Lessons from Recent Floods in Kenya", *Financing Alliance for Health*, 2024.

³³ The Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) summarises how frequently households resort to stress-related food coping behaviours over the past seven days: relying on less preferred foods, borrowing food, limiting portion sizes, restricting adult intake, and reducing the number of daily meals. Each behaviour is weighted by its severity (weights 1-3) and summed, so higher rCSI scores indicate greater and more frequent reliance on negative coping, signalling higher food consumption stress.

Figure 2: rCSI score bands, by cluster and country.



These survey findings align with community perspectives. Youth in Kotaruk spoke of persistent hunger as droughts and failed farming undermine both household production and access to markets, with insecurity further limiting trade and food supply. Women noted that malnutrition disproportionately affects them and girls, especially those tasked with heavy domestic and livelihood chores, while women in Loya explained how breastfeeding mothers were unable to produce milk due to poor nutrition.

The dry-season separation of herds from settlements was also highlighted, cutting children off from milk and contributing to malnutrition. Respondents across all FGDs stressed that hunger is now an ever-present feature of the dry seasons, as drought, environmental degradation and flooding repeatedly disrupt agriculture and pastoralist systems. One key informant explained how floods along the Kospir River in Loima blocked movement from Lodwar, preventing pastoralists from accessing markets and further tightening food availability.³⁴

In **Uganda**, rCSI scores also indicate considerable stress, though with higher variation across clusters (Figure 3). Moroto is the most affected, with 85 per cent of households in the High band, followed by Napak (72%). Amudat shows a more mixed picture, with half of households in the High band but nearly one-third (30%) reporting Low stress, reflecting comparatively better food access. To cope with scarcity, families across Uganda report rationing food, often reducing to one meal a day and struggling through hunger peaks in the dry months. When harvests fail, the situation worsens. In Loroo, women described entire harvests being swept away by heavy rains, while in the early months of the year households sometimes survive with little or no food at all. Peace committee members linked these patterns to reduced yields when rains failed, particularly between April and July, leaving families dependent on scarce relief or seasonal migration.

The impacts are most severe in the districts already under stress. In Amudat, repeated droughts have pushed some communities

into starvation, deepening already entrenched poverty. In Moroto, women described widespread malnutrition during hunger peaks, while in Napak they recounted visible weight loss that households could not recover even after rains returned. In such cases, families are often left subsisting on a single type of meal each day, a coping strategy that accelerates malnutrition and undermines recovery.³⁵ Amongst communities interviewed, women linked poor nutrition to reproductive health problems, citing missed cycles, miscarriages during displacement or mining, and inability to produce breast milk during hunger peaks.³⁶ Child malnutrition is widespread, worsened when herd movements cut children off from milk.

³⁴ KII17, KII21, FGD1, FGD2, FGD6.

³⁵ KII26, FGD14, FGD15, FGD18, FGD23.

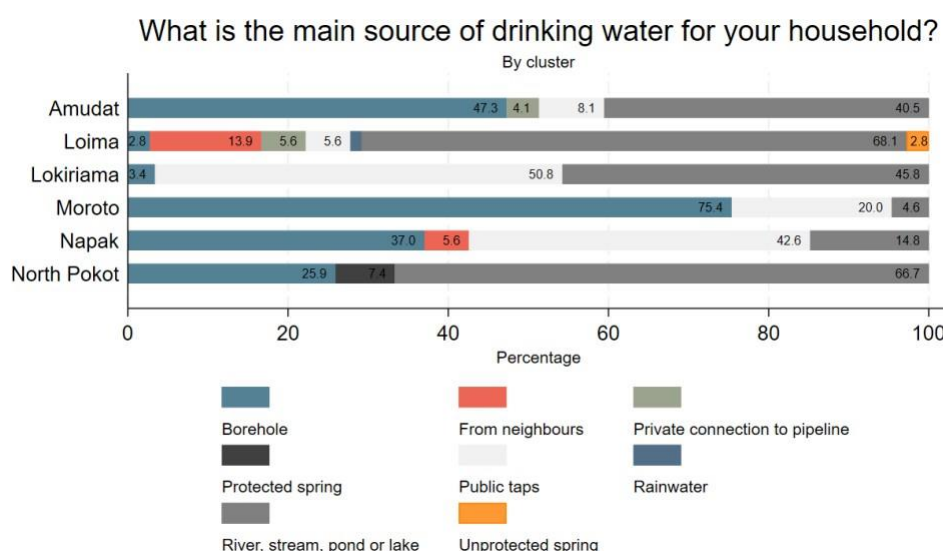
³⁶ FGD6, FGD10, FGD12

Water

In both countries, households link water scarcity to hunger, malnutrition, and disease. Most surveyed households in **Kenya** (61%) relied on surface water, with around 1 in 4 depending on boreholes in North Pokot and 51% in Lokiriamia relying on public taps (18%). This reliance on unsafe and unreliable sources translates into multiple risks. For instance, in Lobei, the water table has dropped, forcing people to travel further to rivers. Moreover, communities have also reported that some dangerously deep boreholes have led to fatalities. Youth in Kotaruk described walking long distances to unsafe sources, exposing households to disease and families reported outbreaks of malaria and diarrhoeal illnesses linked to contaminated water.

Water scarcity also fuels competition. Along the Kenya–Uganda border, single boreholes often serve entire populations, becoming flashpoints for violence. Beyond health and protection, water shortages threaten livelihoods as well. In places such as Nasiger and Urum, households rely on small-scale gold mining, but when rains fail and water points dry up, mining operations grind to a halt, cutting off one of the few available income sources.³⁷

Figure 3: Primary sources of drinking water, by cluster



In **Uganda**, by contrast, boreholes are the predominant source (54%), while surface water is also a key source in Amudat (41%) and public taps are commonly relied on in Napak (43%). Yet even where infrastructure exists, supplies are inadequate. In Napak, water levels in dams, boreholes, and rivers have dropped sharply, leaving some people and animals without sufficient access. In Kailikong, communities reported severe shortages, forcing reliance on unsafe alternatives. Water scarcity also creates protection risks, particularly for women. In Rupa and Napak, women stressed that long walks to fetch water not only increase their workload but also expose them to harassment, attacks, or even death when crossing areas patrolled by warriors or robbers.³⁸

Health

Health remains closely tied to climate variability and environmental stress, with disease incidence rising during both floods and droughts. For instance, malaria spreads during floods when rivers are contaminated and mosquito breeding surges in stagnant water. Moroto communities report cholera outbreaks from unsafe water and poor sanitation practices. Pneumonia and malnutrition increase during droughts, particularly when households are displaced or cut off from milk. Cold spells also drive-up pneumonia and malaria cases, which households cannot manage due to inadequate services and unaffordable clothing. Livestock diseases follow a similar pattern, appearing in both wet and dry seasons and further eroding livelihoods. Respondents reported

³⁷ KII4, KII19, KII26, KII33, KII34, KII38, FGD18, FGD23.

³⁸ KII26, KII33, KII34, KII38, FGD18, FGD23.

outbreaks of foot and mouth, foot rot, and Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) in new grazing areas, alongside cases of Emadang, Kisungusungu, and Loukoi. Tsetse fly infestations were also noted, affecting both animals and people consuming infected meat.³⁹ Water shortages described in the previous sub-section also have impacts on health. For instance, sharing water points with livestock is widespread, raising the risk of contamination and outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera.

These health risks require reliable health services. Yet, access and quality remain uneven across the borderlands. As shown in Figure 5 below, health service availability is relatively high across most **Kenyan** clusters, with access reported by 96% in Loima, 92% in Lokirima, and 83% in North Pokot. In **Uganda**, however, access is more uneven, ranging from 89% in Napak to only 57% in Moroto and 51% in Amudat. Yet access alone does not translate into improved outcomes. Community testimonies highlight how weak infrastructure and poor service provision exacerbate these risks. For instance, in Kotaruk, the only health facility, Locher Elim, is a converted container with no drugs or vaccines, leaving residents without essential care. Across clusters weak sanitation infrastructure has been highlighted as further exacerbating health risks, with open defecation still common in many locations. Flooded rivers also cut off access to clinics and prevent ambulances from reaching patients, isolating communities when needs are highest.⁴⁰

Education

The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022 reports that educational attainment in Karamoja is also significantly lower than in other regions. The median number of years of education is just 0.0 years for women and 1.0 year for men, the lowest in the country. Karamoja also has the highest share of the population with no formal education: 61% of women and 35% of men.⁴¹ The same is true for Turkana with 59% of women and 41% of men aged 15–49 reporting no formal education.⁴²

Access to education services is generally higher and more consistent in the Kenyan clusters compared to those in Uganda. In **Kenya**, almost all households in Loima (99%) and Lokirima (92%) report access, with slightly lower but still strong coverage in North Pokot (81%). In **Uganda**, access is more uneven: while Napak (83%) and Moroto (82%) show relatively high levels, Amudat lags significantly behind at only 50 percent (Figure 5). This reflects that schools do exist, offering an important entry point for resilience and future opportunities. However, the ability of children to attend and remain in school is undermined by climate and conflict shocks. In Kenya, droughts, displacement, and raids force children out of school, with enrollment collapsing when livestock deaths strip families of the means to pay fees.

In some cases, disruptions in attendance manifest differently for boys and girls. Boys' attendance is frequently disrupted as they are more likely to move from place to place while herding livestock while girls are more likely to be married early for their dowries. Teachers in Loima noted that recurrent attacks and dry-season mobility leave classrooms half-empty, eroding continuity of learning.⁴³ In Uganda, children's access to education is highly sensitive to climate shocks and insecurity, with households often forced to withdraw them from school when resources or safety are at risk. For instance, Peace committee members in Loroo recalled families withdrawing children from school entirely during periods of insecurity. In Napak, parents reported keeping children home when drought reduced household income or forced migration to new areas. The cost of uniforms, books, and meals during lean seasons further limits attendance, even when schools are physically present.

³⁹ KII7, KII19, KII38, KII39, FGD1, FGD2, FGD3, FGD7.

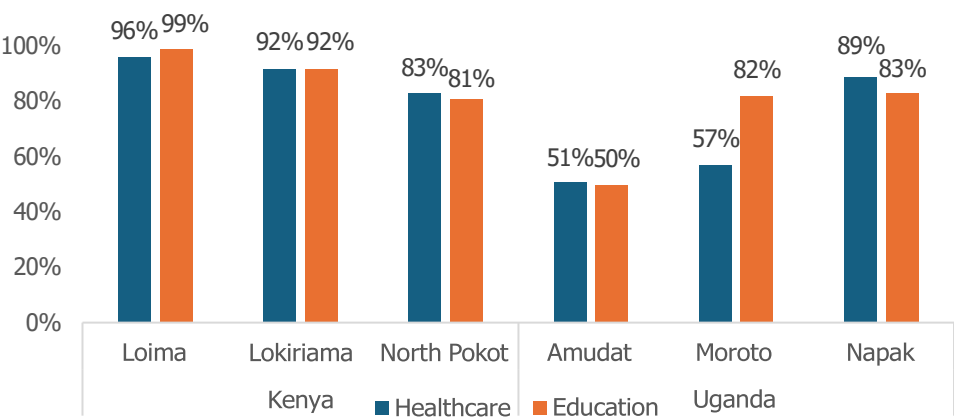
⁴⁰ KII23, KII39

⁴¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, "The Uganda Demographic And Health Survey", 2022.

⁴² Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 2022

⁴³ FGD 1,2,9. KII

Figure 4: Access to healthcare and education, by cluster and country



Shelter

Most households live in mud houses, with straw or stick huts also common, while permanent brick or concrete structures remain rare. As shown in Figure 6, these patterns differ across the clusters. In Loima, households are almost evenly split between mud houses and straw or stick huts; in Lokiriana, straw or stick huts dominate. Meanwhile, in **Uganda** mud houses are the most common. Permanent brick or concrete structures remain rare across both sides of the border.

Shelter vulnerability extends beyond the fragility of these physical structures. Mud houses and straw huts provide little resistance to floods, strong winds, or extreme heat, leaving households repeatedly exposed to damage and loss. Limited access to durable building materials and the overcrowding of shelters further heighten risks, while rebuilding after climate shocks places additional stress on already stretched resources.

Figure 5: Housing type, by cluster

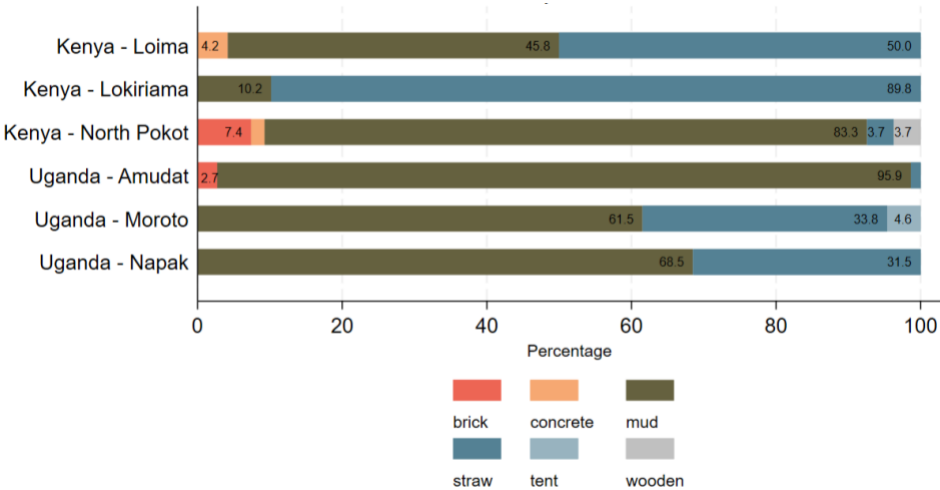


Image 3: Dwelling



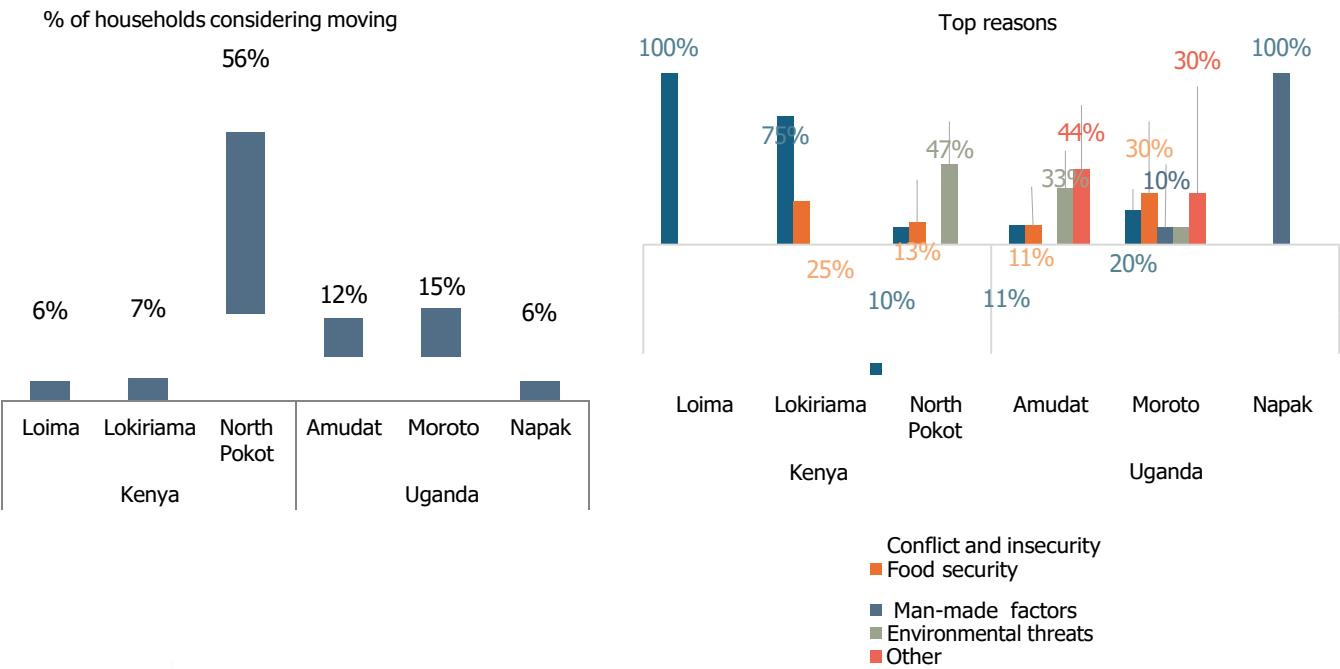
“One of the recent problems we had in Loroo was in the months of April and May, there was not much rains but with a lot of strong wind some shop roofs were carried off and so were some home steads which made it hard for people to get shelter.”

Community Leader, Loroo

Mobility

Patterns of mobility in the Karamoja Cluster reflect a mix of cross-border movement, internal displacement, and rural-urban migration, all shaped by climate stress, insecurity, and social pressures. Environmental threats and food insecurity emerge as the main drivers of migration, while conflict and insecurity play a secondary but locally significant role (Figure 7). In some clusters, insecurity represents the main trigger of movement, with families relocating more in response to violence than to livelihood pressures. More than half of households surveyed in North Pokot are either planning or considering moving, whereas in other clusters most households do not have such intentions.

