



KARAMOJA REGION FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT: UGANDA

**A SPECIAL REPORT BY
THE FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM NETWORK (FEWS NET)**

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This publication was prepared by Stephen Browne and Laura Glaeser of FEG Consulting for the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located in the northeast corner of Uganda and flanked by Kenya to the east and Southern Sudan to the north, Uganda's Karamoja Region is situated at the apex of East Africa's Karamajong Cluster.¹ The region's semi-arid climate, the subsistence-based livelihoods and relative isolation of its inhabitants, and its volatile civil security status heavily influence its food security. While the region's inhabitants are often characterized as highly resilient, the direct and indirect effects of consecutive years of poorly distributed rainfall, crop and livestock pests and diseases, and continual changes in the civil security environment have contributed to an overall decline in their food security status and coping capacity. In addition, while external assistance to Karamoja Region has fluctuated for decades, this assistance is often incongruent with the livelihoods context of the region's population and/or addresses only a portion of needs, thereby limiting its overall impact. While increases in the frequency and intensity of local coping strategies and the provision of external, largely emergency aid offset some of the current acute food security challenges the region's population faces, continuation of the current coping-assistance combination will not improve food security in the medium- and long-term. Rather, meaningful and durable improvements in food security in Karamoja Region require programming that goes beyond the short-term provision of inputs and assists the region's population in protecting and building from their remaining assets.

Karamoja Region is composed of six livelihood zones, each falling broadly within one of three livelihood systems: a predominately 'agriculture'-based livelihood system in the western part of the region, a largely 'agro-pastoral' system in the region's midsection, and a mainly 'pastoral' system in much of the east of the region². Despite these variations, the assessment team found many similarities in and connections among the underlying causes of food insecurity across Karamoja. In particular, drivers of food insecurity in the region include the direct and indirect effects of:

- Climatic variability – specifically, consecutive seasons of poor spatial and temporal rainfall distribution;
- Endemic hazards to productivity – especially crop and livestock diseases; and
- Civil insecurity – including significant fluctuations in the incidence and prevalence of cattle raiding and other forms of theft and banditry, exacerbated by the presence of and access to small arms and an unevenly implemented and enforced government-sponsored disarmament program³.

¹ The Karamajong Cluster is composed of approximately 1.4 million predominately pastoral and agro-pastoral ethnic groups on the borders of Uganda, Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia. (*Akabwai, Ateyo December 2007*)

² See section III/Background for additional information on the classification of these livelihood systems and their composite livelihood zones.

³ See section III/Background for additional information on the disarmament process in Karamoja Region.

These drivers are inter-related. Consecutive years of below-normal crop production due to climatic and endemic hazards has left more people with limited food availability and access and fewer coping options, led to deterioration of traditional social safety nets, increased competition over and the degradation of available natural resources, and increased theft.

Civil insecurity in districts neighboring Karamoja Region during and attributed to seasonal (dry period) migrations of Karamojong pastoralists has also led the Government of Uganda (GoU) to restrict the movement of livestock out of the region. Unfortunately, while designed to reinforce civil security for Ugandans sharing a border with Karamoja, such policies increase the civil and livelihoods insecurity of populations within the region, as they hamper normal migration patterns, exacerbate competition over limited available resources, and confine populations and their assets (livestock) within a known space where they are more vulnerable to risk factors such as diseases and raids.

Similarities also exist among the coping mechanisms people in Karamoja Region employ to respond to food security challenges. Given consecutive years of below-normal crop and livestock production in the region, more people have turned to and/or intensified reliance on natural resources, including cutting trees for construction, firewood, and/or charcoal. This coping strategy is particularly evident in the region's pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, where timber is used to construct houses as well as the fencing that protects homesteads. In addition to increased frequency and magnitude of natural resource exploitation, the assessment found that more households are turning to casual labor for either cash or in-kind payment as a main means of sourcing food and non-food essentials. This casual labor often takes the form of migration to nearby urban areas or to those farther afield such as Iganga, Jinja, and Kampala. While most commonly considered a driver of food insecurity, raiding serves as another means of acquiring assets that assist in coping for many households in the region, though the purpose and results of and the means by which raiding is carried out has changed over time⁴.

Several external assistance programs are ongoing in the region, and interest appears to be increasing among new organizations to lend their expertise to these aid efforts. However, much of the assistance currently provided in Karamoja Region is short-term in nature and, while it works to provide some needed inputs, it focuses on proximate problems and near-term gains and rarely address underlying causes of the region's food insecurity or builds from the dominate livelihoods context of the region. Without increased appreciation of and attention to these underlying causes and the broader physical and social context within which they occur, aid efforts in Karamoja Region will remain unsuccessful in assisting the region's population toward recovery.

While the drivers of food insecurity and coping mechanisms share many similarities across the region, important distinctions exist in their prevalence and magnitude between livelihood systems and among the wealth groups residing within them. This assessment report underscores some of these key distinctions, and, to the extent possible, evaluates the role of external interventions in supporting and/or improving food security for the people of Karamoja Region.

⁴ See section III/Background for additional information on the evolution of raiding in purpose and result of and means of raiding in Karamoja Region.

SECTION I: ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE, LIMITATIONS, METHODOLOGY AND REPORT STRUCTURE

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) conducted a rapid food security assessment in Uganda's Karamoja Region from 30 October through 6 November 2009. The assessment focused specifically on the evolution and current status of food insecurity in Karamoja, in particular through the collection and analysis of information on coping strategies, local capacity to withstand shocks, and the use and importance of external assistance, especially food aid. Among the questions the assessment team sought to answer were: 1) how are people sustaining themselves in the face of consecutive shocks? and 2) how significant is relief assistance, particularly food aid, in supporting people's livelihoods?

Using a combination of primary and secondary data, this report aims to delineate the causal factors contributing to food insecurity in the region and the resultant shifts in household food and income sources and coping strategies. The report also anticipates likely future food security trends given current conditions. One of the major limitations of rapid assessments such as this is that analyses are based on a small sample of 'snapshots' of current conditions and livelihoods at the time fieldwork is undertaken. As a result, conclusions tend to be broad and extrapolated from a limited amount of temporally-specific information. The authors acknowledge such limitations with this report, though it is hoped that the snapshots collected and presented here, in conjunction with the growing body of information – much of which is referenced in this report – on how people in Karamoja cope with shocks, will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of food security and coping in the region. It is further hoped that the information presented here underscores the importance of undertaking more detailed analyses of the causes of and responses to food insecurity in Karamoja Region, as understanding and appreciation of these nuances is essential to ensuring effective assistance for the region's population. The authors also wish to emphasize that while this report highlights many of the 'meta' factors that are illustrative of larger food security trends in Karamoja, the information included in this document is neither exhaustive, nor should it be construed as representative of food security conditions among all wealth groups in all livelihood zones across the region.

Primary data was collected in each of the five districts of Karamoja Region through key informant and focus groups interviews with district, sub-county, community, and household representatives. The assessment team also interviewed local and international non-governmental organizations throughout the region. Whenever possible, community focus group interviews included at least as many women as men. Secondary information was collected from a series of local, national, and international reports and studies which are footnoted herein.

Methods of primary data collection relied heavily on community and other stakeholder participation, and included informal semi-structured interviews, wealth group breakdowns, livestock profiles, and herd dynamics matrices. When conducting wealth group breakdowns, the assessment team focused on

delineating differences between ‘poor’ and ‘better-off’ wealth groups and less on the distinguishing characteristics of ‘middle’ wealth groups. This focus was due in part to time constraints associated with the assessment. In addition, given the extremely small size and lack of representativeness of the wealth group sample collected during this assessment, the authors describe wealth groups in this assessment report in terms of activities undertaken rather than assets owned.