Figure 6: Plans to move, by cluster.





In **Kenya**, respondents reported frequent cross-border movement into Uganda, particularly around grazing areas and dams. For example, in Amudat, some families move repeatedly, both across the border and within the district and several reported holding dual identity cards, used to secure access when needed. Nevertheless, such movements are often marked by hostility and



exclusion from host communities. Internal displacement is also common in Kenya. In Kotaruk, internally displaced families live in temporary shelters after flash floods destroyed their homes, while along riverbanks other households face repeated losses from heavy rains, forcing them into cycles of displacement and rebuilding. Beyond flood-related displacement, droughts also force families to move in search of water, pasture, and safety, often leaving them to sleep outside with exposure to cold, scorpions, and other risks. Within these repeated displacements, women stressed the heavy burden of rebuilding shelters, a responsibility that falls largely on them. Youth mobility is also significant, particularly when pastoralist livelihoods collapse, prompting many to leave for mining sites such as Loima in search of income, reflecting the limited alternatives available to young people.⁴⁴

“The effects of climate change, especially drought, are an act of God and that no one has the capacity to act upon it. The only capacity they have is to migrate”

KII27

In **Uganda**, mobility takes multiple forms, combining seasonal migration and disaster-related displacement. Seasonal migration to Teso is a common coping strategy when Napak experiences prolonged drought seasons, with both pastoralists and crop farmers moving to access water and income opportunities. Farmers from Loroo also migrate to Chepsikunya, Kween, Napak, and Moroto during periods of rainfall shortage. Disaster-related displacement is frequent, particularly along the slopes of Mount Moroto, where floods, strong winds, and landslides have damaged homes and caused fatalities. In Napak, strong winds regularly strip roofs from houses, forcing households into repeated cycles of rebuilding.⁴⁵

In addition to these movements, rural-urban migration is increasingly common particularly among adolescents and uneducated youth. For instance, girls and young women move to towns to seek casual labour or to avoid forced marriage, while boys are often sent by families into Kenyan towns to earn income. Many eventually migrate to larger urban centres such as Kampala, Busia, or Nairobi, with limited prospects of return once they enter precarious and insecure livelihoods. In Kampala, communities reported that migrants often live on the streets and engage in informal or risky activities to survive, leaving them vulnerable to arrest and forced return by city authorities.⁴⁶

Poverty and marginalisation

Poverty is widespread across the Karamoja Cluster, reducing households' ability to cope with recurrent droughts, floods, and other shocks. Survey data show that households more exposed to climate shocks are also more likely to report financial hardship. Many describe their situation as "very difficult" or "difficult," and these households have significantly less savings, representing about half that of less-exposed households. Across the borderlands, Kenyan clusters show consistently higher shares of households in financial difficulty, indicating more generalised economic stress. In Uganda, while some households report acute difficulty, others report relative comfort. Moreover, households with limited resources struggle to absorb repeated shocks, slowing recovery and heightening the risk of food insecurity, displacement, and conflict over scarce resources. rCSI scores reinforce this context, with exposed households averaging 18.8 compared to 8.6 among unexposed.

In **Kenya**, this vulnerability is reflected in both national and household-level data. For instance, 83% (818,000 people) of the population in Turkana and West Pokot were estimated to be living below the poverty line in 2022, with more than half (421,000 people) in extreme poverty. Average per capita expenditure is low at Ksh 3,483 (USD 27), of which Ksh 2,732 (USD 21) is spent on food, leaving limited resources for health, education, or other needs. Household-level data illustrate how financial stress is distributed across clusters. Figure 8 shows that a higher number of households in Lokiriama (39%) and Loima (40%) report their financial situation as "very difficult." In North Pokot, 78% of households describe their conditions as "difficult," with only a small share reporting comfort.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ KII13, KII19, FGD1, FGD7, FGD8, FGD12, FGD14

⁴⁵ KII23, KII25, KII33, FGD20

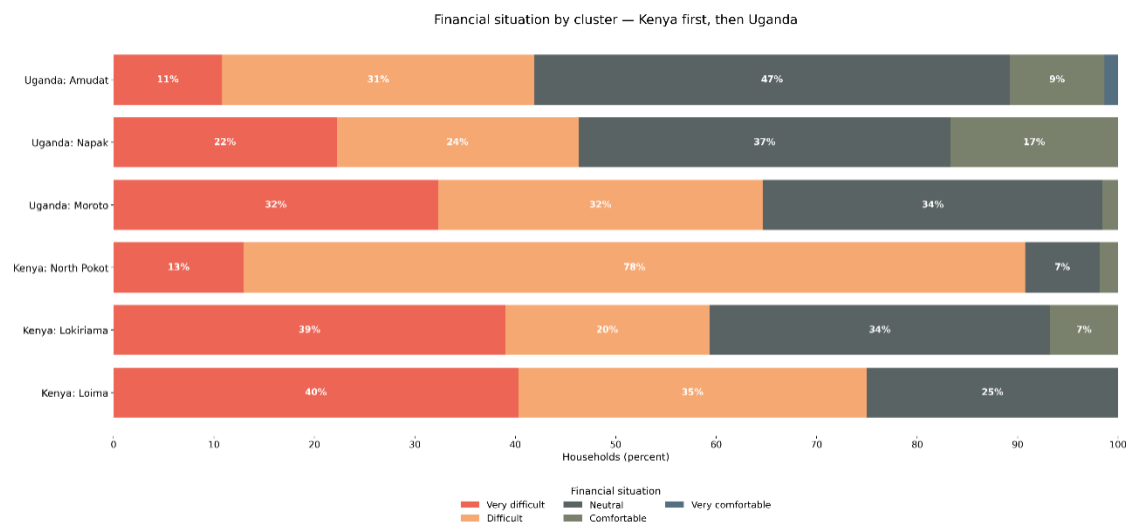
⁴⁶ KII33, KII34, FGD21, FGD23, FGD24

⁴⁷ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, "The Uganda Demographic And Health Survey", 2022; StatKenya, "Turkana County", n.d.

Women and youth in Kotaruk expressed how the lack of financial resources, particularly after raids and during dry seasons, impedes the ability to buy or sell goods. This financial strain is compounded by under-resourced health and education services, limiting access to essential needs. Communities struggle to afford basic necessities like warm clothing and rely on dowry for economic recovery. Furthermore, the loss of livestock due to malnutrition and lack of food, severely impacts their economic stability and deepens their poverty. Moreover, community members perceived government agricultural policies as having led to the marginalisation of pastoralist communities, worsening their problems.⁴⁸

In **Uganda**, however, most households place themselves in the neutral to comfortable categories, as shown in Figure 8. In Amudat, 47% of households report a neutral situation and only 11% describe their conditions as “very difficult.” Napak is more divided, with 22% of households reporting “very difficult” conditions while 17% identify as “very comfortable.” Moroto is the most uneven, with 32% of households reporting “very difficult” conditions and 34% describing themselves as comfortable, pointing to marked disparities within the district.

Figure 7: Financial situations of surveyed households, by cluster.



Droughts have intensified poverty, leading to widespread starvation, malnutrition, and wasting reported in Amudat and Moroto, with women in Napak particularly affected by significant weight loss. The struggle for survival pushes people, especially women, into dangerous situations, like deeper into forests for firewood, where they face fatal encounters with warriors. The lack of livelihood opportunities and the pressure of practices like polygamy contribute to suicidal tendencies among women. Women are further marginalised by systematic denial of adequate land for farming, limiting their productive capacity and leading to isolation due to their inability to provide for their families.⁴⁹

“There is striking poverty within the communities and so; there is reduction in income levels and there is also food insecurity that has become an issue because they are not able to sustain. There is no accessibility first of all. If you don’t have money you cannot access that (food) in the market.”

DRR Officer Napak

⁴⁸ Women and Youth FGD Kotaruk, Peace Leader North Pokot.
⁴⁹ FGD15,18,23. KII 26,34

Box 1. The most vulnerable among the vulnerable⁵⁰

Across the clusters, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pastoralist families are consistently the most affected by climate and conflict stressors, though the pathways of vulnerability differ. Lived experiences of these shocks is felt differently depending on gender and age, alongside disability:

Children are among the most at risk in both Kenya and Uganda. In Uganda, they are described as lacking the strength to search for food and are highly vulnerable during floods, malaria outbreaks, and raids. The loss of milk when livestock migrate or is raided has left many malnourished. In Kenya, similar patterns emerge: children face hunger and stunted growth during droughts, lose access to milk when herds are split, and are often left in the care of elderly relatives unable to cope. Education is disrupted in both contexts, as children are withdrawn from school during migration or when families cannot afford fees.

Women carry the heaviest burdens. In **Uganda**, they act as breadwinners while remaining “accessors of property” without decision-making power. Patriarchy and polygamy deepen vulnerability: men sell livestock without consulting wives, widows are dispossessed, and adolescent girls face early marriage or unsafe migration. In **Kenya**, women are left behind when men migrate with livestock, shouldering childcare, water collection, and risky coping strategies such as gold mining or charcoal burning. They are responsible for rebuilding homes after displacement and often face gender-based violence. Poor reproductive health services, malnutrition, and heavy workloads further undermine women’s health. They provide for households but lack property rights, leaving widows dispossessed and girls vulnerable to early marriage or unsafe migration.

When men migrate with livestock, women are left behind to manage childcare, food, and water — often forced into risky coping strategies like charcoal burning or gold mining. They face **gender-based violence, poor reproductive health services, malnutrition, and heavy workloads**. Yet they have limited influence in peace and resource governance. Nearly half of women in Kenya say they do not feel welcome in decision-making spaces, compared to 4 in 10 men, and the gaps are even sharper in Uganda.

The elderly and disabled are repeatedly singled out as the most vulnerable. In both countries, they are often left behind during migration, sometimes caring for children without support. Unable to search for food, defend themselves, or move to safer areas, they face heightened risks during floods, raids, and droughts. Their survival is heavily dependent on family or neighbours, making them especially exposed when households fragment under stress.

Youth experience climate stress through risky coping pathways. In Uganda, adolescent girls and uneducated youth migrate to towns for insecure casual labour, often taking on breadwinning roles at an early age. Boys are drawn into raids or migrate further with livestock, exposing them to hunger and violence. In Kenya, young men face violence while herding across borders or turn to precarious work such as gold mining or charcoal burning. Girls face disrupted education, early marriage, and caregiving burdens, while lack of sanitary products compounds exclusion and shame. Families often marry off girls to recover economically through dowries after losing herds.

Youth also play a dual role. They are **active agents** in natural resource management, informal security, and early warning for floods and droughts, yet remain excluded from formal governance because of cultural norms. “The youth make decisions these days unlike the old days, for instance these days the youths are involved in stealing of camels, so when these issues happen the elders give them chances to take part in the decision because they are the ones that brought this problem.” Many are **drawn into violence or risky survival strategies** — migration for mining, or even participation in raiding

Pastoralist households, especially in Kenya, remain deeply vulnerable. Their dependence on livestock exposes them to drought, pests, and diseases such as tsetse infestations that cause rapid herd loss. Migration into Pokot or Tepes territories for pasture increases exposure to conflict, while raids often coincide with the need for school fees, directly linking violence to household survival.

⁵⁰ KII3, KII23, KII25, KII26, KII30, KII31, KII33, KII34, KII41, KII44, FGD2, FGD3, FGD6, FGD10, FGD12, FGD14, FGD23, FGD24

3. CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND PEACEBUILDING STRUCTURES

3.1 Drivers of Conflict

Key findings

- Since colonial times Karamoja was governed as a “closed district,” under military law and later discriminatory acts. This left a legacy of exclusion, weak services, and deep distrust in state institutions.
- Poverty, marginalisation, and climate stress underpin **cycles of raiding and localised justice**. External actors often misinterpret these dynamics as cultural “backwardness,” overlooking the structural causes.
- Kenyan clusters (Loima, Lokirima, North Pokot) face higher exposure to raiding, theft, and resource disputes.
- Ugandan clusters (Moroto, Napak, Amudat) report higher perceptions of safety, partly due to disarmament and security patrols, though tensions persist.
- Disputes converge around key resources such as Kobebe Dam (Moroto), Nakonyen (Amudat), and Loima (Kenya), where migration pressures, water scarcity, and porous borders drive recurrent clashes.
- Conflict severity is greatest in Loima, Lokirima, and parts of Moroto/Napak. Drought, land disputes, and economic pressures—including bride price inflation, livelihood collapse, and profiteering—sustain cycles of violence.

Historical and structural context

Violent conflict among pastoralist communities in the Karamoja region has historical roots, dating back to pre-colonial times. The region has long been excluded from national development and subjected to special treatment rooted in control and isolation rather than integration and support, both during colonial rule and after independence. Since colonial rule, Karamoja has been treated as an outlier, first declared a “closed district” under military law, meaning access to and from the area was heavily restricted and placed under special military administration. This status reflected colonial perceptions of Karamoja as unruly and underdeveloped, requiring control rather than integration. The result was limited investment in infrastructure, education, and services, setting the region apart from the rest of the country.⁵¹ This condition was later neglected by post-independence governments.⁵² Post-independence governments largely maintained the region’s marginalised status, treating Karamoja more as a security liability. Discriminatory laws like the 1964 Administration of Justice (Karamoja) Act, which suspended the presumption of innocence for suspected raiders, further alienated the population.⁵³ Today, the region remains under-served and under-governed. Basic services, infrastructure, and effective governance institutions are lacking. This vacuum has led to distrust towards the state and a sense of abandonment among the Karimojong, reinforcing a reliance on self-help through raiding and localised justice mechanisms.⁵⁴

Current conflict drivers

Many Karimojong view conflict as a consequence of poverty, marginalisation, and the failure of the state to provide alternatives to pastoralism. From their perspective, raiding is a necessary livelihood strategy in such an arid environment. In contrast, many external actors including government officials, development agencies, and NGOs, attribute conflict to cultural resistance to modernisation. They invoke the “cattle complex” and associate raiding with backwardness and hypermasculinity, often ignoring

⁵¹ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, “The Karamoja Conflict: Origin, Impact, and Solution,” *Oxfam*, 2003.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bevan, J., “Crisis in Karamoja Armed Violence and the Failure of Disarmament in Uganda’s Most Deprived Region”, 2008.

⁵⁴ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, “The Karamoja Conflict: Origin, Impact, and Solution,” *Oxfam*, 2003.

the broader structural injustices that sustain it. This disconnect has implications for policy and programming. Efforts focused only on cultural transformation or coercive disarmament often alienate communities and fail to address the root causes of insecurity. For example, traditional practices such as the bride price system exacerbate gender inequality, with women and girls treated as property or labour.⁵⁵ Yet, despite their marginalisation, women are being increasingly involved in activities such as agricultural production and other livelihood activities, including small livestock rearing and artisanal mining.⁵⁶

Local political leadership in Karamoja is often weakened by internal divisions and clan loyalties. It is sustained by broader political and economic systems, including the failures of local elites and political leaders who have not effectively advocated for the region's development. Some are seen as disconnected from their constituencies or as complicit in perpetuating the status quo for personal or political gain. Local political leadership is frequently influenced by strong clan and sectional loyalties, which prevent them from providing unified direction towards peace. Accusations are common that leaders encourage conflict to serve their own political agendas. Moreover, there are actors who benefit materially or politically from continued instability, such as those involved in cross-border cattle trade or arms trafficking, who resist efforts towards peacebuilding. This also includes wealthy Karimojong and economic elites who are implicated in the commercialisation of cattle raids, transforming a traditional practice into a profit-driven criminal enterprise. Moreover, the region suffers from a "brain drain," as educated Karimojong often leave the region for opportunities elsewhere, thereby failing to return and contribute to positive change or challenge the existing political dynamics at home.⁵⁷

Contemporary conflict is also shaped by the intersection of climate stress, resource scarcity, and mobility. Survey findings identify livestock raiding as the most persistent threat across the cluster. Yet the drivers vary across the border.

Figure 9 shows a **country-level comparison of top community conflict types**, indicating that cattle raiding and cross-border or nearby conflict, as well as clan clashes, are higher and most reported in Kenya. Survey findings provide further evidence of how conflict dynamics differ across the borderlands. Kenyan households report higher levels of exposure to nearly all types of conflict compared to Uganda. Livestock raiding stands out as the most widespread driver on both sides (84% in Kenya and 71% in Uganda), highlighting its central role in causing insecurity. Kenyan clusters also report significantly higher levels of cross-border conflict (78%) and clan clashes (58%), while Ugandan clusters highlight land, water, and pasture disputes (40%) as relatively more prominent. Mining-related violence is most visible in Kenya (47%) but remains notable in Uganda (18%).

Overall, this graph shows that:

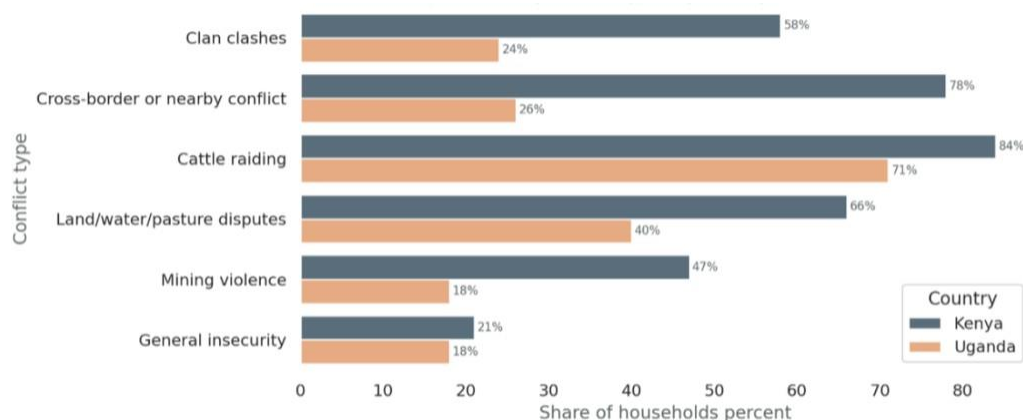
- All types of community conflicts resulting from resource and climate challenges are more reported in Kenya than in Uganda
- Cattle raiding is the main issue reported alongside very localised conflict and concentrating around the border where population density is highest
- Conflicts over land, water, and pasture are the third type most reported, indicated areas where governance and infrastructure interventions will be most needed.
- Other conflicts – whether clan clashes or mining violence – require interventions by traditional conflict resolution systems with additional support to men and women involved in alternative livelihoods such as mining, led by private sector entities in the area. Communities have reported their inability to solve, on their own, certain challenges related to increased private sector interventions in the area.

⁵⁵ UNDP, "Karamoja Cluster: Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment (Kenya and Uganda)", 2022.

⁵⁶ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, "The Karamoja Conflict: Origin, Impact, and Solution," *Oxfam*, 2003.

⁵⁷ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, "The Karamoja Conflict: Origin, Impact, and Solution," *Oxfam*, 2003.

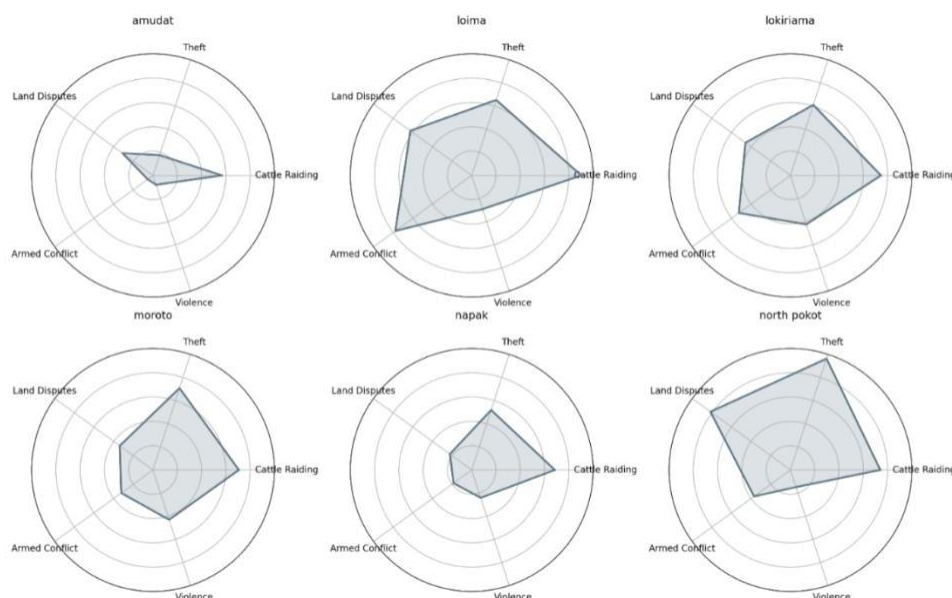
Figure 8: Top community conflict and insecurity shocks reported, by country.



Cluster-level dynamics

As shown in Figure 10, livestock raiding and land disputes are more predominant in **Kenya**, while theft and violence are more common in **Uganda** (except in Amudat, where conflict levels are lower). Eviction emerges as the least common driver across all clusters. Even if insecurity is widespread across the Karamoja cluster, only 48.6% of Kenyan respondents report feeling “safe” or “very safe,” compared to 79.3% in Uganda.⁵⁸ These differences do not suggest lower exposure to conflict in Uganda, as these are subjective reflections of safety shaped by local conditions and experiences.

Figure 9: Top 5 conflict and insecurity shocks reported, by cluster.



These structural and contemporary dynamics manifest differently at the cluster level, where localised histories, resource pressures, and security arrangements shape distinct patterns of violence and perceptions of safety. In **Kenya**, clusters show overlapping but distinct conflict profiles:

- In **Loima**, the conflict profile is high-intensity and multi-triggered, with livestock raiding occurring more often, followed by theft, land disputes, general violence, armed clashes, and mining-related violence. Nevertheless, despite these

⁵⁸ By cluster: (Amudat: 74.3%, Moroto: 81.5%, Napak: 83.3%) (North Pokot: 40.7%, Loima: 59.7%, Lokiriama: 42.4%)

threats, perceptions of safety from community members surveyed are mixed, with 60% of respondents reporting that they feel safe.

- **Lokirima** shows a similar context, with high levels of livestock raiding and theft combined with land disputes and contention over gold mining sites. Here, residents report the lowest sense of safety across the Kenyan clusters.
- **In North Pokot**, conflict is primarily driven by livestock raiding and theft, with land disputes less frequently reported. Despite these risks, perceptions of safety are relatively more positive with only 9% of respondents reporting feeling unsafe, although nearly half remain neutral, reflecting a cautious outlook.

These cluster profiles reflect broader dynamics that are common across the Kenyan clusters. Livestock raiding and theft remain the most widespread and destabilising forms of violence, involving Turkana, Pokot, Tepeth, and Matheniko communities. Rooted in longstanding grievances and cycles of retaliation, livestock raiding has expanded in scope to include camel theft and even intra-clan violence, described locally as “kin killing kin.” Shifting alliances among groups further complicate peacebuilding efforts, as traditional mechanisms of mediation struggle to keep pace with evolving patterns of violence.⁵⁹

Resource competition further exacerbates these dynamics. Boundary and territorial disputes, such as those along the Turkana–Moroto line, frequently erupt when traditional grazing routes are crossed. During droughts, tensions often flare at boreholes and rivers, where scarce water becomes a flashpoint. Gold mining adds another layer of contention, with competition for sites in Loima, Lokirima, and North Pokot driving violence, drawing in both local groups and outside actors. Pastoralist–farmer disputes are also reported, particularly when livestock encroach on cultivated fields, highlighting how expanding land use and shrinking resources increasingly overlap.⁶⁰

Social and political dynamics further sustain cycles of violence. At the community level, inter-clan and intra-family land inheritance disputes, rumours of imminent attacks, or even the praise and ridicule of young men by women can fuel raiding. Practices such as the abduction of girls for marriage (“akiumar”) frequently provoke reprisals, drawing families and clans into broader confrontations.⁶¹ Tensions also emerge between displaced families and host communities, where limited resources and suspicion of collusion exacerbate mistrust. At the political and economic level, manipulation and profiteering play an important role. Local politicians exploit the cultural legitimacy of raiding to mobilise support, while traders and intermediaries benefit directly from the circulation of arms and stolen livestock. These dynamics reinforce the commercialisation of violence and make efforts at disarmament or reconciliation more difficult to sustain.⁶²

Another reason for conflict in my area is “akiumar” which is the case where small girls are abducted and forced to be married, the family of the groom comes and takes the girl by force thus forcing the bride’s family to retaliate these cases were prone in our community until when our village administrator with chief started providing civic education on why “akiumar” is not good for children’s mental health. Peace Committee Leader, Loima

Conflict dynamics in **Uganda** differ in form from those in Kenya, with overall perceptions of safety higher despite a wide range of underlying tensions. This contrast likely reflects the impact of disarmament campaigns, active patrols, and functioning local arrangements that reduce everyday exposure even when structural triggers remain.⁶³

- **In Moroto**, the conflict profile is broad, with land disputes, livestock raiding, theft, and armed clashes all prominent. Much of this is linked to cross-boundary raiding and encroachment on preserved pastures. Yet, despite these drivers, 82% of respondents report feeling safe, pointing to the influence of local security measures.

⁵⁹ KII18, FGD7, FGD8, FGD11; KII22

⁶⁰ Conciliation Resources, “Peace and Security for Pastoralist Communities in African Borderlands”, 2024; KII21, KII22, FGD7, FGD8.

⁶¹ KII2.

⁶² KII18, KII5; UNDP, “Karamoja Cluster: Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment (Kenya and Uganda)”, 2022.

⁶³ FGD15,18 KII 33,36

- **Napak** presents a similar context, with raiding as the most common threat, alongside theft and sporadic violence. Hunger–season pressures and youth mobilisation add to the volatility, though Napak stands out as the safest cluster overall, with 83% of respondents reporting they feel safe.
- **Amudat** presents a narrower conflict profile, centred mainly on livestock raiding. Here, 74% report feeling safe, consistent with accounts of reduced insecurity following disarmament, though many remain cautious and report neutral perceptions.

Beyond these local variations, certain patterns are common across the Ugandan clusters. Livestock theft and raiding remain the central conflict driver, escalating from isolated thefts to open raids. Raiding actors include Matheniko, Bokora, Jie, Dodoth, Pokot, Turkana, and Deposa, often armed, with recurrent cross–boundary incidents reported. Resource–based disputes are also common. For instance, Turkana herders were reported to encroach on preserved grasslands in Loroo, while Teso communities restricted access to Napak herders. Farmer–herder clashes occur when livestock graze in cultivated fields, and land ownership disputes are widespread in areas where land remains unsurveyed, such as Amudat, Loroo, and Napak. Resistance to women's land claims adds a further layer of tension.⁶⁴

Because of these occurrences [climate change] they have also brought in inter–ethnic conflicts. They always have conflicts between “Bokora”, the “jie”, “Matheniko”, Bokora then the “Turkana”, so, those inter–ethnic conflicts are there because of struggling for pasture. Government representative Napak.

Mining–related violence is predominantly present in Moroto, which borders Loima, and is also highest within the Kenyan clusters, confirming the struggle for gold in this region. Beyond resource disputes, community–level tensions also impact insecurity. Alcohol consumption is among the highest in the region, with 72% of men and 62% of women reporting use. This fuels communal fighting during the dry season. In addition, communities reported that domestic and intra–community tensions, including gender–based violence, rise when scarcity and alcohol use intersect. Food insecurity further exacerbates disputes, with incidents such as hunger–driven theft and family quarrels over resource plots frequently reported.⁶⁵

Respondents report that political manipulation and harmful practices reinforce conflicts. Community members interviewed reported how politicians and local leaders have at times mobilised communities by framing livestock raiding as culturally legitimate, as well as by invoking spiritual justifications for cattle capture. Moreover, women's participation in peace committees is often resisted, limiting the inclusiveness of local dialogue mechanisms. Communities also mentioned that seasonal patterns have an impact on social pressures, with the December – March dry season consistently linked to peaks in raiding and theft (including breaking women's granaries).⁶⁶

Cross- border conflict

In the Karamoja region, cross–border conflicts are rooted within everyday struggles shared by cross border actors. Pastoralists and farmer communities compete with each other over scarce resources such as water and grazing lands. One of the most persistent drivers of cross–border conflicts is livestock raids which do not stop at national borders. Indeed, porous borders, small arms proliferation, and limited state presence on both sides of the border between **Kenya-Turkana** and **Uganda-Karamoja** regions are complicating peace stability. The internal structure of the Karimojong society itself also adds complexity to the conflict. For instance, Turkana and Karamoja communities share deep cultural and social values, and sometimes family ties across the border. People on either side can often be related by marriage or blood and find themselves in conflict over resources or cattle. These ties can provide a foundation for peace, but they also complicate conflict resolution when brothers and cousins stand on opposite sides of a dispute, bringing family loyalty into the conflict.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ KII23, KII24, KII27, KII33, KII36, KII38, KII41, FGD21

⁶⁵ FGD15, FGD17, FGD19; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, “The Uganda Demographic And Health Survey”, 2022.

⁶⁶ KII23, KII24, KII24, FGD23; FGD15, FGD19

⁶⁷ APAD for Feed the Future–USAID, “Conflict and climate assessment for the Karamoja cluster”, 2023.



Cross-border tensions are most visible around Loima in Kenya and Amudat and Nakonyen in Uganda, with Kobebe Dam in Moroto District standing out as a central flashpoint. Resource scarcity, particularly grazing land and water, sits at the core driver of these disputes. These drivers are exacerbated with perceptions of exclusion, hostile receptions, and heavy-handed security responses.⁶⁸

Due to climate change, people and livestock are forced to migrate, and upon reaching new lands, they often feel like orphans because they don't belong to that country. Any negative occurrences are considered to be Kenyans' fault. Kenyan laws reflect a sense of justice, unlike the Ugandan ones; for example, there, if you even take a cup of their local brew, you might have to pay with cows. – Peace and security Committee Members, Lokirima

For Turkana pastoralists in Kenya, crossing into Uganda during drought is a survival strategy. Tensions are heightened by perceptions that Uganda has more accessible water, fuelling resentment and repeated clashes. For Ugandan communities in Amudat, Loroo, and Musupo, however, these same movements are perceived as encroachment, triggering boundary disputes and inter-community confrontations. Ugandan respondents emphasised suspicion and hostility toward incoming groups, whereas Kenyan respondents highlighted experiences of violent exclusion, particularly around Kobebe Dam in Moroto district. Reflecting its proximity to these contested areas, Loima records the highest incidence of cross-border conflict on the Kenyan side.⁶⁹

The porous nature of these borders, combined with limited state presence and the availability of small arms, facilitates such incursions. Moreover, the lack of coordinated cross-border security measures and the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms exacerbate tensions among these communities.⁷⁰

Climate- economy- conflict nexus

The geographic and environmental conditions of Karamoja play a fundamental role in shaping conflict. Recurrent droughts, land degradation, and increasing competition for scarce water and pasture exacerbate tensions and force communities into confrontation. Environmental stressors and climate shocks push pastoralists to cross borders more frequently in search of water and grazing land, often triggering disputes with host communities. In a needs assessment conducted by WHH in May 2023 in Uganda's Karamoja, 30% of households reported experiencing conflict or fights over water use within or between communities. Rising temperatures and increasingly unpredictable rainfall have further intensified scarcity. Moreover, frequent droughts, floods, and extreme weather events have placed additional pressure on already limited natural resources. Combined with rapid population growth, agricultural expansion, unsustainable farming practices, insecure land tenure, and widespread poverty, these pressures contribute to more frequent and intense conflicts across the region.⁷¹

⁶⁸ FGD19

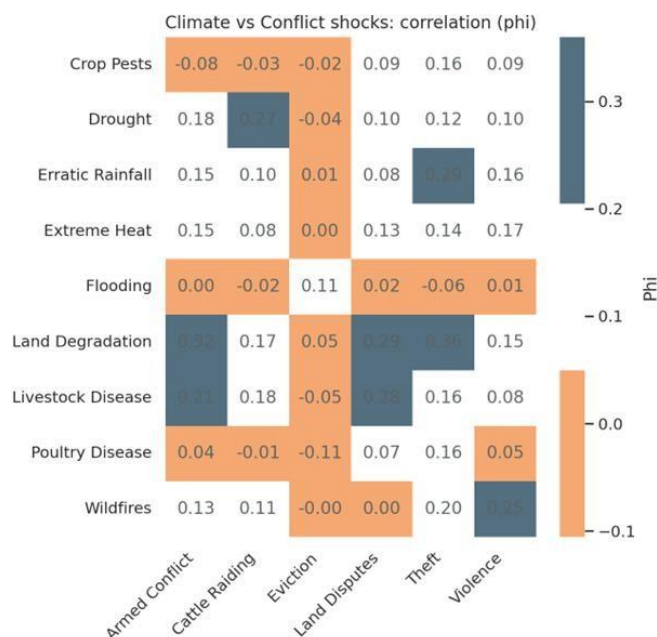
⁶⁹ KII18, FGD7

⁷⁰ Medium, "Robbed of their livestock and hunted out of their land", 2018; Johnstone Siiku Kisindai, "Climate change and cross-border conflicts among pastoralists in East Africa: a case of Turkana of Kenya and Karamojong of Uganda", November 2024; Springer Nature, "Cattle, conflict, and climate variability: explaining pastoralist conflict intensity in the Karamoja region of Uganda", April 2024.

⁷¹ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, "The Karamoja Conflict: Origin, Impact, and Solution," *Oxfam*, 2003.; Welthungerhilfe, "Multisector Needs Assessment – Karamoja Region – Uganda", May 2023; Climate Diplomacy, "Communal conflicts in the Karamoja Cluster (Uganda)", n.d.