This report is divided into three main sections. The first section provides readers with an overview of some of the key physical and social factors that impact food security in Karamoja Region and linkages among them. The second section examines and analyzes primary data collected during the rapid assessment, distinguishing the drivers of food insecurity, coping, and the role of external assistance among wealth groups in each of the region’s livelihood systems and zones. The third section synthesizes the main findings of this rapid assessment into a series of conclusions, including suggested areas of future study and how this information can inform decisions on future assistance to the region.

SECTION II: DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY, ASSISTANCE, AND THE INTERSECTIONS AMONG THEM IN KARAMOJA REGION

Among the main factors impacting food security in Karamoja Region are climatic variability, widespread civil insecurity (and government measures to control it), and poor access to technical extension services and high disease prevalence, especially among livestock. This section examines each of these factors in more detail and outlines relationships among and responses to them.

Climate, external connections, and crop and livestock diseases

Compared with much of the rest of Uganda, Karamoja Region is semi-arid and unimodal, with variations in spatial and temporal rainfall distribution across the region significantly influencing the livelihoods strategies undertaken. The majority of the region’s population practices some combination of crop production and livestock rearing as climate and resources allow. Livestock are moved seasonally between the wet (agricultural livelihood zones), and the dry season (agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones) grazing areas, and intercropped agricultural production includes sorghum, millet, maize, and various other crops for household consumption and cash income. Despite its generally semi-arid nature, there are significant distinctions in levels of precipitation within the region. The western part of the region typically receives more rain, allowing for conditions more conducive to crop production. Three largely agriculture-focused livelihood zones exist within this wetter western area: the *NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock Zone*; the *Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone*; and the *South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone*. Moving east, the climate becomes drier and agricultural activities give way to more livestock-centered livelihoods. As such, the central and eastern parts of the country house three additional livelihood zones: the *Karamoja Livestock Sorghum Bulrush Millet Zone*; the *NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone, Central*; and the *Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone*.

Given the presence of both crops and livestock in every corner of the region, this report assigns the following definitions when discussing agricultural, agro-pastoral, and pastoral households. Agricultural households are defined as those who normally receive the majority of their annual food and income from crop production. These households may also possess some livestock holdings, the importance of which may increase in 'bad' years, but the main source of household food and income is normally derived from crop production (e.g., 80 percent crop production; 20 percent livestock). Agro-pastoral households refer to those households who normally source their annual food and income needs from roughly equal parts livestock and crop production. In bad years this balance may be somewhat skewed, but in general agro-pastoral households engage in significant and similar amounts of crop production and animal husbandry. Pastoral households are defined as those households who normally derive the majority of their annual food and income requirements from livestock and livestock products. These households are also likely to engage in some level of crop production when climatic conditions and resources allow, but the main source of household food and income is normally derived from animals (e.g., 80 percent livestock and livestock products, 20 percent crop production).

Significant fluctuations in the spatial and temporal distributions of rains across the region, especially in the last three years which included prolonged dry spells and flooding, have had a significant impact on agricultural production in Karamoja Region. These erratic rains led to below-normal agricultural harvests, constraints on availability of browse and water points, decreased local food availability, increased food prices, and decreased availability of seed for future planting seasons.

Exacerbating these production issues is the fact that Karamoja Region is largely geographically and socially isolated from much of the rest of Uganda. Until recently, civil insecurity inhibited many commercial (i.e., traders from outside the region), governmental (i.e., extension services), and social (i.e., local and international non-governmental organizations, NGO) institutions from engaging regularly with the area. Poor road networks and persistent volatility in security conditions further impede these exchanges. —Despite the fact that the region is becoming progressively more accessible as northern Uganda continues to normalize, as disarmament in Karamoja continues, and as NGO interest increases, the relative isolation means that prices for goods are high and selection is limited in this region compared with much of the rest of the country. Several key informants encountered during the rapid assessment also noted that the region's food access is inhibited by the inflationary impact of traders from Southern Sudan who reportedly tend to buy goods in large quantities at or above market value, thereby further limiting supply and pushing prices even higher. The region's relative isolation also means that extension services and other technical and social support mechanisms that are admittedly weak throughout the country are even weaker in Karamoja, if they exist at all.

The combination of inconsistent climatic conditions, a relatively high cost of living, and a comparative lack of technical and social support structures makes responding to endemic and exceptional crop and livestock pests and diseases particularly difficult. In 2007, Foot and mouth disease, Rinderpest and Peste des Petits Ruminants [PPR] infiltrated the region from Western Kenya and spread throughout Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts. The fluid movement of livestock both within the region and across the border with Kenya makes it difficult to localize and contain the threat of disease.

Shifts in the 'art of livestock ownership'

As noted above, livestock are an essential part of wealth and traditional coping for nearly all households in Karamoja Region. In general, people in the region use their animals and animal produces for sale (to buy food or other basic needs) and/or consumption (milk, blood, meat, etc.). Decreases in livestock numbers due to factors including: disease, decreased water and pasture availability, theft, restrictions on movement, and/or general poverty therefore significantly impact the overall food security and wealth of households and communities in the region⁵.

In terms of theft, key informants repeatedly referred to livestock raiding as a main cause of the deterioration of household food security and livelihood status in the region. While livestock raiding in Karamoja has traditionally been a means of asset creation (including dowry constitution) or as an expression of prestige, changes in the practice in the last 20-30 years that have significantly altered the region's social and economic landscape.

Traditionally, raiding was sanctioned by clan elders, followed specific protocols that helped to limit fatalities, and was relatively limited in scale. In recent years, however, changes in the environment internal to and outside of Karamoja have led to a significant shift in the purpose, results of, and means by which raiding is undertaken. Most experts mark the 1970s as the beginning of the shift in livestock raiding practices. Consecutive years of drought and resultant poor harvests in the first part of the 1970s weakened traditional alliances among the Karamojong. As these alliances began to dissolve, inter-clan raids became more prominent, and, with them, revenge attacks. Such raiding was further fueled by external factors, mainly, civil conflict across parts of the rest of the Horn of Africa, including Southern Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia. As these conflicts intensified, the availability of small arms increased, replacing the more traditional spear and stick⁶ as the weapons of choice. Civil conflict within Uganda also fed this proliferation of small arms in Karamoja Region, a proliferation which has fed directly into the larger civil security challenges that are now an inextricable facet of the region's food security. Though raiding occurs through the region, it is most predominant in the agro-pastoral and pastoral areas where livestock numbers are higher. Within these areas, the northern parts and some areas to the south are most active due to the higher warring nature of the Karamojong sub tribes, mostly the Karamojong and Turkana and the Pokot and Karamojong.

Consecutive years of shocks and the continued proliferation of arms in the region, despite attempts at disarmament which will be discussed in the proceeding section, have led to what many key informants referred to as the 'commercialization of raiding'. Given general increases in poverty and increased attempts to control the security environment in the region, raiding patterns are shifting away from acquiring large numbers livestock to build herd sizes and wealth and more toward smaller-scale but more frequent and more violent raids, after which the raided animals are taken directly to markets for immediate sale. This evolution in raiding has led to increases in loss of life, aggregate loss of assets

⁵ *Stites, Mazurana, and Akabwai, June 2007.*

⁶ *ACF, September 2008.*

(particularly when raided animals are sold to traders from other areas, such as Southern Sudan and as efforts to protect animals from raids, including placing them in protected *kraals* with many other livestock, increase the prevalence of livestock disease and death), and loss of access to many dry season grazing areas critical to the economy of much of the region due to perceptions of insecurity.