Figure 10: Correlation between climate and conflict shocks.



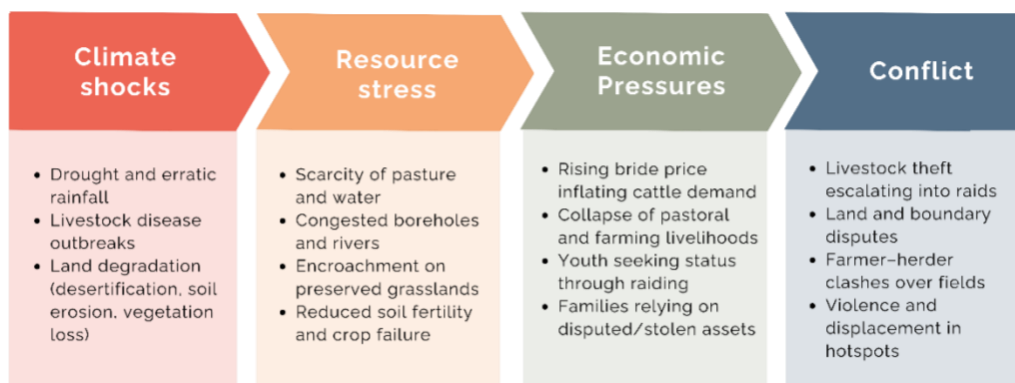
Survey data further reinforces the link between environmental stress and insecurity. Figure 11 illustrates the statistical correlations (phi coefficients) between climate shocks and conflict outcomes across the Karamoja clusters. The results confirm that land degradation is the strongest driver, correlating with land disputes (0.36), theft (0.29), and armed clashes (0.17). Drought and livestock disease also align positively with livestock raiding (0.27 and 0.21, respectively), consistent with field accounts of herders competing for dwindling pastures and healthy animals. By contrast, flooding and crop pests show little to no consistent association with conflict, suggesting that sudden, short-term shocks are less combustible than cumulative environmental degradation. Erratic rainfall and extreme heat show moderate positive links with theft and violence, underscoring how climatic variability undermines livelihoods in ways that can escalate insecurity.

At the same time, households face mounting **economic pressures** that feed into cycles of insecurity. Bride price inflation sustains demand for cattle, driving youth to raid as a means of meeting dowry obligations and securing social status. The collapse of both pastoral and farming livelihoods under climate stress forces families into precarious coping strategies, from charcoal burning and mining to reliance on stolen or disputed assets.

Loss of livestock undermines not just food security but also savings and the collateral needed to access markets or services, deepening the poverty-conflict trap.⁷² Figure 12 illustrates how climate shocks interact with resource stress and economic pressures to generate conflict.

⁷² UNDP, "Karamoja Cluster: Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment (Kenya and Uganda)", 2022.

Figure 11: Climate-Economy-Conflict Nexus



Impact of conflict on communities

Conflict in the region does not affect all households in the same way. While violence and insecurity are recurrent features across the region, the severity of impacts varies by location. For instance, the degree to which communities are affected depends on their proximity to flashpoints, exposure to repeated raids, and the resilience of local coping mechanisms. Survey data highlight how some clusters experience acute and sustained disruption, whereas others report more moderate though still significant effects on livelihoods and services.

- In **Kenya** (Figure 12), communities have reported experiencing higher impacts overall. Loima records the highest levels, with nearly two-thirds of households affected badly (46%) or very badly (21%). Lokirima follows, with 44% badly affected and 23% very badly, representing the highest share of households in this category across all clusters. North Pokot is the less affected, with more than half of households (54%) report only moderate impacts, and very few describe severe effects (13% badly, 4% very badly).
- In **Uganda** (Figure 13), Napak represents the highest levels of impact, with two-thirds of households affected badly or very badly (38% and 28%). In Amudat, most households report little (30%) or moderate (16%) impact, with fewer citing severe harm (23% badly, 11% very badly). In Moroto, a third of households report moderate effects (31%), while only one in five describe being badly or very badly affected. Overall, conflict here tends to disrupt livelihoods and services in less extreme ways than in the Kenyan clusters, though Napak remains an exception.

Figure 12: How did conflict affect your household?

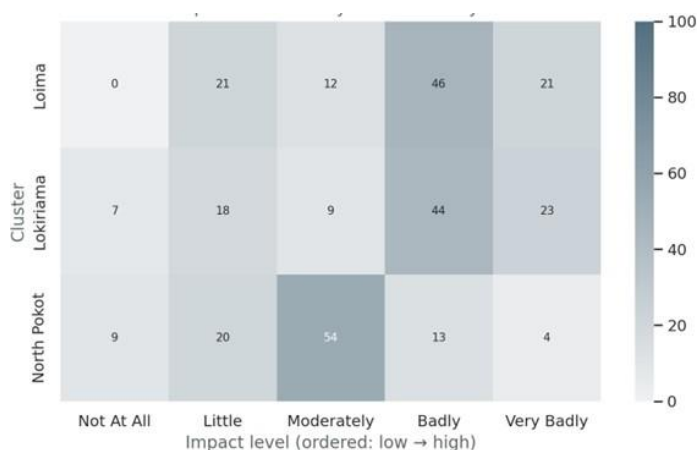
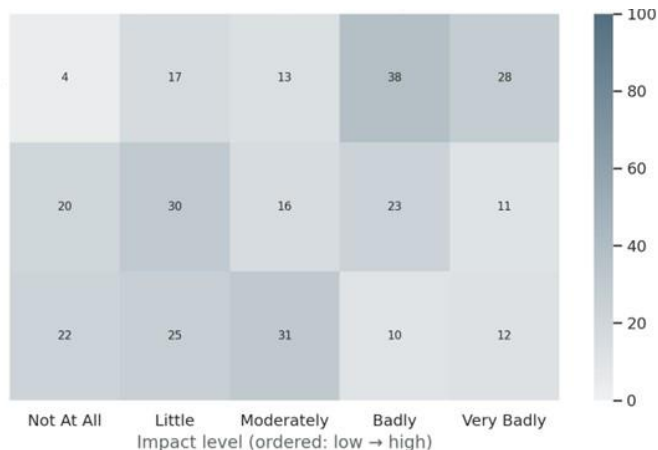


Figure 13: How did conflict affect your household? - Uganda.



3.2 Governance

Key Findings

- **There is a wide range of local formal and informal institutions and governance systems in place in the Karamoja cluster** – at times connecting elders to community committees, inter-community dialogues, local authorities and formal security and state systems. These linkages can however be strengthened and improved.
- **Both countries rely on a mix of formal structures** (chiefs, LC1s, county/district offices, NPRs, ASTUS police units), **committees** (peace, land, natural resource, climate), **and informal systems** (elders, kraal leaders, barazas, women/youth groups).
- **Informal institutions remain at the heart of local governance**, particularly in managing conflicts and natural resources. Elders, kraal leaders, and community committees carry deep cultural legitimacy, making them trusted mediators in disputes ranging from livestock raiding to land disagreements. Yet **trust is higher among elders than youth in these mechanisms**.
- **Women and youth are present in both contexts but in advisory or observer roles**. Positive exceptions include the Lokibor women's group (Kenya) and the Moroto Women Peace Forum (Uganda).
- **Communities trust elders and informal systems most**, valuing their cultural legitimacy and accessibility. Younger people show more faith in formal systems for fairness, though these are often seen as slow or corrupt.
- **Many committees duplicate roles or rely on NGOs for facilitation, raising sustainability concerns**. Cross-border forums (e.g., the Ateker Chiefs' Forum) show potential for harmonisation but remain unevenly supported.
- **Survey data shows differences across clusters** in both awareness and participation in local governance and building. Uganda awareness is lower overall.

Committees and Local Governance

Committees are central to conflict management and community governance across the Karamoja Cluster. These include peace, natural resource, land, and climate change committees, which operate alongside both formal and customary authority. For instance, in Kenya, committees cannot issue judgements without elders, whereas in Uganda peace committees integrate kraal leaders, LC1 structures, and political leaders. However, overlapping mandates are common, as peace committees, natural resource committees, and NGO-supported resilience committees often duplicate functions, creating dependency on external facilitation. Positive examples of harmonisation exist, such as the Ateker chiefs' forum and cross-border peace dialogues that integrate customary practices with county or district by-laws. Yet tensions persist where customary demands, such as double compensation for stolen livestock, clash with statutory frameworks.⁷³

Within the **Kenyan** clusters, traditional systems of chiefs, elders, and National Police Reservists remain the primary dispute resolution structures, but they are increasingly complemented by formal committees and NGO-supported initiatives.

Peace committees are foundational to the culture of the Karamoja region. They work well from the community and county perspective and especially useful to coordinate cross border issues between Uganda and Turkana on range land management, or on stolen livestock and co-existence between communities. In Uganda, they are part of the Parish Development Model, and have been also known to integrate former warriors (such as the Karachunas), getting them to lay off their weapons and join the committees. **Peace committees are widely cited as effective** as they recover raided livestock, negotiate compensation, and coordinate with *kraal* leaders, chiefs, and county officials (also refer to the Baseline Report for more detailed analysis on this). In

⁷³ FGD11, KII38.

terms of inclusivity, in Loima and Lokirama, peace committees include youth and women, though their roles are often tokenistic. Natural resource and climate committees complement these efforts by regulating grazing lands and supporting adaptation planning. For example, under the Turkana County Climate Change Act (2021), ward-level committees carry out vulnerability assessments and mobilise communities for climate action, while forest committees enforce by-laws such as “cut one tree, plant two.” At the cross-border level, platforms like the Ateker chiefs’ forum in Lokirama and rangeland management agreements with Moroto, Amudat, Kotido, and Kaabong facilitate shared access to pasture and water.⁷⁴

Image 4: Baraza – community peace gathering



In **Uganda**, peace committees are anchored in cultural norms and the authority of elders, forming a central pillar of the governance fabric. They operate alongside land boards, communal land associations, forest and water committees, and WASH/environmental committees. In Tapac (Moroto), the natural resource committee enforces grazing rules in Nakonyen, prohibiting grass burning and penalising violators. Women’s groups are also emerging as governance actors, such as through the Women Peace Forum in Moroto, established in 2015, that now negotiates cross-district resource-sharing agreements, including the Kobebe, Rengen-Sidok, and Nakonyen accords. While these committees have an important role locally, their functionality is often constrained by weak facilitation, sporadic engagement, and reliance on NGO support, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.⁷⁵ Table 3 explains these aspects in more detail.

Climate change committees are also a key part of a hybrid governance system, set up by the government in wards for example with World Bank FLOCA funding, with inclusivity mandated by law, to include women, youth, persons with disabilities, chiefs elders and others. They operate in Kenya under the Turkana County Climate Change Act (Act 2021). **Natural resource committees** control rangeland with the support of external actors, advise on where to plant trees, and are of the opinion, in some areas, that greater cross-fertilisation of knowledge or training peace committees could help bring them more technical skills, notably on proper harvesting times. **Water committees** are in place to support with access to clean drinking water and **cross border community dialogues** are also active on water, pasture and natural resource management.

Table 3: Formal and Informal local governance structures, by country.

Dimension	North Pokot, Loima, Lokirama (Kenya)	Moroto, Napak, Amudat (Uganda)
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⁷⁴ KII2, KII3, KII22.

⁷⁵ KII29, KII30.

Formal state structures	County departments (trade, livestock, agriculture); Chiefs/Assistant Chiefs; Deputy County Commissioner; Police + NPRs; Kenya Forest Service (by-law “cut one tree, plant two”) ; ward climate governance under Turkana County Climate Change Act (2021) with 7-member committees (women, youth, PWDs, chiefs, elders) conducting VA/prioritisation; Lorugum cross-border project steering committee on rangeland management (county + GIZ).	LC1-parish-sub-county chain; District technical offices; ASTUS (Anti-Stock Theft Unit) policing raids; regularised patrols post-raids; presidential Executive Order No.3 (2023) banning commercial charcoal (security enforcement); constitutional and compensation frameworks (triple fine for theft; homicide sanctions).
Hybrid & committee mechanisms	Peace committees (Ateker chiefs’ forum, Lokirima); Loya Resilience Committee (APaD/DRC) with youth + county; Natural resource committees (e.g., Lokitonyala land committee; Natural Resource Management committees reserving dry-season grazing and enforcing rules); cross-community/resource-sharing dialogues for water/pasture in drought; ward climate committees (VA, project selection, policy awareness).	Peace committees (district and parish level); Women Peace Forum (Tapac, Moroto) brokering Kobebe, Rengen-Sidok, Nakonyen resource-sharing accords; Area Land Committees & Communal Land Associations (land rights education/protection); parish Justice & Peace Committees.
Informal / cultural systems	Elders and kraal leaders mediate raids/compensation; barazas; women/youth associations (Lokibor women’s group in Loima) increasingly present but often advisory.	Elders/clan councils; ritualised peacemaking; reformed warriors (Karachunas) mobilised for peace/livelihoods.
Functions commonly cited	Livestock recovery & return; negotiation/compensation; seasonal grazing plans; tree-felling fines/replanting; water-use coordination; climate VAs and community mobilisation. Locations: Lokirima, Loima, Loya, Lokitonyala.	Cross-border pasture/water protocols (Kobebe, Nakonyen, Rengen-Sidok); inclusive peace meetings (e.g., Sinyu); joint patrols; LC1 vetting of newcomers. Locations: Tapac/Moroto, Napak, Kaabong, Kotido, Amudat.
Inclusivity (who sits at the table?)	Mandated representation (women, youth, PWDs) in climate committees; women present in peace fora but often as observers; Lokibor is a positive exception; Loya women consulted on land for a dispensary but voice still limited in decisions.	Women’s inclusion growing via Women Peace Forum; youth engaged but often fewer in number to avoid “overpowering” elders; cultural status (dowry, childbearing) shapes who can attend.
Awareness of legal/policy frameworks	Climate Change Act; county climate law (Turkana, 2021); local by-laws (“cut one tree, plant two”); knowledge of IGAD/cross-border protocols but enforcement seen as uneven.	Constitution, compensation policy (triple fines), disarmament policy, presidential charcoal ban; parish/district bylaws (vetting newcomers).
Integration & process	Elders anchor legitimacy; committees document and liaise with county/police; cross-border forums connect customary norms to county by-laws (e.g., Ateker forum at Lokirima).	LC1 + elders + peace committees triage disputes; escalate to police/courts if talks fail; regularised patrols reduce retaliation risk.

Common gaps/risks	Committee activity tied to NGO projects; uneven functionality; gatekeeping/self-interest. Border posts under-staffed/porous (Nakabat/Niswa contrast).	Low public awareness vs leaders; misinformation by some leaders; tension between elders' mediation and statutory protections (women/children).
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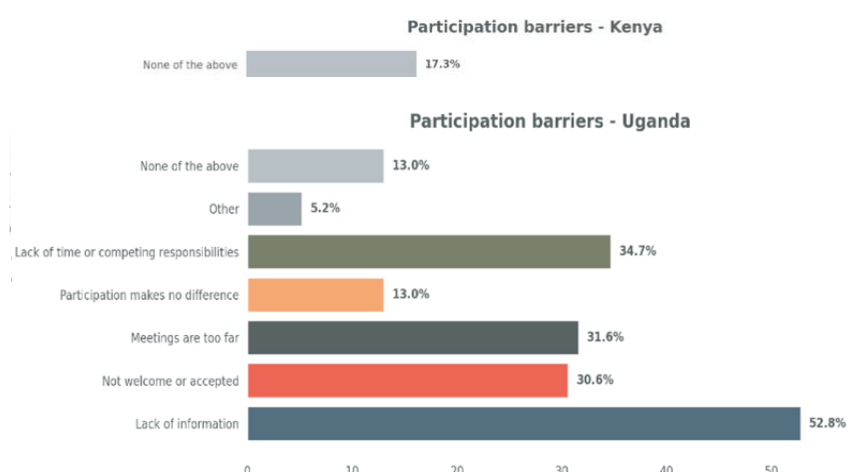
Awareness, participation and trust in governance mechanisms

In Kenya (Loima & Lokirima), over 80% of respondents report awareness of peace efforts, compared to 65% in Uganda's Amudat. Men are more aware of community peace activities than women - 82% of men vs 65% of women. The gap is statistically significant.	Men are more likely than women to report being included: 82% of men vs 65% of women say they are aware of or involved in peace activities; younger people (18-24) are most often "told after decisions" or "not informed."	Top barriers include lack of information (40-45%) and time (30-35%). In Uganda, over 25% doubt participation makes a difference, reflecting trust gaps. Women more often cite lack of time and not feeling welcome/accepted, especially in Uganda
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Survey data shows differences across clusters in both awareness and participation in local governance and peacebuilding. In **Kenya**, awareness is consistently high across Loima (86.1%), Lokirima (84.7%), and North Pokot (79.6%) and participation is strongest in Loima and North Pokot, where around 45% report active involvement in decision-making. Lokirima is an exception, with most respondents saying they are either uninformed or only told after decisions. In **Uganda**, awareness is lower overall, with Moroto (75.4%) and Napak (70.4%) relatively strong but Amudat lagging behind (47.3%). Participation follows a similar pattern, with Napak and Moroto showing higher involvement, while nearly 70% in Amudat report exclusion.

Survey findings also highlight the barriers that prevent participation. In Kenyan clusters (Figure 16), the main obstacles are lack of information and competing responsibilities, with some also doubting whether their input makes a difference. Distance and not feeling welcome are secondary, while a high number of community members report no barriers at all. In Uganda (Figure 16) scepticism about the value of participation is more pronounced, alongside lack of information and time. Distance and exclusion are minor, and fewer report no barriers, pointing to slightly higher overall restrictions than in Kenya. Women face a double burden. Around 4 in 10 cite lack of time or competing responsibilities (versus 3 in 10 men), and nearly half of women in Kenya say they do not feel welcome, compared with 4 in 10 men. In Uganda, women are also more likely than men to express doubt about

Figure 14: Participation barriers reported in i) Kenya; ii) Uganda.



the value of participation (19% versus 5%). Other barriers, such as lack of information and distance to meetings, are shared more evenly across genders.

Moreover, men are more likely to be consulted, while women more often report being informed only after decisions. These gaps are modest in Kenya and more pronounced in Uganda, though not statistically significant. Younger respondents (aged 18–24) report participating the least, whereas older groups, especially in Uganda, are more often consulted. However, survey responses about inclusion do not always reflect meaningful participation in practice. While many respondents report that women and youth “have a voice,” qualitative findings suggest that their influence is often limited. Elders, predominantly male, continue to dominate decision-making, and cultural norms restrict women and youth from speaking openly or shaping outcomes. In this sense, inclusivity remains more aspirational than real.

Differences across groups further illustrate this gap. Women and youth receive the highest recognition in surveys, while displaced households are consistently rated as least influential in decision-making. People with disabilities and minorities fall in between. Yet, in practice, these groups still face barriers to active involvement, with their participation often symbolic. Exceptions highlight what more inclusive governance could look like. For example, in Lokibor, Kenya, a legally recognised women’s group provides an organised platform for women to influence peace processes. Similarly, in Uganda, the Women Peace Forum in Moroto (see Box x below) offers a space where women can collectively articulate priorities and negotiate resource-sharing agreements. Still, even in these cases, enduring barriers linked to dowry, childbearing, and patriarchal norms continue to limit full equality in decision-making.⁷⁶

“How do you consult women, their role is just to follow what you say, like when the rains begin, you tell to go and clear the garden.”

Community Leaders FGD, Napak

Finally, **trust in governance mechanisms** varies across clusters. Across both contexts, elders and community-based systems are the most trusted, especially among older community members, because they are perceived as accessible, culturally legitimate, and seen to deliver swift resolutions.⁷⁷ Younger people sometimes express preference for formal mechanisms, which they see as fairer and less biased by kinship ties.⁷⁸ At the same time, communities emphasise the value of integration between the two systems: elders and kraal leaders providing traditional knowledge which strongly underpins legitimacy, while government officials, police, or committees provide enforcement power. Examples include elders in Turkana negotiating livestock restitution while county officers record the agreement, or peace committees in Moroto working alongside LC1 leaders and police patrols to enforce grazing boundaries.

Formal actors include chiefs, Local Council leaders, police units (including National Police Reservists and Anti-Stock Theft Units), and county or district government offices provide governance, planning, and service delivery functions. However, their effectiveness is limited by chronic resource shortages, capacity constraints, and logistical challenges in these remote and insecure borderlands. Historical marginalisation and perceptions of corruption erode trust in formal authorities:

- In the Karamoja Cluster, the legacy of colonial-era exclusion and subsequent neglect by state actors has deeply impacted how communities view formal government institutions.
- Many community members perceive local government officials and formal authorities as distant, unresponsive, or even corrupt. This marginalisation has fostered widespread distrust, which limits communities’ willingness to cooperate or engage meaningfully with state-led initiatives. This hinders effective delivery of services, governance, and conflict resolution efforts.

⁷⁶ KII4, KII9, KII11, KII12, FGD10, FGD15, FGD20.

⁷⁷ KII27.

⁷⁸ FGD11.

- On a positive note, local level state representatives are not outsiders but members of their own communities. This rootedness gives them deep knowledge of local histories, grievances, and practices, making their insights and recommendations credible and responsive to the realities on the ground.

Platforms that blend customary legitimacy with formal enforcement help rebuild trust and improve conflict and resource management: Hybrid governance platforms, such as peace committees that include both elders and local government representatives, offer promising models. They combine the cultural legitimacy and acceptance of traditional authorities with the enforcement capacity and legal frameworks of formal institutions.

- Communities already detail an integrated approach with cultural systems often the first dispute resolution/governance step and formal ones the last resort. Disputes usually start with elders, who mediate using traditional systems. If unresolved, they move to local committees (peace, land, or climate) which offer broader representation and dialogue. When issues escalate beyond community capacity, they are passed to formal authorities such as LC1s, chiefs, or police.
- Examples include elders in Turkana negotiating livestock restitution while county officers record the agreement, or peace committees in Moroto working alongside LC1 leaders and police patrols to enforce grazing boundaries.
- By bridging the two, they foster greater community buy-in, improve dispute resolution, and create more effective mechanisms for managing scarce resources and mitigating conflicts.

Box 2. The Moroto Women Peace Forum

Despite barriers, both contexts show gradual improvement. In Kenya, constitutional guarantees and devolution have enabled women and youth to gain seats in committees and leadership roles, supported by training programmes.⁷⁹ In Uganda, government policies of emancipation and the rise of female leaders at LC1 and councillor levels are expanding space for women's voices, while youth savings groups and business activities are providing alternative entry points. In both countries, these shifts suggest the beginnings of a cultural rebalancing, though sustained support, legal awareness, and stronger integration of women and youth into decision-making processes remain critical for lasting change.

The Moroto Women Peace Forum, established in 2015, provides one of the strongest examples of inclusive and culturally grounded peacebuilding in Karamoja. The forum brings together women from across Moroto district to negotiate and mediate disputes traditionally dominated by male elders and kraal leaders. Their efforts have extended beyond district borders, contributing to landmark cross-border agreements such as the Kobebe Dam, Rengen-Sidok, and Nakonyen accords. These agreements regulate shared access to water and grazing resources between communities in Moroto, Napak, Kaabong, and neighbouring Turkana.

Women's participation has been critical in reshaping community approaches to peace. Unlike men, who are often perceived as direct actors in raiding and retaliation, women leverage their roles as caregivers and community anchors to argue for dialogue over conflict. Forum members describe themselves as "mothers of peace," emphasising that when violence erupts, women and children bear the brunt of displacement, hunger, and insecurity. Their legitimacy is reinforced by cultural traditions: women use songs, dances, and rituals to sensitise youth and mobilise broader community support for peace agreements.

"When we sat down as women, we found that for years, we were excluded from important community dialogues, these discussions were only held among men who were able to sit on a round table or under a tree to discuss something very important within the community which women are not involved yet these issues affect the women. When boys go and raid or steal, the first person who is affected is the women and even the older persons"

⁷⁹ KII19, KII22.

Female Councillor Moroto

However, the Forum still faces structural challenges. Women's influence is frequently mediated by patriarchal norms, with dowry status and childbearing determining who can participate. Funding and facilitation remain heavily reliant on NGO support, raising questions about sustainability. Despite these constraints, the Moroto Women Peace Forum demonstrates the potential of inclusive committees to bridge cultural traditions and formal governance structures, offering a replicable model for strengthening inclusive community-driven peace initiatives across the clusters.

Box 3. Opportunities for local financing and cash transfer schemes

The Parish Development Model, launched in 2022, is Uganda's poverty eradication strategy by promoting economic transformation and service delivery at the parish level. It operates through seven pillars – including, production, infrastructure, financial inclusion, and social services. Similarly in Kenya, the devolved government and the process of devolution enshrined in the Constitution, aims to bring services closer to people.

Building on initiatives set up under the Parish Model in Uganda can provide entry points for the Karamoja strong project, namely farmers were grouped into enterprises to earn a living and transform their lives. The government formed groups at the local towns and village level, to channel funds to these enterprises, providing a system for local financing. The group then decides who benefits from the funds and how the funds are invested to generate income. In one village in Lagunyet, a youth member received one million shillings that he invested in pig rearing, allowing him to step out of poverty. The model – a cash transfer scheme that promotes self-employment by providing household-level grants – was confirmed as effective during focus group discussions. Other examples shared include the Emiyooga programme, a government funding scheme that communities receive in groups to support wealth and job creation, launched in August 2019 as part of a broader government strategy to transform lives through savings groups.

Other revolving funds exist as well, and can be linked to these: whether the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) in Uganda or the Women Entrepreneurship Program (WEP) where money is given to women. Government initiatives in Uganda have also supported local villages' savings models. There are however risks, such as the inability of those benefiting from savings or funds to repay.

Cross-Border Governance Opportunities

Cross-border cooperation forums play a crucial role in fostering collaboration across the Kenya-Uganda border. These forums facilitate dialogue around shared management of rangelands and water resources, while also supporting peacebuilding efforts that address common challenges faced by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities.

1. **The Ateker Chiefs' Forum** in Lokiriamia: was born out of necessity under the Peace III program, funded by USAID and implemented by APaD in 2015. Before its creation, chiefs and LCIII representatives rarely interacted. It was formed to improve early warning and early response mechanisms along the borders of Kenya, Uganda, and North Pokot.
 - Successes: facilitating the resettlement of displaced communities, recovery of livestock stolen during raids.
2. **Rangeland management agreements** spanning key districts including Moroto, Amudat, Kotido, and Kaabong. These agreements establish frameworks for equitable and sustainable access to pasture and water, which are vital to livelihoods and reduce the risk of cross-border competition escalating into conflict.
3. **The Women Peace Forum** in Moroto exemplifies the incorporation of inclusive leadership in cross-district resource governance. This forum extends its reach beyond Moroto district.

- **Successes:** actively contributing to landmark resource-sharing accords, such as the Kobebe Dam agreement between Turkana and Karimojong communities. Their participation models how women's engagement can enhance peacebuilding and promote equitable resource management at broader geographic scales.

4. **Peace accords:** Since 2022, APAD and DRC have played a key role in facilitating peacebuilding between Loya's community and neighbouring groups, like Karamojong, Jie, and Pokot. APAD sponsored peace accords, encouraging communities to reflect on the human cost of insecurity. Meetings were held alternately in Jie and Pokot areas, leading to the shared conclusion that conflict brings no benefits.

Yet, cross border coordination remains weak: existing peace and resource committees coordinate but have no formalised or binding agreements with counterparts across borders, limiting conflict prevention. There is significant potential to strengthen the formalisation and the co-management arrangements between Kenya and Uganda through institutionalising these existing platforms. Doing so could help mitigate recurrent resource-based conflicts by creating clear shared governance protocols that respect traditional and statutory rights across borders. Key opportunities include enhancing information sharing mechanisms for early warning and resource status, implementing joint patrols to monitor grazing and water points, and developing conflict-sensitive dispute mediation procedures that incorporate representatives from both countries' communities and authorities. But also, capacity building for local authorities and committees or developing cross-border formal agreements and joint governance bodies with clearly defined mandates.

Cross border Decentralisation: Building on initiatives set up under the 2022 Parish Development Model in Uganda can provide entry points for the Karamoja strong project, namely grouping farmers into enterprises. The government formed groups at the local towns and village level, to channel funds to these enterprises, providing a system for local financing. The group then decides who benefits from the funds and how the funds are invested to generate income. In one village in Lagunyet, a youth member received one million shillings that he invested in pig rearing, allowing him to step out of poverty. The model – a cash transfer scheme that promotes self-employment by providing household-level grants – was confirmed as effective during focus group discussions. Other examples shared include the Emiyooga programme, a government funding scheme that communities receive in groups to support wealth and job creation, launched in August 2019 as part of a broader government strategy to transform lives through savings groups. Other revolving funds exist as well, and can be linked to these: whether the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) in Uganda or the Women Entrepreneurship Program (WEP) where money is given to women. Government initiatives in Uganda have also supported local villages' savings models. There are however risks, such as the inability of those benefiting from savings or funds to repay.

Similarly in Kenya, the devolved government and the process of devolution enshrined in the Constitution, aims to bring services closer to people, yet marginalised counties like Turkana often lack financial support from the national budget. External interventions have come in to reinforce such counties. Both county and community levels required coordinated financial, technical and market support to underpin resilience programming. Cross-border projects at the local level have proven, for instance, benefits of anticipatory action and gender-transformative livelihood support. Interventions which mix financial tools and community led approaches in Kenya have been among the strongest, and have been supported by IGAD-led cross border dialogues temporarily reducing raiding.

4. LIVELIHOODS AND RESILIENCE

4.1 Livelihoods Profiles

Key Findings

Kenya:

Livelihoods are more pastoralist-oriented, with herding dominant and often combined with casual labour and small business. Lokiriamia is most diversified but also has the highest aid dependency.

- Coping relies on migration, herd management, food preservation, remittances, and VSLAs.
- Negative strategies like charcoal burning, unsafe water use, skipping meals remain widespread.

Uganda:

Livelihoods are more diversified, with farming, casual labour, and mining especially visible in Napak and Moroto. Amudat shows a balanced mix of herding, farming, and small business.

- VSLAs play a central role in coping, especially for women, enabling loans, food support, and business start-up. Communities use grazing systems, collective migration, and seasonal cultivation shifts. Reliance on negative coping such as reduced meals, wild foods, distress migration persists

Barriers:

- Kenya: lack of capital/equipment, water scarcity, insecurity, and misuse of community funds.
- Uganda: weak technical farming skills, poor infrastructure and markets, unreliable forecasts, and poverty-driven misuse of support.

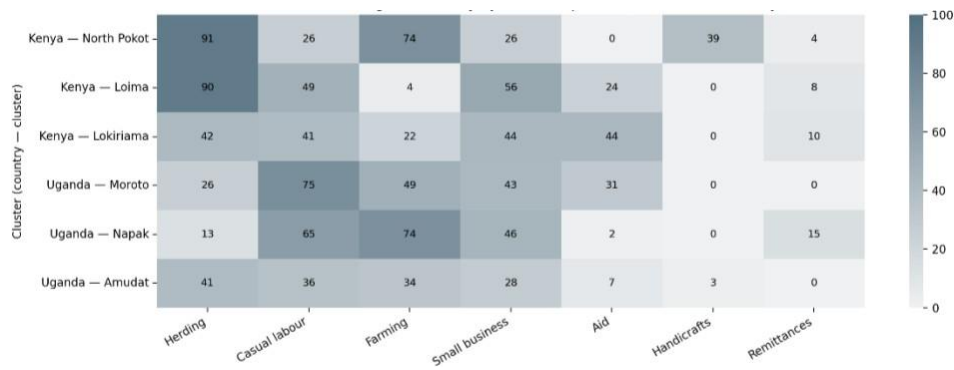
Resilient strategies like poultry, beekeeping, and small-scale irrigation exist in both countries but remain small-scale due to limited technical and financial support. Mining and charcoal burning provide income but undermine long-term sustainability.

Livelihood systems across the Karamoja clusters show clear differences between Kenya and Uganda. Figure 16 illustrates the distribution of livelihood activities by cluster, highlighting the contrasts between more pastoralist-oriented Kenyan communities and the more diversified Ugandan clusters.

In **Kenya**, pastoralism remains the main form of livelihood. North Pokot has a strong engagement in both livestock herding (91%) and farming (74%), and it is the only cluster where handicrafts form a significant share (39%). Loima is also highly pastoralist (90%) but combines this with substantial engagement in small business (56%) and casual labour (49%); farming is negligible (4 %) but aid dependency remains notable (24%). Lokiriamia is the most diversified of the Kenyan clusters, with more balanced shares across herding (42 %), casual labour (41 %), and small business (44%), alongside the highest aid dependency in the dataset (44%).