As raiding continues and becomes more commercial in nature, the aggregate wealth of many clans has diminished, creating an imbalance not only in household asset holdings, but also in the social safety nets of entire communities, as the livestock holdings of better-off households often become temporary assets of poorer households (poorer households keep and reproduce livestock from better-off households in exchange for animal products and/or offspring, etc.)⁷. Also, as a method of protecting their livestock, some poor household will opt to keep their livestock with better-off households, since they typically have the resources, including firepower to protect the larger herd.

Disarmament and restrictions on movement

In response to the proliferation of arms and concomitant increases in civil insecurity in Karamoja Region, the GoU began implementing a voluntary disarmament program in 2002. The scope of this program covered most areas in the region with more emphasis in the northern areas where most of the arms are located. This initiative was short-lived, however, as disarming groups did not receive adequate protection from raiders who had yet to be disarmed. Understanding the implications of this vulnerability, most groups refused to continue disarming. The GoU launched another disarmament initiative in 2006. This one was not voluntary and involved the use of GoU military personnel in a cordon and search operation said to have been replete with human rights abuses⁸. GoU army contingents still maintain a presence in each district as a security control measure, though key informants encountered during this assessment and secondary sources alike strongly suggest uneven enforcement of this security, indicating a tendency among individuals in the army to align themselves with different raiding parties for personnel gain⁹. In addition, given that the people living in Karamoja compose only one part of the larger Karamojong Cluster, and the historical albeit shifting animosities between clans in the region and those across the borders in Kenya and Southern Sudan, disarming only Uganda's Karamojong creates an imbalance of power and increases the vulnerability of these populations to losses of household wealth.

The second round of disarmament activities also saw the introduction of protected *kraals* (livestock holding pens protected in the sense that they are located next to military barracks) in much of Karamoja Region. While the GoU introduced these *kraals* to improve the physical security of livestock in the region, implementation of this initiative has been replete with problems. In particular, the protected *kraals* initiative has disrupted livestock production and productivity by increasing disease transmission among animals due to their close proximity; decreasing access to grazing land (as households can only graze their animals as far as they can walk within a day, since the animals must be returned to the *kraals*

⁷ ACF, September 2008.

⁸ ACF, September 2008.

⁹ Stites, 2009.

in the evening); decreasing household access to animals and animal products, such as milk and blood; and increasing vulnerability to raids, given the density of animals in protected *kraal* areas.

A further GoU measure to increase civil security in Karamoja Region and surrounding areas involved the imposition of restrictions on the movement of livestock between districts and across borders. The implementation of livestock movement restrictions was informally initiated at the district level in 2000 and formally enforced by the central government in 2003. In 2005 GoU intensified this initiative during the forced disarmament. This, however, has served to limit livestock access to pastures and water and has disrupted normal dry season grazing patterns. It has also disrupted household access to grain and livestock market opportunities.

Response strategies

While response strategies inevitably vary between and within households, commonalities in response strategies cited during this assessment include: collection of wild foods; offering of casual labor; petty trade; brewing of beer; collection of firewood/charcoal, collection of rocks/quarrying, and brick making; distress sale of livestock; out-migration to urban centers (particularly women and girls); movement and resettlement in wetter areas (though some officially sanctioned resettlement sites used to be livestock dry season grazing areas); and in some instances, illicit coping such as road ambushes, cattle rustling, other forms of theft, and prostitution.

While strategies such as those listed above are frequently undertaken when a household experiences difficulties meeting their food and income requirements, consecutive shocks in Karamoja Region over the past several years have intensified the magnitude and prevalence of these forms of coping. This intensification has in some instances begun to erode the durability of the coping strategy itself, thereby increasing the populations' overall vulnerability. This is particularly true of coping mechanisms associated with natural resource exploitation. For example, while increased reliance on bush products—including timber for firewood and charcoal sales—was pervasive among the coping strategies listed by key informants encountered during this assessment, more people turning to more of these limited resources is likely to lead to environmental degradation that, over time, could further reduce the success of the Region's main livelihood systems (livestock and crop production). That is, as the prevalence and magnitude of natural resource exploitation increases in the region, it has the potential to decrease the viability of the natural environment on which the people of the region depend, thereby increasing their vulnerability.

One significant change in coping over time that several stakeholders noted was the erosion of social support networks as shocks continue. Informants explained that whereas poorer households in the region used to be able to rely on better-off households to mitigate the impacts of shocks (through borrowing of livestock, labor opportunities, or gifts to offset education and/or health expenditures), now even these better-off households have lost assets and are unable to provide the same levels of support.

Resettlement, both permanent and temporary, to the western livelihood zones was another response strategy households in the agro-pastoral and pastoral areas used to fill food shortages. There were two forms of resettlement noted during the assessment. Temporary and informal 'resettlement' where households from the agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones would travel to the South Kitgum-Pader-West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock livelihood zone (specifically Iriiri) and to the southern part of Karenga in the NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock livelihood zone. Those that resettled to these areas would cultivate cereals and pulses to be brought back to native zones. Another form of resettlement was formally implemented by the GoU. This entailed collecting Karamojong migrants from the urban areas of Kampala and Jinja and formally placing them in non-settled areas in western zones of Karamoja, notably in Iriiri. It was unclear how many households were temporarily resettled at the time of the assessment; however, the formal resettlement activities by the GoU have been discontinued.

Assistance to date

Food aid, and in particular the 2009 general food distributions across much of Karamoja Region, has played a central and somewhat contentious role in the current relief assistance landscape of the region. While the goal of the UN World Food Programme's (WFP) general distribution activity was to provide blanket supplementary half- to three-quarter rations¹⁰ to targeted beneficiaries in the region during 2009, pipeline breaks and civil insecurity have made it impossible to carry out this activity at anticipated levels. It was also reported that food aid distributions have increased beneficiaries' vulnerabilities to civil insecurity, as incidence of theft reportedly tend to increase immediately following distributions. As one key informant put it, people are now being raided for food, not just cattle. Discussions with communities across the region during this assessment indicate that food aid at the levels at which it is currently being provided have, to a small degree, contributed to household food sources and offset some of the expenditures they would otherwise have had to direct toward food purchases. However, many households interviewed reported that they cannot and do not depend on these rations to sustain themselves, given the amount of food actually distributed and the unreliable frequency of these distributions.

Unfortunately, assistance in much of the region has now become linked with civil security, and there was a feeling reiterated among many of the stakeholders visited during this assessment that removal of assistance, and, in particular food aid, will lead to an increase in civil insecurity (e.g., road ambushes and other forms of theft), as people will have even less access to the assets needed to sustain themselves and will be forced to undertake increasingly extreme actions to meet basic needs.

¹⁰ WFP initially provided 50% rations to targeted beneficiaries, raising this to 70% rations in mid-2009.

SECTION III: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The elements that shape the current food security situation and their effect on households in Karamoja are best understood by analyzing them according to livelihood systems¹¹. Though most of the drivers of food insecurity are prevalent throughout the region, the degree to which they influence food access may vary from agriculture-based to agro-pastoral to pastoral livelihood systems. For instance, livestock disease may impact all households in Karamoja, but it will severely impact those most dependent on animals for their economic and food needs, such as households in pastoral areas. Differences may also exist *within* livelihood systems and it is therefore essential to understand nuances between and within livelihood zones¹² to best analyze how similar shocks will affect households' food security.

The assessment team found three wealth groups within each of the livelihood zones: Better-off, Middle and Poor. Though three groups were identified, the sample size of information collected was too small to establish a clear pattern among them. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, the analysis focuses principally on the poor and the better-off, with the understanding that a middle wealth group does exist and is contained here between the other two groups.

This section examines how food insecurity in Karamoja is manifest within each livelihood system, and, where there are differences, across livelihood zones. The analysis then delves deeper into the impact of shocks on households in a given area by looking at factors such as wealth composition. This approach is based on the understanding that, within communities, the capacity to cope with shocks is largely determined by a household's wealth, assets owned, and ability to effectively utilize available resources. With this information, one can gauge the general resilience of a population within a geographic area and determine appropriate types and levels of assistance needed to ensure food security and preserve livelihood systems.

Agriculture-based Livelihood Systems

The three livelihood zones that fall under the larger agriculture-based livelihood system umbrella are: the *NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock Zone*; the *Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone*; and the *South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone*. Box 1 describes each of these agriculture livelihood zones in more detail.

Though agricultural production is the dominant means by which the majority of households' in this livelihood system access food and income, the geography, rainfall¹³ and agro-ecology of each zone

¹¹ Livelihood systems are the systems employed by households to obtain and maintain access to essential resources to ensure their immediate and medium- and long-term survival.

¹² Livelihood zones are areas where people share broadly similar means of production and similar access to markets.

¹³ See Annex I

ultimately determine the types and quantities of crops households are able to produce for consumption and sale. Market-access or the households' ability to sell the commodities they produce or raise, in addition to their ability to purchase essential food and non-food goods throughout the year, is another key factor considered in analyzing livelihood and food security. Production hazards will hinder access to food and income; however the level of impact and the response strategies households employ to compensate for deficits varies across livelihood zones and wealth groups.

Hazards

Throughout the three agriculture-based livelihood zones, prolonged dry spells and crop pests and diseases limit households' ability to source both food and income. Across these areas, food security tends to be stronger among better-off than poorer households, since better-off households typically cultivate more land and can therefore sustain themselves for more months of the year. Not surprisingly, better-off households also tend to fare better than their poorer neighbors in the face of hazards, as better-off households have access to more productive assets, which they are able to maximize without severely undermining their livelihood security. Despite this relative resilience to hazards, better-off households are likely to face and must find ways to fill an income gap from lost crop sales.

BOX 1: Karamoja Livelihood Zone Descriptions – Agriculture-based livelihood systems

Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone

This sparsely populated lowland agricultural zone extends from the northern reaches of Elgon district north into the southern part of Nakapiripirit and has an annex in the southwestern part of Moroto district. This relatively fertile zone enjoys 1000-1250 mm of precipitation annually which feed the main crops cultivated – maize and beans, and in the swamper areas, rice. Though most households own livestock to some degree, the contribution they make to household food and income is overshadowed by the importance of agricultural production.

All households in the zone rely on their own crops as their primary source of food. The amounts households are capable of producing are contingent on a variety of factors including but not limited to: rainfall, the amount of land cultivated, labor and agriculture inputs and the ability to prepare land in a timely manner. The amount poor households harvest in normal years is not enough to cover all of their annual food needs; therefore they source food by working for better-off households in exchange for grain or pulses, and purchase remaining needs from the market. To finance the latter, poor household sell their labor as well as firewood and charcoal. They may also sell some crops immediately after harvest to cover pressing cash needs.

Better-off households harvest sufficient amounts of food to meet most of their annual food and cash needs. They complement the former with livestock products such as milk and meat and with food purchases. In addition to crop sales, the better-off earn income buy selling livestock and livestock products.

Market access is good throughout the year allowing households to sell and buy essential items. The crops sold are done so at local trading centers and taken outside the zone and to Kenya. Livestock is sold locally throughout the year and in accordance with household cash needs. From the local trading centers livestock are transported out of the zone to other regions and Kenya.

The main hazards influencing household food security are prolonged dry spells and crop and livestock disease. The ability for households to recover from food or cash deficits incurred by hazards varies according to wealth. Increasing livestock and firewood/charcoal sales, reducing of meal intake and labor migration are some common strategies households use to cope.

South Kitgum-Pader-West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone

The rolling grassland plains of this large rain-fed agriculture livelihood zone stretches from central Acholi into Western Karamoja. 700-1000 mm of rain falls annually, though the eastern part of this zone does not receive as much rainfall as the west. Agricultural production and, to a lesser degree, livestock drive this zone's economy. Sorghum, finger millet and pigeon

peas are the main crops households produce for food, whereas simsim, groundnuts and sorghum are produced for sale.

Poorer households are primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture, mostly cultivating staples such as sorghum and millet. The amounts they harvest in normal years usually isn't enough to last the whole year, therefore they will make up remaining needs by purchasing food and through the charity of relatives and neighbors. Though the poor may sell some crops immediately after harvest, they mostly earn cash by selling their labor in local towns, on the farms of the better-off, and through the collection and sale of bush products, such as firewood and charcoal. Households owning livestock may also sell chickens, sheep and goats as a last resort and according to need.

In normal years better-off households are capable of producing more crops than their poorer neighbors. Most of the food they consume comes from their fields, though as their food stocks expire they will rely on the market and livestock products to meet their remaining needs. In addition to crops sales the better-off sell livestock, mostly sheep and goats. They also engage in brewing and petty trade.

Most households in the zone are within close proximity to trading centers and are able to access markets without limitation throughout the year. Crops and livestock are typically sold locally and transported to larger trading centers within the zone and abroad to Sudan. Some labor opportunities are found locally on the farms of better-off but most are found in Sudan, Kotido and Lira.

The main hazards in this zone are prolonged dry spells, crop disease, flooding and civil insecurity. The degree to which these hazards affect food security depends on the resiliency of the household. For the most part, households will increase normal income earning activities and purchase more food. Poor households are more vulnerable to food insecurity as their resources are already stretched to make ends meet in normal years.

NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock Zone

This mountainous livelihood zone receives between 500-700 mm of rainfall annually mostly from April to June, but may get scattered precipitation up until November. The primary source of food and income for this moderately dense livelihood zone is agricultural production. The main crops grown for both consumption and sale are sorghum, maize and simsim.

Poor households source the bulk of their food from their own crops supplementing their production with food purchases and payment in-kind. Cash is earned by selling labor locally, followed by firewood and charcoal sales and crop sales. The better-off get most of their income by selling crops but also get significant portions of cash from livestock sales and petty trade.

Market access is considered to be fair to good, with multiple trading centers operating regularly within sub-counties and within close proximity to households' residences. Within the zone there are few market access limitations, allowing households to sell what they produce or gather and purchase essentials throughout the year. Though labor is mostly sold locally some household find opportunities in local towns and a few outside the zone.

The main hazards affecting the zone's population are prolonged dry spells, crop pests, civil insecurity, livestock disease and wild animals. To compensate for cash and food shortages incurred by hazards, poor households migrate out of the zone in search of labor, collect and consume wild foods and increase the sale of firewood and charcoal. The better-off are less vulnerable to food insecurity as they can sell livestock and purchase food.

All households within the agriculture-based livelihood system rely on agricultural production as their primary source of food and any harvest shortfalls incurred by production hazards will directly impact their food security. Normal cash earnings for poor households are also likely to decrease as a result of hazards such as these, since below-normal yields reduce demand for agricultural labor from better-off households. Poor households living in the *South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone* may not be as affected by the loss of agricultural labor as those in the other livelihood zones in the agriculture-based livelihood system, since more people in this zone sell their labor in towns and larger trading centers rather than on the farms of the better-off. Households living in the slightly wetter *Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone* may feel less of an impact from

prolonged dry spells – since rainfall is more consistent than other zones – but still must account for any food or income deficits as a result from crop diseases and pest.