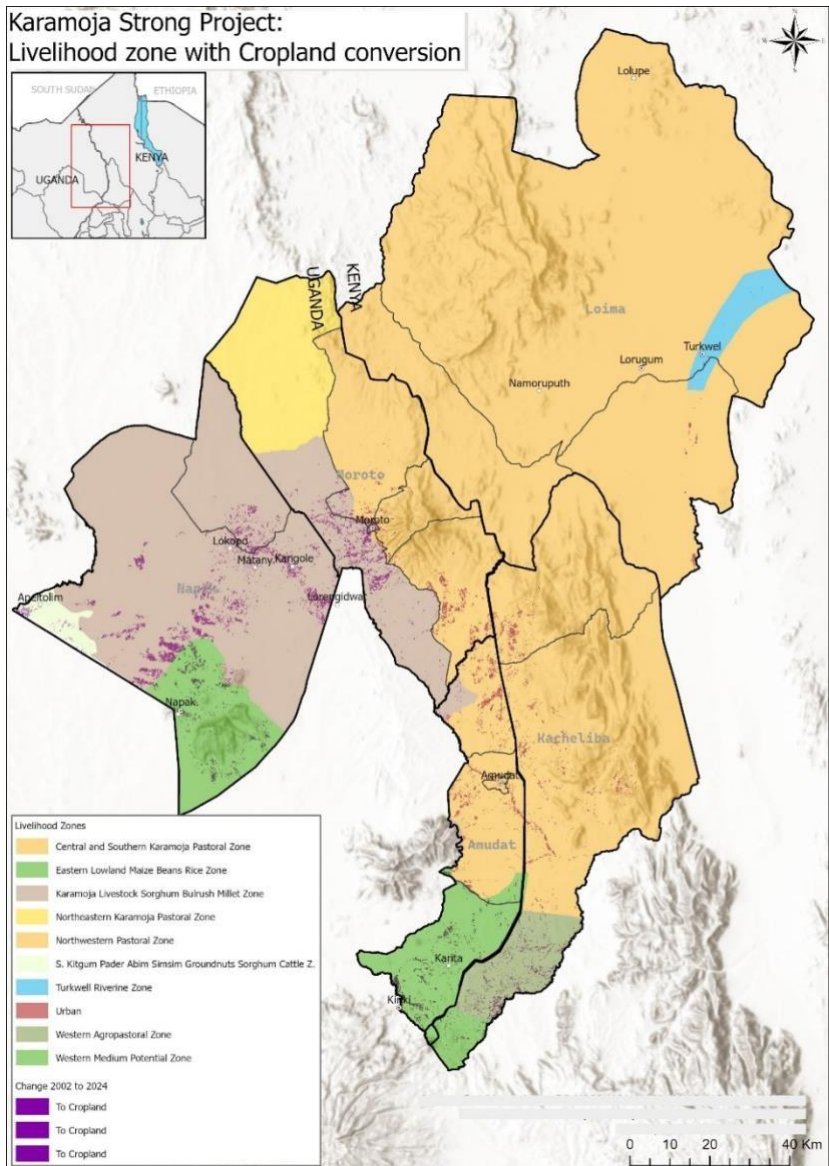
In **Uganda**, farming, casual labour, and mining play a stronger role. Moroto reflects its urban profile with high levels of casual labour (75%), combined with farming (49 %), small business (43 %), and significant aid dependency (31%). Napak is more agriculture-based, with farming (74 %) and casual labour (65 %) dominating, and it records the highest reliance on remittances across all clusters (15 %). Amudat is the least specialised, with relatively balanced engagement across herding (41%), casual labour (36%), farming (34%), and small business (28%).

Figure 15: Households selecting each activity by cluster.



The livelihood zones map (Map 5) reinforces these contrasts. Pastoral zones dominate in western and northern **Kenya** (Loima, Lokirima, North Pokot), while in **Uganda**, mixed agro-pastoral and farming zones are concentrated in Napak and Amudat. The map also illustrates the role of urban hubs and mining as centres of casual labour in Moroto. Furthermore, cropland expansion

Map 5: Livelihood zones map.



suggests how farming is pushing into areas once dominated by herding, especially in Napak and parts of Moroto, reflecting climate and demographic pressure.

With climate shocks and other environmental events, households are reconfiguring their livelihoods in response to repeated shocks. Drought, raids, and economic challenges have weakened traditional systems, pushing families to explore new income sources. Yet the balance between positive and negative adaptation is uneven. Activities with resilience potential, such as poultry, beekeeping, and small-scale irrigation, remain limited by scarce technical and financial support. In contrast, environmentally degrading strategies like charcoal burning and unregulated mining activity have expanded, offering quick income but causing negative consequences to long-term environmental sustainability.

For instance, in Kenya, herding remains the most common practice. Yet, recurrent droughts, disease outbreaks, and raids have accelerated shifts into alternatives, such as gold panning. Regulated yet persistent charcoal trade are also common fallbacks, especially for youth. Poultry, beekeeping, and petty trade have shown some resilience, though they remain limited in scale and highly vulnerable to conflict disruptions. Cross-border trade with Uganda, particularly in livestock and consumer goods, has traditionally been a critical safety net, but it is increasingly undermined by disease-control restrictions, border closures, and insecurity along trade routes.

In **Uganda** clusters, livelihoods have diversified more visibly away from cattle, with mining (gold, marble, stone in Moroto and Napak), charcoal burning, brewing, and small retail businesses emerging as key alternatives. Women have pursued diversification through poultry, home gardens, and petty trade, supported by savings groups. Some of these activities, such as poultry and beekeeping, are moderately resilient, but others (charcoal and brewing) accelerate environmental degradation and reinforce poverty cycles. Table 4 summarises the most commonly reported barriers to livelihood diversification across the two contexts.

Table 4: Barriers to livelihood diversification.⁸⁰

Kenya	Uganda
Lack of capital and equipment , households and youth lack tools, start-up support, or machinery for mining, farming, and small businesses.	Limited technical farming skills , weak knowledge of improved farming methods and soil conservation.
Water scarcity & resource-based conflict , affects both agriculture and mining, reinforcing dependence on aid.	Poor infrastructure and market access, bad roads restrict mobility and trade opportunities.
Limited skills & training , few opportunities to build agricultural or business knowledge, especially for women and youth	Cross-border insecurity , raids and theft undermine otherwise valuable trade with Kenya.
Conflict & insecurity , raids and violence disrupt grazing, markets, and trade routes.	Unreliable weather information & weak extension services , poor access to forecasts and climate-smart guidance reduces adaptive capacity.
Weak leadership and misuse of funds, community funds or youth loans mismanaged; group initiatives often collapse.	Poverty-driven misuse of support , households consume seeds, sell farm inputs, or mismanage livestock and credit programmes.

Coping and adaptation

In response to severe and recurring stress from drought, conflict, and economic insecurity, communities across the Karamoja Cluster are forced to adapt. Coping mechanisms are diverse but often fragile, shaped by unequal access to assets, skills, and

⁸⁰ Summarised from FGDs and KIIs.



external support. Survey and qualitative data shows that some households adopt strategies that build resilience, but many still rely on short-term measures that further exacerbate their vulnerability.

In **Kenya**, pastoralist families rely on a combination of traditional coping mechanisms and emerging practices to manage climate and conflict stress. Traditional strategies include migrating livestock to greener pastures, designating grazing zones for seasonal use, and selling animals in anticipation of dry spells. Food preservation, such as storing sorghum, drying milk into powder ('akosoyo' in Ngakarimojong/Turkana or 'akosoinyo' in Pokot), or preserving wild fruits (*Ngakile na makany* (Ngakarimojong) *Ngakile ne makanyi* (Pokot)) and cereal banking help bridge hunger periods.

Emerging and collective strategies complement these approaches. Households rely on remittances from urban migrants for food and basic needs, though tensions can arise over how resources are shared. Collective approaches through social networks and cooperatives, including group farming, mining groups, and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), serve as important buffers during shocks. Small-scale resilient practices like poultry and beekeeping, often led by women and youth, are accessible because they require less land and capital and can survive in harsher environments. National government schemes such as livestock off-take and insurance also provide some, yet limited, support.

Despite these efforts, negative coping strategies persist, especially when shocks intensify. For example, women frequently skip meals to prioritise children, increasing maternal malnutrition and long-term health risks. Families buy cheaper, lower-quality food from Uganda or West Pokot, reducing dietary diversity and deepening dependence on fragile trade links. Water scarcity drives unsafe practices such as using cow urine for dishwashing, increasing hygiene and disease risks. These strategies may secure immediate survival but ultimately undermine health and long-term resilience.⁸¹

In **Uganda**, livelihood adaptation relies heavily on community-based structures. VSLAs play a central role, particularly for women, by providing food loans, start-up capital, and emergency support. Diversification is more visible than in Kenya, with households engaging in horticulture, poultry, handicrafts, and off-stocking cattle to spread risks. Community grazing systems such as paddocking and fodder storage help preserve dry-season reserves, while migration is more organised. For example, in Amudat, households plan herd movements collectively, and in Loroo, livestock are moved during the rainy season to allow crops to grow. Cultivation is often shifted closer to riverbeds during droughts.

However, structural constraints persist. Access to water and infrastructure is limited, as dams and boreholes are often inadequate or non-functional, bridges remain broken, and water harvesting systems are poorly developed. Communities respond with a mix of traditional and emerging strategies, including digging pits, reinforcing riverbanks, shifting farm sites seasonally, and engaging in small-scale reforestation. Yet reliance on migration is high, which reinforces short-term coping over long-term adaptation. Negative strategies such as reducing meals, relying on wild foods, and distress migration remain widespread, undermining health and resilience.⁸²

"Perhaps we have only one borehole serving the entire population. Gold-mining activity provides a livelihood because of unemployment, rather than people just being idle, and they fight to have something for their families."

FGD Peace and Security Committee Lokirima

Box 4. Role of Women and Youth in Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods

Across all clusters in **Kenya**, women are central to everyday resource management. They fetch water, collect firewood, build huts and kraal fences, plant trees, harvest and preserve produce, and sustain families during drought through small businesses, often supported by NGOs. They also participate in labour-intensive coping strategies such as charcoal burning and open-cast gold mining activities which are described as male-dominated and risky but increasingly taken up by women

⁸¹ KII6, KII7, KII8, KII12, KII23, FGD1, FGD2, FGD4, FGD6, FGD7, FGD9, FGD10, FGD11, FGD12, FGD13

⁸² KII27, KII33, KII36, KII43; FGD13, FGD20, FGD22, FGD23, FGD24



when male labour is absent. Youth play watchdog roles by alerting communities to environmental changes, and are deeply engaged in herding, water collection, tree cutting, and firewood sales.⁸³

Women's roles echo similar responsibilities in **Uganda's** Karamoja. In Amudat and Loroo, women fetch water, maintain boreholes, and are consulted on land when schools or health facilities are planned. Some engage in mining on the slopes of Mt Moroto, breaking stones or panning gold, while others run small-scale trading. They are also noted as influencing security by persuading husbands not to migrate during tense periods. Youth are active in firewood collection, charcoal burning, and livestock trade, with some cultivating small plots or joining markets. That said, women are often seen as accessors but not controllers of land or resources, while youth are sidelined for "lacking experience". Structural barriers include low literacy, limited training, resource constraints, and safety risks.⁸⁴

Box 5. Flagship community-led solutions

Peace committees including youth and women exist but often mainly in advisory or observer roles, except:

- In Lokibor, Kenya, a legally recognised women's group provides an organised platform for women to influence peace processes.
- Community-managed grazing plans and by-laws linking environmental management with conflict prevention.
 - Collective approaches to managing pastureland, including designated dry-season reserves and rotational grazing that protect regeneration while reducing disputes.
 - Complementary environmental by-laws, such as Turkana County's "cut one tree, plant two" regulation, institutionalise sustainable tree harvesting practices, linking ecosystem restoration with social stability.
- Adaptive livelihood strategies in response to climate change:
 - **Kenya:** Communities are adopting diverse adaptive livelihood strategies in response to climate change, including drought-resistant livestock, shifting to commercial drought-tolerant crops like sorghum, and practicing agroforestry and integrated crop-livestock systems to boost soil health and biodiversity
 - **Uganda:** horticulture and agribusiness (beekeeping). Livestock Keeping: Communities in Uganda rely on their livestock during prolonged drought but also practise farming when the weather allows. Communities have structured livestock paddocking systems that are strictly adhered to preserve the pasture. A section of the grassland is preserved for the dry seasons only. Preservation of milk and meat during the wet seasons.
 - **Complementary measures include:** organic and regenerative agriculture, supported by county and NGO inputs (seedlings, fertilisers, market access)

These mechanisms demonstrate how governance approaches grounded in local knowledge and formal frameworks harmonise environmental and peace objectives, offering pathways for durable, context-sensitive resilience.

⁸³ FGD1Youth, FGD2Women, FGD6, FGD10

⁸⁴ KII1, KII2, FGD_Women Loroo, FGD16Youth Loroo, FGD18Women, FGD24Youth Napak.

4.2. External support and services

Key Findings

- Programmes work best when they combine financial support, technical training, market linkages, and community ownership. Across both countries, VSLAs and women's groups stand out as the most consistent anchors of resilience.
- In Kenya NGO- and donor-led efforts dominate, Government action has focused more on regulation than direct livelihood programming.
- In Uganda, Government-led schemes (NUSAF, PDM, UWEF, YLP) are widespread but often undermined by misuse of funds and weak repayment. NGOs have been more impactful.
- Challenges and gaps:
 - **Cultural barriers:** Patriarchal norms limit women and youth from accessing resources or decision-making power.
 - **Technical gaps:** Weak forecasting capacity, poor veterinary and seed systems, limited climate-smart agriculture uptake.
 - **Sustainability issues:** Infrastructure failures (e.g., dams, boreholes), underfunded anticipatory action, weak local climate information.
- Opportunities: Scale up VSLAs, women's enterprises, and climate-smart agriculture; integrate AI and index-based livestock insurance (IBLI); and strengthen cross-border partnerships (e.g., BORESHA) to address both climate and conflict shocks.

External programmes have been most effective when they combine financial support with technical training, market linkages, and community ownership. In both Kenya and Uganda, VSLAs and women's groups remain central vehicles for strengthening adaptive livelihoods. External support has been crucial in both contexts, but with different emphases. Kenya relies more heavily on NGO and donor-driven initiatives, while Uganda benefits more from broader government programmes, though with mixed and often uneven results.

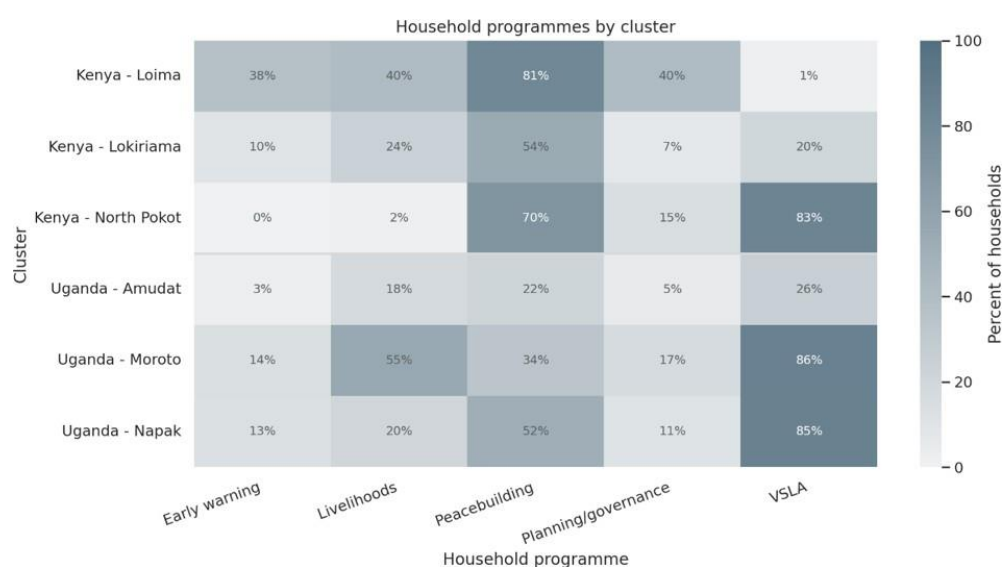
In **Kenya**, government engagement has largely focused on regulating charcoal, livestock trade, and markets, with limited direct livelihood programming. By contrast, NGOs and donors have been more visible, piloting horticulture, kitchen gardens, poultry, and interventions in mining zones. Programmes such as Nawiri, BOMA, the Red Cross, and GIZ have supported VSLAs, cash transfers, and training, while IGAD-led cross-border dialogues temporarily reduced raiding. The most successful strategies have been those rooted in VSLAs and women's groups, which provide savings and credit alongside peer support. Yet gaps remain, particularly in access to formal financial services, insurance, and climate-resilient inputs such as seeds and tools. Mining also remains unregulated and risky.⁸⁵ Household survey results (Figure 17) reveal that households across Kenya were most frequently involved in peacebuilding programmes, while in North Pokot engagement in VSLAs programming stands out.

In **Uganda**, government-led programmes such as NUSAF, the Parish Development Model (PDM), the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEF), and the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) have been implemented but show mixed results. Weak guidance, misuse of funds, and repayment failures have undermined their effectiveness. NGO interventions have generally been more successful, with Save the Children supporting livestock and gardens, BRAC and ZOA providing vocational training, Mercy Corps introducing drought-tolerant crops, and TPO promoting irrigation. VSLAs have been scaled up

⁸⁵ KII 2,3,4,5,6,7,18,22 FGD 1,2,7,9,11

significantly, especially for women. Welthungerhilfe (WHH) trained mothers in nutrition, sanitation, and bookkeeping for VSLAs. This is also reflected in the survey results, with VSLA programming being the most commonly engaged in among surveyed households. Moreover, vocational training and livestock distribution have also produced positive outcomes. Persistent gaps include weak veterinary cold chains, lack of seed banks, limited access to timely weather and climate information, and poor inclusion of youth and women in peace structures.⁸⁶

Figure 16: Is anyone in your household currently part of any of the following programmes? By cluster.