In addition to hampering household access to food and income, insufficient rains and crop pests and disease also exacerbate an already tense civil security situation among the Karamajong sub-tribes, increasing the risk of food and livelihood insecurity. Conflict associated with theft (raiding) is the most common impediment to civil security affecting all households, across all zones. The food security implications of civil insecurity in this region manifest themselves in a number of ways, including: limited safe travel within and between livelihood zones, affecting market access; injuries and deaths of able-bodied household members, decreasing households' income earning potential; loss of livestock and associate food and income; and loss of food and household assets as a result of theft.

Livestock disease, specifically *Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)*, has also increased households' risk of livelihood and food insecurity, especially in the *NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock* and *South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim* livelihood zones. In these zones, household wealth, income and their ability to cope with other hazards has drastically been reduced as a result of the PPR virus. Though the outbreak of the virus was initially detected in early 2007¹⁴, the subsequent loss of significant numbers of animals and the slow rate at which households have been able to recuperate small ruminant losses have reduced response strategies for and resilience to recent shocks.

The Government of Uganda's policy of preventing livestock movement beyond the western border of Karamoja has further aggravated food and civil security in the region by increasing competition for scarce resources. As the livelihood options of the agro-pastoralists and pastoralists from eastern areas of the region continue to deteriorate, theft of food, small ruminants and other household assets has also increased. Typically, thieves who are often armed will steal indiscriminately, injuring or even killing those attempting to fight back. All households are vulnerable to attacks and deaths associated with attack can have a significant impact on households' income earning potential and therefore their ability to produce and buy food. Poorer households, for example, may have limited household members able to perform highly physical labor and the death of one member will therefore have considerable affect on household income. Better-off households, on the other hand, may sell assets to pay for hired labor if an able-bodied family member were to die as a result of violence. Thus, the increasing incidences of violence associated with theft can push poorer households closer to food insecurity while chipping away at the assets of the better-off. Incidents of roadside ambushes are also on the rise. The GoU's uneven enforcement of their disarmament policy in the region has had a similar effect of increasing households' vulnerability to theft and raiding in this area.

Hazard Impacts and Household Response Strategies

The culmination of these multiple hazards affects all households within the greater Karamoja agriculture livelihood system, albeit with some important differences. Crop and livestock losses among better-off households have resulted in income deficits and reduced wealth, accelerating the deterioration of

¹⁴ FEWS NET East Africa Special Report August 2008

household assets due to increased livestock sales, which threatens short-term livelihood options as well as long-term food security. Although better-off households remain largely capable of coping, even without food assistance, the medium and long-term costs of their current coping strategies is a slide toward poverty. As the better-off become poorer, normal traditions of sharing - or the trickle-down of resources to poorer households - have become less common. This not only disrupts the normal flow of resources but, perhaps more concerning, it results in the corrosion of traditional power structures and social safety nets.

In addition to increased livestock sales, brewing and petty-trade are common strategies that better-off household use to cover food and income gaps. As discussed above, the viability of increased livestock sales as a coping mechanism depends on how many animals households can sell without negatively affecting herd size. In other words, livestock are only able to reproduce at a certain rate and if a household sells livestock at a rate higher than its herd can replenish them, the household will have difficulty maintaining a normal herd size to support their livelihoods. During the assessment, information on livestock holdings versus sale according to wealth group was collected, but given the small sample size of data collected it is not possible to accurately determine overall impact of coping on herd sizes.

Brewing and the sale of local beer are among the other strategies better-off households engage in to earn cash to fill income gaps resulting from hazards. Even if a harvest is below normal, the better-off can afford to use sorghum, purchased from the market, or maize sourced from ongoing food aid distribution to make local beer. Petty trade in both food and non-food items is another income earning option better-off households engage in to fill income gaps. This is mostly in form of buying grains from middle and some poor households immediately after harvest and reselling when prices spike between April and June/July (the peak hunger period). The better-off remained relatively food secure at the time of the assessment. However, the price of grains is likely to increase as a result of supply deficits and importation from more productive areas, consequentially reducing purchasing power for food stuffs as well as increasing costs associated with brewing and petty trade. Therefore, in the short-term better-off households are likely to have to rely less on brewing and petty trade and more on livestock sales. The long-term effects of increased livestock sales could result in asset depletion and increased vulnerability to livelihood insecurity.

The poor have a more difficult time coping with hazard events and therefore tend to be at higher risk of food insecurity. The effect of crop loss is significant in that it reduces food sources for these households and, more importantly, results in lost labor opportunities. Below normal harvests in 2009 resulted in reduced demand for agricultural labor by better-off households. This is significant because poor households depend on labor as their main source of income. Lost income opportunities translate into decreased household purchasing power, at a time when low harvests force them to rely more on purchased food.

The impact of livestock disease and theft may not result in as large a loss for poorer households as it does for the better-off, but the complete loss of livestock - especially small ruminants (reported among

many of these households at the time of the assessment) - leaves them with significantly reduced or no economic safety net to cover urgent food and/or non-food needs. As a result, poorer households rely on increased exploitation and sale of natural resources – firewood, grasses, building poles and charcoal - and the charity of others within their clan. Some poor households indicated they had already pulled their children out of school to avoid paying the high fees and to help the family earn income. Though important to household survival, these activities are not likely to be sufficient to meet these households' survival needs, particularly if stocks from the 2009 harvest expire earlier than normal. Furthermore, the continuous extraction of natural resources in the long-term will only exacerbate the unfavorable climatic trends and ultimately reduce the utility of such coping strategies.

Agro-pastoral and Pastoral Livelihood Systems

The agro-pastoral livelihood system is situated in the comparatively drier central part of Karamoja Region¹⁵. The drier condition of the agro-pastoral livelihood zone, or the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone*, limits the type and quantity of crops households are able to cultivate. As a result, the majority of the zone's population relies on livestock keeping. Like their agriculture-based neighbors to the west, the wealth of households in this zone dictates the level at which they engage in agricultural activities and their ability to withstand shocks.

To the east are two pastoral livelihood zones: the *Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone* and the *NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone*. The zones share similar characteristics in that livestock rearing is the dominant activity and agricultural production is minimal; however they differ in their ability to access markets. In the *NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone*, poor road networks and long distances to markets render market access difficult for the majority of households. By contrast, in the *Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone*, access to market and labor opportunities are better. Box 2 describes each of these livelihood zones in detail.

Wealth in these livelihood zones is determined by livestock ownership, and there are significant differences in the numbers of livestock owned between the wealth groups. Though the majority of poorer households own fewer cattle, goats and sheep, they often combine their livestock with those of a wealthier household in the *kraal*. By joining their animals with better-off herds, poorer households benefit from the protection of the *kraal* leader. They provide labor as herders and, in return, often receive milk, blood and/or meat as compensation. In general, households encountered during this rapid assessment indicated that laborers from poorer households who serve as herders often receive all of the milk these animals produce.

Hazards

Several factors have caused and perpetuated current food insecurity within the agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones. However, the manner in which these factors affect household access to income and food within each zone and across wealth groups varies. Similar to households within the

¹⁵ See Annex I

agriculture-based livelihood zones, the agro-pastoral and pastoral zones have experienced successive years of poor rainfall, compounded by livestock disease and civil insecurity. In general, civil insecurity and resultant government policies to address it have exacerbated the effects of poor rainfall and widespread livestock disease.

In the agro-pastoral area (the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone*), poor rains affect pastures, livestock watering points, and crop production. Though most households in this zone typically engage in some cultivation, the last three years of inadequate and erratic rains have resulted in poor harvests. The level at which households in this zone rely on crop production varies according to wealth. Owning plow oxen and utilizing household and hired labor allows better-off households to clear and cultivate more land, producing more food for consumption and sale. The poor, however, typically consume most of what they produce, selling smaller amounts to meet immediate cash needs. When rains are inadequate, as they have been for the past three years, the better-off can normally fill any food gaps by selling additional small stock and purchasing their food from the market. Conversely the poor, who have lost income-earning opportunities on the farms of the better-off, have not been able to adequately fill food gaps through normal coping mechanisms.

BOX 2: Karamoja Livelihood Zone Descriptions – Agro-pastoral and Pastoral livelihood systems

Karamoja Livestock, Sorghum and Bulrush Millet Zone

This sparsely populated livelihood zone stretches through the central part of Karamoja Region from the border of Southern Sudan south and into the northern part of Nakapiripirit. The bush scrub landscape is mostly uninhabited with a number of wildlife conservation areas which double as livestock migration routes for both the agro-pastoral residents and their eastern pastoral neighbors. Though most households cultivate crops, the environment is more conducive to livestock rearing which is the dominant economic activity. All of the zone's residents rely heavily on the meager 400-600 mm of rainfall received to recharge livestock watering points, pastures and for crop cultivation. Sorghum, and in the northern reaches of the zone, bulrush millet, are the dominant crops grown by households. Other crops, such as maize and sunflower can also be grown throughout the zone but to varying degrees.

Most households depend on food purchases from the market, supplementing the remainder of their food needs from crop production and consumption of livestock products. Livestock rich households earn most of their cash selling small stock, milk and butter, local beer, grains and, as last resort, cattle. Owning less livestock, poorer households can only sell so many animals before negatively affecting their herd size. They therefore must rely on the sale of labor, firewood and charcoal, grasses, hens and eggs and wild fruits to cover their essential needs.

Poorly maintained feeder roads and distances to trading centers make it difficult for rural households to sell their commodities and purchase essentials. Main road networks are not as bad, allowing for a steady flow of goods to enter and leave the zone. All commodities are sold by households locally.

The main hazards in the zone are prolonged dry spells, civil insecurity, and crop and livestock disease. Poor households respond by collecting and consuming wild foods, increasing the sale of labor and migrating to Soroti and or Mbale in search of labor opportunities.

Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral

This sparsely populated livelihood zone covers the Eastern Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts. Infertile soils and low rainfall (350-500 mm), tending toward arid conditions, in this zone's mountainous landscape do not favor agricultural production. However conditions are adequate for livestock rearing. For the majority of households, livestock and livestock product sales form the foundation of the zone's economy. For the better-off, small stock, sheep and goats are sold throughout the year to finance the purchase of grains and other essentials from the market. Purchased food is supplemented by the consumption of animal products such as milk, meat and blood. The poor may also purchase some food but mostly rely on livestock products, in-kind payment for their labor and wild fruits, seeds, nuts and roots that are found in the zone. With smaller livestock holdings

the poor are unable to meet all of their income needs through the sale of livestock and livestock products and thus sell their labor, collect and sell firewood and charcoal and quarry stones for income.

Market access in this zone is fair since there are large livestock and food markets throughout the livelihood zone. Most livestock and livestock products are sold at local trading centers and then transported throughout the region and to Kenya and Mbale. Nearly all labor opportunities are found in local towns within the zone, however some will migrate to Soroti, Mbale, Kampala and Iganga in search for work.

Major hazards include prolonged drought, civil insecurity and livestock disease. For the most part, households will increase normal income earning activities and purchase more food. Poor households are more vulnerable to food insecurity as their resources are already stretched to make ends meet in normal years.

This small and sparsely populated livelihood zone covers the southeastern part of Kaabong district and extends south into the northeastern reaches of Moroto. Agro-ecology and livelihood systems are similar to those living in the *Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone*. Poor feeder roads and long distances to markets are the major difference between this zone and the *Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone*. Given the importance markets play on how households access income and food, the *NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone* tends to be more food insecure.

Poor rains have also affected normal livestock grazing and watering patterns in the agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones. This has forced households to move their animals earlier to dry season grazing grounds located in the wetter areas of the west, and has increased competition among and instances of conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralists. In the pastoral livelihood zones, inadequate pastures and water directly influences milk production. Table 1, below, provides generalized estimates of conceptions and births from the *NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone* for the past five years. As the table demonstrates, consecutive years of below-normal rainy seasons have translated into low conception and birth rates, which in turn have resulted in comparatively lower levels of milk production. Most better-off and some middle households rely on milk production as a source of food and income. Poorer households, who often receive milk as gifts or payment in kind, are also affected by decreasing milk production, as the willingness to share and offer payment in milk is reduced. Given similarities between the two pastoral livelihood zones, the table below likely represents patterns for the *Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone* as well.

TABLE 1: Herd Dynamics for the NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone from 2005-2009								
Year	Season	Seasonal Performance (1-5)	Cattle			Goats		
			Conceptions	Births	Deaths	Conceptions	Births	Deaths
2005	WET	5	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
	DRY							
2006	WET	3	LOW	HIGH		HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
	DRY							
2007	WET	2	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
	DRY							
2008	WET	1	LOW	LOW	HIGH	LOW	LOW	HIGH
	DRY							
2009	WET	1	MEDIUM	LOW		LOW	LOW	

Across all three of these livelihood zones, traditional and commercial raiding has threatened livelihood security, pushing once wealthy households towards poverty and edging poorer households closer to food insecurity. It is assumed that better-off households, with their larger herd sizes, are more susceptible to raids, however, since poor households often merge their livestock with the better-off in their *manyatta*¹⁶ they too are at risk of losing what little livestock they own. The effect raids have on household food and livelihood security varies and largely depends on the ability of the attackers to successfully launch an assault and the ability of defenders to thwart it. As one informant told the assessment team, ‘...livestock ownership is fluid; if you have the muscle you can own cattle’. Overnight, a better-off household can lose a quarter, half, or nearly all of their herd and, with that, much of their ability to recover from other hazards affecting their food security.

Commercial raiding, which involves raiding smaller numbers of livestock for cash rather than prestige¹⁷, is another common phenomenon in all three zones. This type of raiding affects household food and livelihood security differently than traditional raiding. The raiding parties associated with commercial raids are smaller, and the resultant number of livestock raiders steal is less. The impact of smaller-scale raids on better-off households’ food and livelihood security may therefore not be as significant as for poorer and some middle households. However, the indiscriminate violence associated with commercial raiding, which often involves small arms, is often more devastating than traditional raiding practices. The traditional practice of raiding prohibits indiscriminate killing of women, children and the elderly, and rules of engagement for traditional raids were dictated by communities’ councils of elders. However,

¹⁶ A settlement or compound established by a family or clan.

¹⁷ Traditional raiding is done to increase herd sizes, and to acquire a dowry whereas commercial raiding is done primarily to earn cash.

throughout the years local governments have instituted more political control over local matters which have reduced the elders' influence. As the role of elders change within communities, and as economic conditions worsen, the traditions and rules associated with raiding are being ignored by younger warriors and instances of commercial raiding are increasingly common. This change in power structures and rules of engagement for raiding are likely to worsen civil security in the region, and could potentially spill into surrounding areas of Uganda. Like traditional raiding, this type of violence is detrimental to intra-household operations and the distribution of labor. As able-bodied household members die due to violence, the level to which households can engage in income generating activities diminishes. For instance, in the agro-pastoral *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone* poor households who do not have the economic means to hire laborers may pull one or two children out of school to compensate for the loss of an able-bodied adult. Better-off households, on the other hand, are better able to hire labor replacements from the pool of poorer laborers should the need arise.

Banditry and stealing of household assets and food also disrupts food and livelihood security of all wealth groups in each of these three livelihood zones. For poorer households, whose limited options to access food and income are already stretched, theft of productive household assets put them at greater risk of food insecurity. Stakeholders interviewed throughout these zones during the assessment indicated that banditry is increasing. As the general food security situation of the region worsens with yet another below-normal harvest, it is expected that banditry and other forms of theft will increase further. The repercussions of this negative form of coping again include deterioration of existing social safety nets – when households become poorer and food insecurity more common, the normal sharing of resources and other social arrangements tends to decrease, as better-off households have less to give.