Overall, the evidence shows that NGO programmes are generally better targeted and more community-based in both contexts, while government efforts are broader but uneven. The most promising results are consistently associated with VSLAs and women's groups, which combine financial resilience with social cohesion.

Box 6. Women's saving groups as anchors of resilience

VSLAs are a good example of resilience in fragile environments, particularly in Karamoja where women struggle to access formal credit and sustainable livelihood opportunities, these groups provide a practical alternative. Women pool resources, support small enterprises, and in doing so, strengthen household finances, cope with shocks, and gain influence in decision-making.

During the FGD with women from Rupa Sub-County, Moroto, one participant described how women come together in times of need:

"When there's a crisis, we form VSLA groups, for example, those that make beads. We collect money to buy beads, then make necklaces, waist beads, and bags which we take to town to sell. We bring the money back, save some, and use some to provide food and basic needs for the family."

⁸⁶ FGD 17,22, 23,24 KII 23,24,26,36,32,38

This example shows how women use VSLAs how women use VSLAs not only as savings groups but also as community safety nets. They redistribute resources during shocks, reinforce solidarity, and create platforms where women exercise more influence in household and community decision-making.

Key lessons from this experience is that VSLAs reduce vulnerability in ways that complement traditional coping strategies. They provide access to small loans, strengthen household finances, and support livelihood diversification. However, their scale remains modest. Limited funds, weak market access, and water scarcity constrain their ability to generate transformative change. Without parallel investments in infrastructure, technical training, and market linkages, VSLAs risk remaining short-term coping mechanisms, rather than drivers of resilience.

Programming gaps, challenges and opportunities

Part of the key controversial issues that would pose a challenge to programming in the Karamoja cluster include strong cultural influences that have a direct correlation to the lives, attitudes, and actions of the communities. Identifying strategies to incorporate these strong cultural references is essential to having a concrete result in the programming. Evidence has also shown that complementing both traditions with government structures could provide an added advantage in conflict resolution.⁸⁷

In an environment that is highly patriarchal, decision-making power has been delegated to men, further neglecting the role of women in the community to the extent that they have no resources to forge a livelihood. As stated in the USAID's political economy analysis of the Karamoja region, women not only act as peacekeeping champions but also as active contributors to household resilience. Further within the region, evidence has shown that independent women are more admired within the community as a number of them have become primary providers for their households. This, however, poses a challenge as men perceive this as de-masculating, which could translate to domestic violence. Alternative options for enhancing women's livelihoods have been provided in commercialisation, where women are more willing to adopt and learn alternative livelihood opportunities, although with increased difficulties due to their limited access to resources.⁸⁸

The advent of technology and the increased ownership of gadgets within the region brings both opportunities for increased communication and information sharing to support climate-smart and resilient agriculture and build resilience, and complicates peacebuilding initiatives and social cohesion. For instance, the use of Google Maps has intensified border conflicts as the borders depicted in the maps seem to be altered, further fuelling conflict.⁸⁹

Identified gaps in relation to AA were that there is insufficient funding in the eastern region to provide adequate protection to vulnerable communities; the forecasting capacity in the Eastern Africa region is not well developed; and the current forecasting methods used rely on global data often missing on the local climate events. AA systems should be responsive to the simultaneous nature of flood and drought in the region. Integration of AI in the FII (forecast index insurance) could enhance the resilience of the communities by addressing shocks in real time.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ USAID, "Applied Political Economy Analysis for the Karamoja Cluster," 2023; IGAD, "Resolving Conflicts Using Traditional Mechanism in the Karamoja and Teso regions of Uganda," n.d., accessed at <https://land.igad.int/index.php/documents-1/countries/uganda/conflict-7/1217-resolving-conflicts-using-traditional-mechanisms-in-the-karamoja-and-teso-regions-of-uganda/file>

⁸⁸ USAID, "Applied Political Economy Analysis for the Karamoja Cluster," 2023; Elizabeth Stites, "Gender in Light of Livelihoods Trends in the Karamoja Cluster," 2019.

⁸⁹ Rigan Mark Acheke, Emmanuel Eilu, "Pastoralists' Use of Mobil Phones for Livestock Management in Karamoja, Uganda" 2024; USAID, "Applied Political Economy Analysis for the Karamoja Cluster," 2023.

⁹⁰ MFA Denmark, WFP, "Artificial Intelligence, Anticipatory Action & Climate Risk Financing: Protecting Food Security from Climate Risks in Eastern Africa 2025-2026" 2024.

A partnership-driven approach that capitalises on the comparative advantages of various agencies, designed in a community-driven recovery and development (CDRD) approach based on the needs and right-based principle, while leveraging the advocacy and protection sensitivity lens, is identified as essential for fostering impactful and sustainable development outcomes.⁹¹

A cross-border programme, Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) endline evaluation, showed that another innovative measure of building the anticipatory capacities of the communities in arid areas is through an index-based livestock insurance (IBLI) scheme that compensates herders and pastoralists for the animals they lose due to drought.⁹²

⁹¹ DRC, "Karamoja-Turkana Scoping Finding", 2022.

⁹² DRC, "Summary Report: The End-line Evaluation of Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa", 2021.

5. ANTICIPATORY ACTION AND PREPAREDNESS

5.1 Early warning

Key Findings

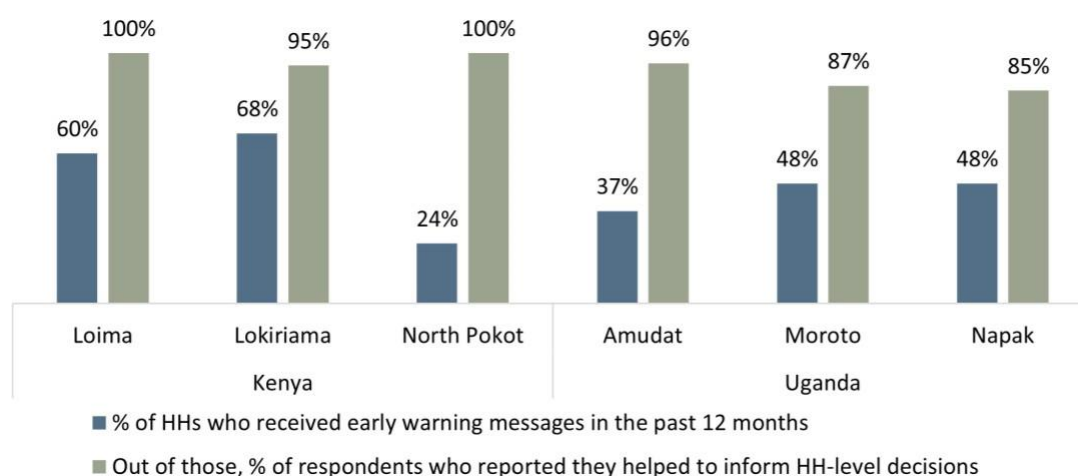
- Just over half of households (53%) reported receiving an early warning in the past year, with higher coverage in Kenya (52%) than in Uganda (44%). Within Kenya, Lokirima (68%) and Loima (60%) stand out, while North Pokot (24%) lags. In Uganda, Moroto (48%) is better covered than Amudat (36%).
- Kenya relies on diverse systems (radios, chiefs, barazas, SMS alerts, NGOs), while Uganda is radio-dominated, with leaders and churches also important. Trust is uneven: NGOs and leaders are highly rated in both countries, but Kenya shows stronger benefits from SMS and religious networks.
- Only one in four households reported taking any anticipatory action before the most recent shock, slightly higher in Kenya (29%) than Uganda (22%). Most coping remains reactive, such as reducing meals or migrating rather than proactive.
- Households report low confidence in coping capacity. Kenya scores slightly higher on resources and recovery, Uganda on decision-making and rebuilding, but few in either setting feel better prepared than before.
- Support priorities:
 - **Kenya:** Expand water infrastructure, seed/cereal banking, climate-smart agriculture, and women/youth cooperatives (VSLAs).
 - **Uganda:** Strengthen VSLAs and agribusiness, promote irrigation, tree nurseries, agroforestry, and practical skills for soil/water conservation.

Despite the existence of traditional coping strategies, many community members point to the absence of reliable, formal support systems, as shocks become more frequent, violent and unpredictable. One of the biggest concerns on existing mechanisms is the lack of timely and practical climate forecasts and information. There is some awareness of early warning messages from NGOs or the government, but these are not always timely, accessible, or trusted, especially because of poor downscaling and distribution of monitoring information. The knowledge is often too general or arrives too late to act on. For example, a general radio forecast might announce expected droughts but without a clear advice tied to local grazing routes or planting schedules, communities cannot interpret the message properly to their realities. With climate patterns shifting, traditional nature observation (animal behaviour and plan cycles) is no longer sufficient. Tools, like mobile alerts, localised meteorological forecasts and other scientific tools could be integrated to traditional strategies and support kraal leaders, farmers, pastoralists and women to spread informed decisions more effectively.⁹³

In our survey, just over half of households (53%) reported receiving an early warning in the past year, with coverage stronger in Kenya (52%) than in Uganda (44%). Within **Kenya**, Lokirima (68 %) and Loima (60 %) stand out as relatively well-covered, while North Pokot is a clear outlier at just 24%. **Uganda** shows similar variation, with Moroto close to parity (48 %) but Amudat notably lower (36 %), suggesting uneven delivery across clusters. Among those who received warnings, the vast majority found them to be helpful in informing decision-making (Figure 19).

⁹³ APAD for Feed the Future, "Karamoja Conflict and Climate Assessment Report", USAID, 2023.

Figure 17: % of households who received early warning messages in the past 12 months.



The field data collection informed that early warning information in Kenya is shared through radios, chiefs, community barazas, Red Cross SMS alerts, chiefs, and traditional foretellers. However, coverage and trust remain uneven. Network blackspots in border areas delay alerts, while limited phone ownership, especially among women, reduces access to SMS-based systems. Communities often still rely on traditional forecasts based on animal behaviour, star reading, or intestine reading, though their accuracy is increasingly questioned by youth. Kenya Meteorological Department and NGOs alerts are often seen as too technical, poorly timed, or difficult to interpret by women, youth, and illiterate groups.⁹⁴

We also need to establish early warning systems, documentation, and knowledge translated into vernacular languages so that people can understand. The information provided by stakeholders is formal, yet it must be translated into local languages so that when people speak on the radio, the information is understood even by those who have not attended school. -- Environment and Climate Focal, North Pokot

Early warning information in Uganda is delivered through radios, churches, schools, markets, and increasingly via district offices that cascade weather bulletins down to sub-counties and villages⁹⁵. Community leaders and religious figures often act as intermediaries in relaying warnings, while traditional foretellers continue to interpret animal intestines, bird movements, or the stars.

Coverage gaps persist in remote areas, and smartphone-based updates remain rare. Women often access this information indirectly via men or savings groups, highlighting persistent gender inequalities in preparedness.⁹⁶

The survey responses presented in Figure 19 shows a similar picture. **Kenya** early warning methods are more diversified, while **Uganda** is radio dominated, risking if radio access is disrupted. However, each cluster has different methods:

- **North Pokot** radio is the most common (100%), alongside on leaders (77%) and community meetings (77%).

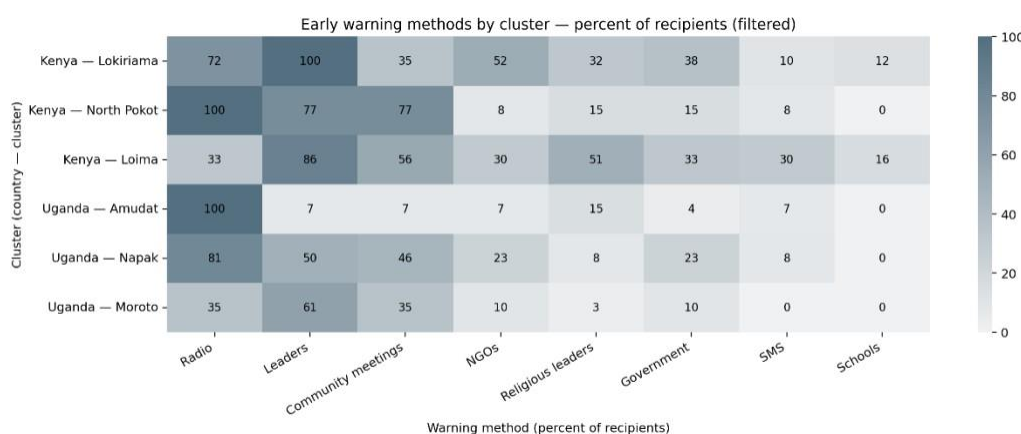
⁹⁴ KII7, KII14, KII15, KII18, FGD1, FGD2, FGD4, FGD22

⁹⁵ KII23

⁹⁶ KII23, KII28, KII31, FGD23

- **Loima** is mainly warned by leaders (86%), community meetings (56%) and religious leaders (51%) and SMS is the highest (30%)
- **Lokirima** leaders is the common (100%), alongside radio (72%) and NGOs (52%) most diversified of the clusters with moderate herding (42%), casual labour (41%), small business (44%) and the highest level of aid dependency (44%).
- **Moroto**, leaders (61%) is the most trusted channel, radio (35%) and community meetings (35%) are secondary.
- **Napak** is radio primary (81%), followed by leaders (50%) and community meetings (46%)
- **Amudat** radio is the major channel (100%) and the rest of systems negligible leaders (7%), community meetings (7%)

Figure 18: Early warning methods by cluster



Among those who received an early warning, the vast majority (94%) considered it helpful, with six in ten saying it helped a lot (60%). As per the household survey responses, NGO- and leader-sourced warnings were seen as especially effective, alongside religious networks and schools, while community meetings were rated somewhat lower. Looking ahead, respondents clearly favor leaders and radio as the most trusted channels for receiving future warnings, with community meetings also frequently mentioned. Preferences are consistent across men and women, indicating broad alignment in how communities want early warning systems to function.

Across clusters, **Kenyan** sites show the strongest positive perceptions of early warning. In North Pokot, 85 % of recipients said the information helped a lot, with similarly high shares in Lokirima (70%) and Loima (60%). **Ugandan** clusters are more mixed: Amudat is broadly favourable (56% helped a lot), Napak combines a clear majority positive with the highest “not helped” share (15%), while Moroto is weakest, with fewer than 40% helped a lot and many only somewhat helped (Figure 21).

Kenyan respondents report consistently stronger benefits from early warning sources, with 83 % citing NGOs, 84 % religious leaders, and 78% SMS as helping a lot. Schools (75%) and local leaders (72%) also perform well. In **Uganda**, leaders (53%) and NGOs (64%) are the most trusted, but religious channels (14%) and SMS (25%) are far less effective. This points to Kenya's advantage in using diverse and technology-linked channels, while Uganda relies more on traditional actors with uneven results.

5.2. Preparedness

Communities across the Karamoja region need more support to build their own capacity to deal with the risks they are facing. Local *kraal* leaders and elders already use traditional knowledge to read the signs of drought or conflict, but it is getting harder to rely on these alone. Practical training is needed on how to read and use climate information, how to interpret early warnings, and how to apply technological tools like mobile alerts or local weather forecasts. Community leaders can spread knowledge by

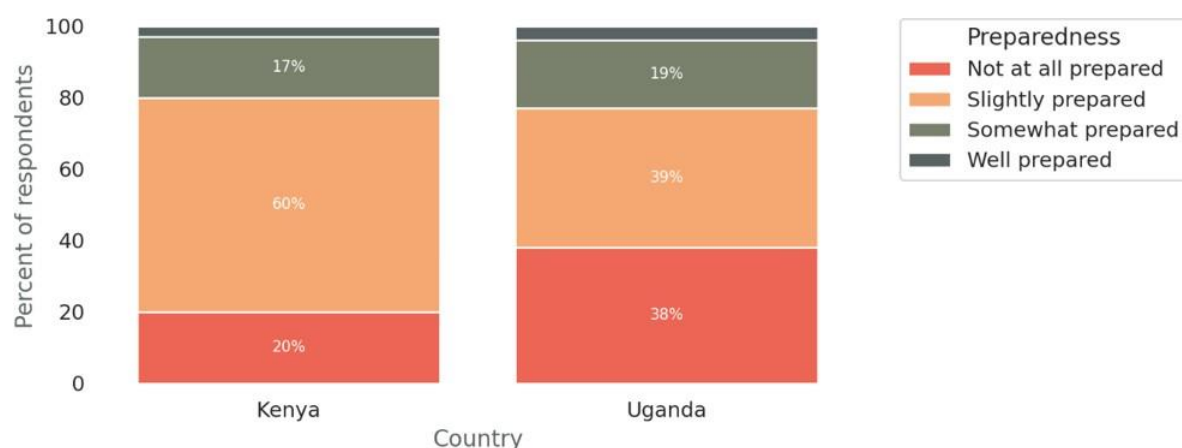
learning stronger skills in managing shared resources and resolving disputes, especially as pressure on land and water keeps growing. With that kind of support, communities could start developing their own preparedness plans, ones that make sense locally and combine what they already know with newer tools. For example, mixing traditional seasonal indicators with scientific forecasts could help guide decisions about when to plant, where to move livestock, or how to respond before a crisis hits. It's not about replacing local knowledge, it's about strengthening it with the right kind of help.⁹⁷

For instance, in our survey, only one in four households reported taking any action before their most recent shock. **Kenya** shows a somewhat higher share taking action (29%) compared to **Uganda** (22%), yet in both countries the majority did not prepare. This points to clear programmatic headroom for promoting anticipatory measures.

We need support for an anticipatory community action plan where community members design their own plans to guide decision-making. We also need to develop scenarios that inform them about possible actions, timings, and types of calamities based on climate or disasters, helping the community determine what threats they face. Through scenario building, they can create action plans and strengthen the Community Management Disaster Risk (DMRR) committee, adopting the best approaches to ensure the community takes a leading role in preventing or mitigating disasters. Once they have a strong early warning system and are trained in designing action plans, they can develop their preparedness strategies and ways to reduce impacts. -- DRR Focal, North Pokot

Moreover, survey respondents reported low levels of future preparedness, though with different patterns. In **Kenya**, most described themselves as slightly prepared, suggesting that while some coping mechanisms exist, overall resilience remains fragile. By contrast, in **Uganda** a higher proportion reported being not at all prepared, though there was also a slightly larger share who felt well or very well prepared, pointing to more polarised perceptions. Across both countries, only a small minority expressed strong confidence in their preparedness, underscoring widespread vulnerability to future shocks.

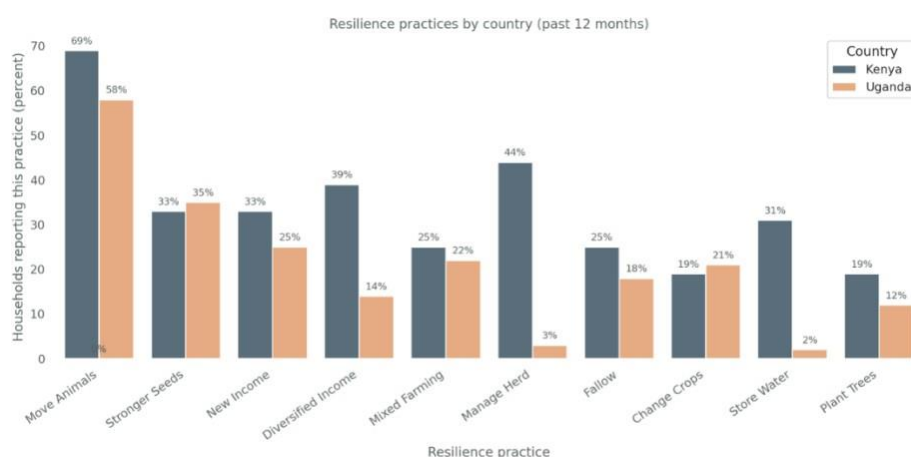
Figure 19: Preparedness distribution by country



Resilience strategies differ by context: in **Kenya**, households lean on mobility and herd management alongside income diversification, reflecting pastoralist approaches to risk. In **Uganda**, households more often report agronomic adjustments, such as stronger seeds or changes in crops (Figure 22).

⁹⁷ USAID Karamoja Resilience Support Unit, "Early warning and disaster response in Karamoja: the need to integrate local knowledge and formal systems", 2024.

Figure 20: Resilience practices adopted in the past 12 months, by country.



Despite these strategies, self-reported resilience remains modest. Fewer than one in three households felt they were performing well on any preparedness or recovery statement. **Kenya** ranked higher on resources, knowledge, and recovery strategies, whereas **Uganda** scored slightly higher on decision-making and rebuilding after losses, while. However, in both settings few households felt better prepared than for previous shocks.⁹⁸

Local action

Box 7. Past programming for anticipatory action

Communities and institutions across Karamoja employ a range of interventions to reduce vulnerability to climate and conflict risks, but these remain uneven in scope and sustainability. On **resource management**, Kenya has piloted dry-season grazing reserves, livestock off-stocking before drought, and tree seedling distribution for reforestation. Uganda has promoted grazing reserves and more structured livestock migration. Yet in both contexts, weak investment in sustainable water infrastructure and pasture management continues to limit impact.

For **food security and coping**, households draw on long-standing preservation practices. Kenyan families preserve milk and wild fruits or sell livestock early. In Uganda, communities dry milk, meat, and cereals and supplement with food loans through VSLAs. These measures have helped buffer shocks, but much coping remains reactive, reducing meals or migrating, rather than anticipatory.

In terms of **community structures**, Kenya has seen progress through cross-border dialogues facilitated by organisations like APaD, while Uganda has relied more on local peace committees and the strength of VSLA networks. Still, across both settings, women and youth remain under-represented in decision-making, limiting inclusivity.

For **early warning and communication**, Kenyan barazas, radios, and traditional leaders remain central channels. In contrast, Uganda uses on radios, churches, and local council structures. Forecasts often fail to translate into action, however, due to scarce funds and weak integration of traditional and formal systems.

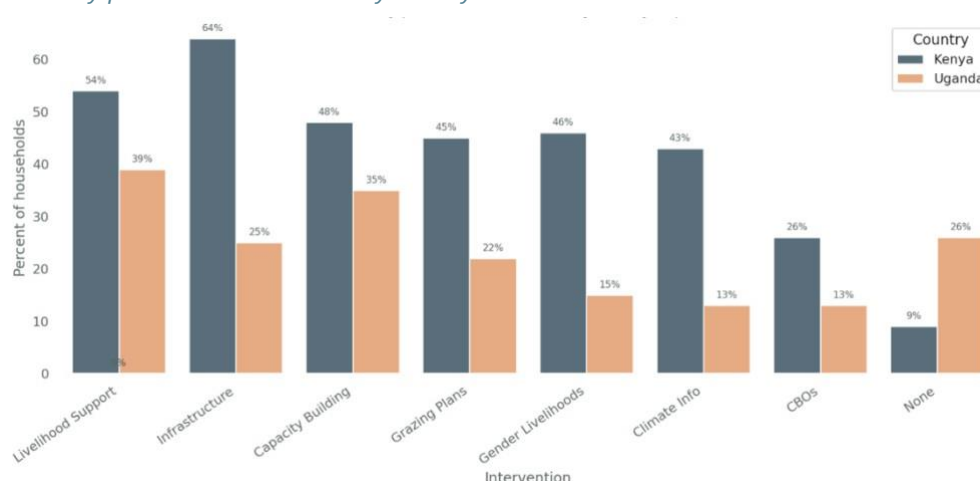
On **external support and infrastructure**, Kenya has focused on livestock restocking for affected families, while Uganda has advanced VSLA microcredit, horticulture, and poultry through NGO programmes. However, investments in dams, boreholes, and irrigation often fail to last due to unclear ownership and limited maintenance resources.

⁹⁸ More detailed analysis on this is presented in the Baseline Report.

At the regional and donor level, **IGAD/CEWARN** has strengthened cross-border risk monitoring and anticipatory action coordination, while the **World Bank's NUSAF** programme in Uganda and **FLLoCA** in Kenya provide models of anticipatory social protection and climate resilience financing. Overall, these lessons point to the value of combining community-led mechanisms with stronger institutional support.

Locally promoted interventions most often mentioned include livelihood support, infrastructure, capacity building, and grazing plans. Survey results presented in Figure 23 highlight clear differences between Kenya and Uganda in the promotion of interventions by local authorities. **Kenyan** households report significantly higher support across almost all categories, with infrastructure (64 %), livelihood support (54 %), and capacity building (48 %) standing out. In **Uganda**, interventions are less common, with livelihood support (39 %) and capacity building (35 %) the most cited, while infrastructure support reaches only a quarter of households. More specialised interventions such as gender-focused livelihoods, grazing plans, and climate information also show much stronger uptake in Kenya (around 43–46 %) compared to Uganda (15–22 %). A notable 26 % of Ugandan households report receiving no intervention at all, compared to only 9 % in Kenya. Overall, the findings suggest that local authority engagement is broader and more active in Kenya, while in Uganda coverage is more limited and uneven.

Figure 21: Local authority-promoted interventions by country.



In **Kenya**, opportunities lie in expanding surface water infrastructure (boreholes, rainwater catchments)⁹⁹, strengthening seed storage, drought resistant crops and cereal banking systems and training in climate-smart agriculture, livestock management and irrigation practices. Supporting household resilience through small businesses, women's and youth cooperatives, and VSLAs will help protect livelihoods against failed seasons. Developing anticipatory community action plans that incorporate scenario building and reinforce the capacity of Community Disaster Risk Management (CDRM) committees will be critical to ensure measures are locally owned and effectively implemented. Additional priorities include integrating indigenous early warning knowledge with official forecasts.¹⁰⁰ In **Uganda**, priority interventions include expanding and strengthening VSLAs and agribusiness ventures, supporting training on land and women's rights, and investing in technical assistance for irrigation, tree nurseries and reforestation to counteract climate stress. Communities themselves have called for greater knowledge on water conservation, agroforestry practises, and soil regeneration, underlining the need for practical skills that can reduce dependency on unsustainable coping strategies. Building inclusive early warning systems that utilise radios, community sensitization meetings, local leaders, schools, and faith networks will be essential.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ FGD1,2,3,4,6,7,12, KII11, KII8

¹⁰⁰ KII1, KII8, KII11, KII12, KII27, FGD1, FGD2, FGD3, FGD4, FGD6, FGD7, FGD12

¹⁰¹ KII23, KII24, KII25, KII26, KII27, KII31, FGD10, FGD13, FGD16, FGD17, FGD22, FGD23

Survey results suggest uneven confidence in local climate measures across the Karamoja clusters. In **Kenya**, confidence is strongest in Loima (75 %) and North Pokot (63 %), while Lokirima stands out for its much lower level (32 %), suggesting weaker trust or fewer visible measures there. In **Uganda**, Napak shows the highest confidence (61 %), with Amudat moderate (41 %) and Moroto lowest (35 %). Finally, there is a major gap in coordination and communication between actors. A systematic, institutionalised and coordinated response capacity is still lacking for communities to adapt and prepare themselves properly to the coming shocks. The roles and responsibilities of different actors, local authorities, national governments, NGOs, traditional leaders, are often unclear or overlapping, and highlight the poor cross-border coordination of formal and informal stakeholders. Literature also stresses the need for stronger coordination between communities and government actors, especially around resource sharing and conflict management. At the same time, cross-border collaboration between Karamoja and Turkana communities is still weak, despite shared challenges and cultural ties.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Climate Diplomacy, "Communal Conflict in the Karamoja Region" n.d accessed at <https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/communal-conflicts-karamoja-region>; DANIDA, "Karamoja Strong Project – Full Proposal", 2024.

6. PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

The Karamoja Cluster remains caught in overlapping cycles of climate stress, livelihood collapse, and resource-based conflict. Historical exclusion and weak service provision have left deep mistrust in the state, while poverty and marginalisation continue to drive negative coping strategies. Communities are adapting where they can — through women's savings groups, peace committees, or small-scale diversification — but these efforts are fragile and uneven. Against this backdrop, the Karamoja Strong programme is particularly relevant, combining livelihood resilience, conflict management, and anticipatory action within a cross-border framework.

1. Diversity and climate-proof livelihoods

Households cannot build resilience without reliable food and income sources. Programmes should therefore prioritise regenerative agriculture and rangeland management, responding to the documented soil degradation and land stress in the survey. Raising awareness of drought-tolerant crops, improved irrigation, and soil and water conservation can help restore productivity, while investments in fodder storage, rotational grazing, and livestock health services strengthen pastoralist recovery. Women's groups are already turning to small-scale poultry, beekeeping, and trade; linking these ventures to savings groups can provide both capital and informal insurance. In parallel, pre-arranged financing tools such as Index-Based Livestock Insurance—successfully piloted under BORESHA—could give herders the means to act before losses mount.

2. Strengthen anticipatory action systems

The assessment found that only about one in four households acted ahead of their most recent shock, with women in particular less likely to receive timely alerts. Early warning systems need to be scaled up and better integrated, blending scientific forecasts with traditional indicators in ways that are meaningful at community level. Warnings should be tied to concrete guidance and resources: pre-shock cash transfers, community action plans, and scenario exercises that prepare households for both droughts and floods. Communication must also reach the last mile (through radio, SMS, chiefs, churches, schools, and barazas) so that even the most remote or marginalised households receive timely, actionable information. Integrating floodplain management and land-use planning will further reduce disaster risks and ease competition over scarce resources.

3. Build on peace structures and governance

Competition for boreholes, grazing lands, and floodplains remains a consistent flashpoint, particularly across porous borders. While local peace committees, cross-border dialogues, and forums such as the Ateker Chiefs' Forum or the Moroto Women Peace Forum have shown promise, they are fragile and too often under-resourced. Programming should build on these structures with more consistent support and by formalising co-management arrangements over grazing, water, and markets at both community and district/county levels. Women and youth must be moved from symbolic to substantive roles, with formal seats in committees and decision-making forums. Linking peacebuilding with climate-resilient resource governance is essential... grazing plans or reforestation by-laws like "cut one tree, plant two" can serve as examples where environmental management reinforces conflict prevention.

4. Invest in cross-border forums and cross-border coordination

The findings reveal that cross-border forums play a crucial role in fostering collaboration across the Kenya-Uganda border. These forums facilitate dialogue around shared management of rangelands and water resources, support peacebuilding efforts as well. Yet cross border coordination is weak. To solve this, we recommend the following key actions:

This vulnerability assessment concludes on the need for sustainable development to be planned to address:



- 1. At the governance level, the lack of policy enforcement and the lack of prioritisation.** There are two issues here. The first, the lack of policy enforcement, is seen in terms of the lack of implementation of the IGAD protocol between Kenya and Uganda, and the lack of administrative structure to ensure implementation over, for example, tariffs. This has exposed community members to overtaking according to interviews. The lack of prioritisation on the other hand refers to the fact that the area is overall neglected by the government, with historical injustices worsened by climate change. Interviews point to both infrastructure gaps as the roads are very poor and connections are missing, while at the same time services such as health facilities and veterinary care are lacking. There are complaints of government not prioritising the needs of people, nor consulting people, when building markets, cemeteries or developing laws. As a result, very few people are aware of climate or land laws, given the lack of enforcement and poor public sensitisation. Cross border coordination is weak – with existing peace/resource committees coordinating but without formalised or binding agreements with counterparts across the borders.
- 2. At the level of public-private partnerships, the growth of extractive industries such as the mining sector opens opportunities for public and private investment as well as regulation in the borderlands areas.** Respondents reported not being able to negotiate directly with the mining companies coming to lease land and negotiate with communities directly. Greater focus is needed to ensure that regulations protect communities, but also specifically men and women who take on work in the mining industry. As reported in 2020 by the World Bank, the “small-scaling mining sector has long been influential in the Karamoja cluster as a source of livelihood and cross-border trade. Although it has generated economic benefits, the work is hazardous and can damage the environment (...) displacing indigenous populations who often lack registered titles. The sector has also reduced the amount of land available for agropastoralism”¹⁰³. Women reported that gold mining remains male dominated, and unsafe, and physically demanding for women; yet some women have no other choice but to work in the sector.
- 3. At the customary and formal justice levels, the gap between community-led compensation and justice systems, and formal compensation systems requires interventions.** According to the local norms, if livestock is stolen, the community, the county government and families contribute to compensation if, for instance, the Turkana side is found responsible. However, in some cases, respondents claim that the laws can be counterproductive, and are better left treated through traditional mechanisms which focus more on restoring peace, rather than on punishment. The government law is called the Livestock Resolution process: when one steals one cow, they have to repay back with three animals. This is seen as being too harsh based on community norms, although cattle rustling is considered illegal by all.
- 4. At the local governance level, the possible breakdown of traditional governance and conflict resolution systems needs to be safeguarded, as agreements between elders no longer seem to be respected.** Youth feel excluded from decision

¹⁰³ World Bank 2020. From Isolation to Integration: An Overview of the Borderlands of the Horn of Africa. Page 13.

making, they feel their role in peace efforts is not recognised, and that they are not involved in crucial decisions over land distribution. Despite youth being one of the agents during conflict, they are often sidelined in peace processes.

5. **At the cross-border trade level, the challenges is to maintain safe and open cross-border routes.** Trade has been impacted by the poor roads and expensive transportation, making it difficult for youth to sell surplus products in markets. Cross-border trade routes were once tied to weekly market days, but such schedules have collapsed due to climate issues and insecurity. Once thriving trade circuits connecting Kenya, Uganda and Pokot have been disrupted by insecurity targeting the killing of traders. In recent months, and in the past year, conflict has resulted in certain markets, such as the Alale Market in Pokot and Loima Market to close due to conflict. Women and youth mentioned trade was becoming less viable as they are affected by raids and lower purchasing power. Women engage in beadwork, small shops and trade – mainly keeping to trade in rural areas, but not cross border trade due to the uncertainty, violence, and risks involved.

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