Although not explicitly revealed during interviews with communities, there appears to be a livestock ownership threshold that households, or clans, have to cross before a 'traditional' raiding party is organized. Once decided, livestock ownership within a household can change overnight. Engaging in raids to increase assets is less of an option for the poor, as they rarely have the economic means to buy weapons, which cost the equivalent to a mature bull.

As mentioned in Section II, the GoU had implemented a number of measures in an effort to control civil insecurity in the region. These measures include disarmament and the introduction of protected *kraals*, both of which are intended to reduce violence and prevent raiding. Though the intent of these initiatives may have been good, their implementation has, to some extent, worsened food security conditions for some of the population. Uneven implementation of the disarmament campaign has left some households weaponless and others heavily armed. As a result, armed raiding parties have been able to easily sack unarmed *manyattas*, killing unarmed defenders and pillaging their livestock (mostly cattle). The most obvious effect of these types of attacks is loss of assets, resulting in loss of income generating options, loss of livestock products (milk, meat, and blood), decreased resiliency to shocks and increased poverty. Such attacks also provide continued support to the illegal arms trade in the region and perpetuate the cycle of violence, as households slide further into poverty and engage in increasingly serious and often negative coping.

In an effort to protect the livestock of weaponless households, the Uganda Defense Forces started a protective *kraal* campaign. Though intended to help households preserve their cattle and prevent raiding, the confinement of a large numbers of animals within the protected *kraals* served as breeding grounds for livestock diseases, especially tick borne diseases, CBPP, Foot and Mouth, Rinderpest and Peste Des Petits Ruminants [PPR], etc. Such confinement also increased the rate of depletion of natural resources around these *kraals*, as livestock could only graze within a day's walk of these areas

As crops fail in the agricultural areas, the availability of local (Karamojong) food in the market is significantly reduced. Households that were able to produce some grains indicate they are keeping most of them for their own consumption. To make up for shortfalls in the market, traders are importing food from outside the region, increasing the cost.

Hazard Impacts and Household Coping Strategies

Households across the agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones are implementing a series of coping strategies to meet their current food and cash needs. Like the agriculture areas, WFP's general food distribution has helped to mitigate to some extent the erosion of household assets, but the amounts of assistance provided have not been enough in quantity or frequency to allow for more than occasional short-term (e.g., one or two week) improvements in food availability. Disruptions in the distribution pipeline and thefts of delivered assistance have further reduced amounts of food aid available for household consumption.

At the time of the assessment, many better-off households in these livelihood zones were comparatively more food secure than their poor counterparts, but all were engaged in some form of coping to cover their cash needs. In general, coping strategies for the better-off households across the three livelihood zones consisted of a mix of increasing livestock sales, sending households members to towns and more productive areas to engage in labor and reducing non-food expenditures. Better-off households in the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone* also reported the collection and consumption of wild fruits and roots.

As noted above, the better-off can only sell a certain number of animals before it detrimentally affects their herd size. Coping by better-off households that includes increasing animal sales beyond this threshold, particularly given other hazards that have reduced the number of animals they own (e.g., livestock disease, raids, etc.), is not sustainable in the long-term as it threatens these households' ability to endure future shocks.

The coping strategies of the poor are more diverse, consisting of increased sale of labor, firewood, charcoal and other bush products. In the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone*, households will also consume wild foods. Those that have livestock may sell chickens, sheep or goats and, if available, cattle. However, like their wealthier neighbors, they can only sell a certain amount before they are no longer able to maintain their herd at a size sufficient to ensure their livelihood security. Poor households in all three livelihood zones sell labor in normal years; however those living in the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone* typically mostly work for better-off household

as agricultural laborers. Pastoralists, on the other hand, tend to look for labor opportunities in nearby towns. In times of stress, the poor in all zones will expand the number of household members selling their labor in local towns and outside their immediate area.

Firewood and charcoal sales are another coping strategy in which most poor households are engaged. At the time of the assessment, informants noted selling one bag of charcoal for UGSh 8,000. This would allow the household to purchase three tins of grain¹⁸ and still have UGSh 2,000 left over for discretionary spending. Commercial, political, and institutional interest in the region continues to gain ground, increasing demand for goods such as the region's relatively cheaper and reportedly higher quality charcoal and keeping prices relatively stable despite the increased supply due to coping strategies. Wood for both construction and fuel is also sold in large quantities. At the time of the assessment, many households reported 'getting by' in part through increased firewood and charcoal sales, but the environmental repercussions are already apparent. The past ten years of exploitation and its recent rapid hastening is quickly exhausting this natural resource base. As food security conditions worsen and more households sell fuel/construction wood and charcoal, the availability of these resources, and this means of coping itself, will also decrease.

As food security conditions worsen, poverty across these three zones is expected to increase. Though the level at which the better-off currently engage in coping may be minimal, it is expected that they will have to rely more on these strategies in the coming months, as conditions worsens. For the poor, the situation is more dire. Another poor rainy season will translate into poor yields in the *Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone*, resulting in lost agricultural labor opportunities, increased food prices and competition for livestock pasture and water. Given the threat of continued deterioration of food security conditions, the poor and some middle households, who have already stretched what resources they have, are likely to need additional food assistance in the short-term. All wealth groups in all agricultural, agro-pastoral, and pastoral zones also need livelihoods support in the short-, medium, and long-term.

¹⁸ On average the tin normally used carries about 3 kg of grain, which may last no more than 3 meals when stretched.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary and secondary information collected during this rapid assessment of food security conditions (both the evolution of and current status), household coping strategies and resilience, and the use and importance of external assistance in Uganda's Karamoja Region led the FEWS NET team to the following conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions

1. ***Coping and resilience in the face of consecutive shocks.*** Three consecutive below-normal production seasons and the high likelihood of a fourth as final 2009 production levels and assessment results are tabulated, combined with crop and livestock diseases and persistent civil insecurity has led households across wealth groups in the agricultural, agro-pastoral, and pastoral livelihood zones of Karamoja Region to engage in and intensify a range of productive and negative coping strategies including: increased sale of labor and livestock, increased natural resource exploitation, and increased livestock raiding and banditry. Unfortunately, continued intensification of many of these strategies in the face of persistent below-normal production conditions is unsustainable. Finite availability of natural resources such as wood and the negative longer-term effects of their depletion mean that increased reliance on these strategies is beginning to erode the coping mechanism itself. While the findings of this analysis indicate that there are some variations in the type and timing of coping mechanisms depending on wealth groups, nearly all households in the region are currently engaged in some form of coping and many have stretched available response strategies near to or beyond their productive limits.
2. ***The role of relief assistance.*** While interest in and external assistance to the region appears to be increasing, and while WFP attempted to launch a massive blanket supplementary feeding program in the region this year, interventions appear to either, 1) not consider carefully the social and productive systems and resultant needs among the people of the region, thereby providing inappropriate or insufficient assistance or 2) operate in relative isolation from one another, limiting potential programmatic synergies and beneficial impacts and restricting transfers of important skill sets and lessons learned. Given what appear to be ever-growing numbers of food and livelihood insecure people in Karamoja Region as climatic, natural, and social hazards persist, there is no doubt that the external assistance beneficiary populations receive off-sets some of their short-term needs for survival. However, rare are the interventions that transcend immediate needs and work toward the necessary medium- and longer-term assistance to maintain, rebuild, and improve the livelihoods of households in the region.

Recommendations

1. Whatever the impressions of food assistance as it has been carried out in the region to date, it is imperative that decision makers more closely examine the composite needs of the region when planning the next phase of assistance. It is recommended that food aid distributions not be phased out completely at the end of the 2009 calendar year, but that they more closely target food insecure households so that they can reach households/communities in need reliably and consistently. It is also important, however, that such programs: 1) consider traditional social safety net approaches within the populations they target (e.g., understanding that, to a large extent, assistance provided to households in a community will, to some degree, be redistributed across the community) and 2) do not operate in isolation of one another. For example, providing food insecure households with only food assistance will help to address short-term food needs. It does not, however, provide them with any mechanisms by which they may begin to improve upon and rebuild their livelihoods (and thus their resiliency). Furthermore, providing food assistance only to select households without additional assistance to other populations also struggling to hold onto remaining assets increases the risk that food aid recipients will become targets of theft and/or other violence. In order for external interventions to be effective on the ground, they must consider and be prepared to respond to *all* known social and productive factors in the region.
2. In order for any of the investments currently underway in or planned for the region to lead to meaningful, longer-term impacts, inclusion of local governance structures, including clan elders, regional representatives, and national officials is imperative. Unless the GoU, local officials, and community leaders all see gains to be had by improving food security conditions in Karamoja Region and consider it a legitimate priority, external assistance is likely to have a minimal effect.

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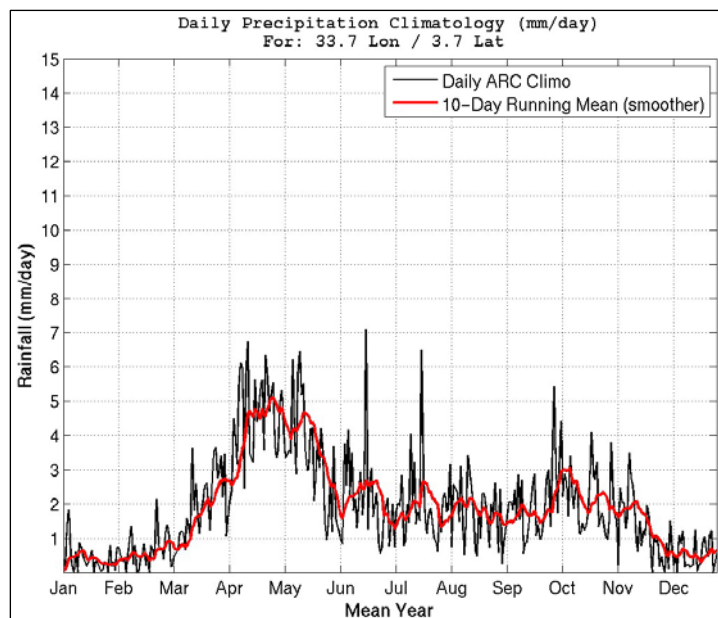
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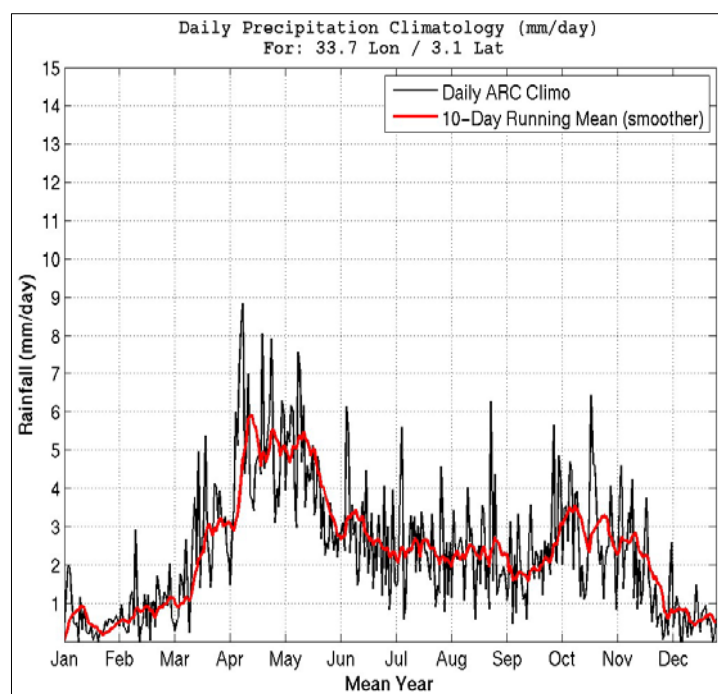
ANNEX I: RAINFALL DATA

Agricultural Livelihood Systems

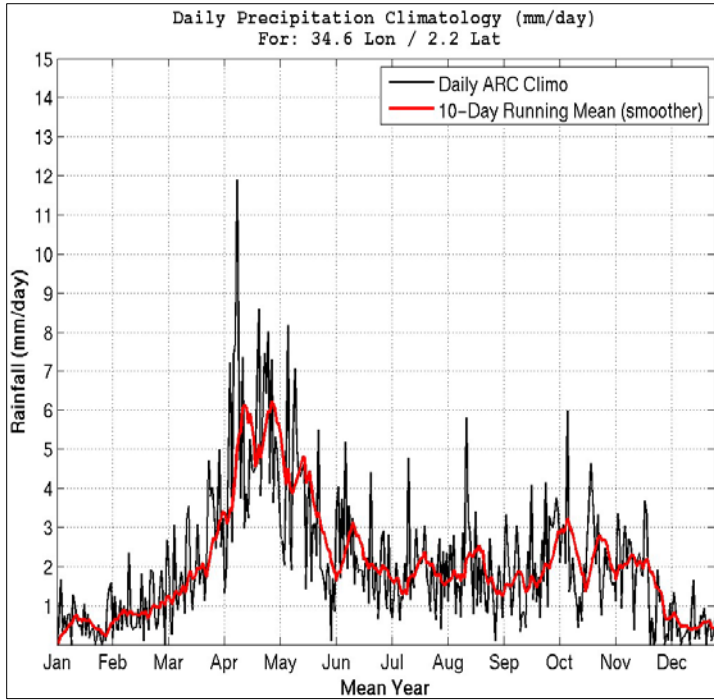
NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock Zone



South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone

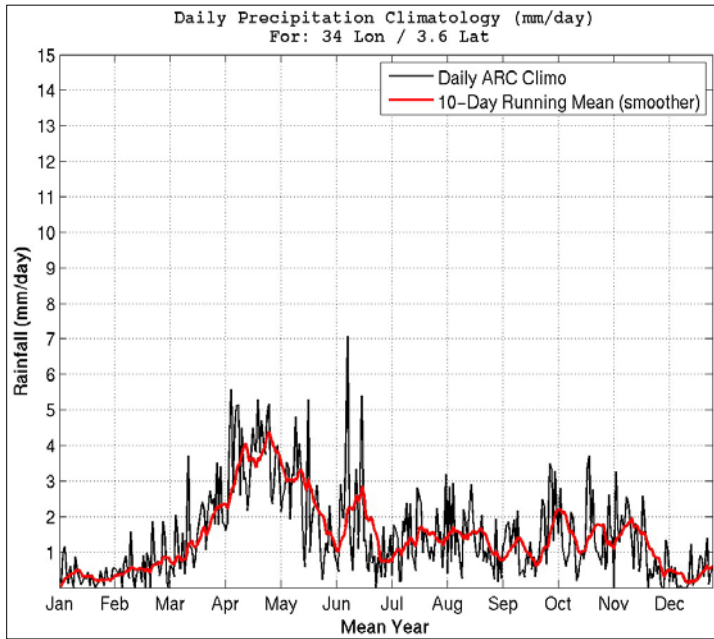


Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone



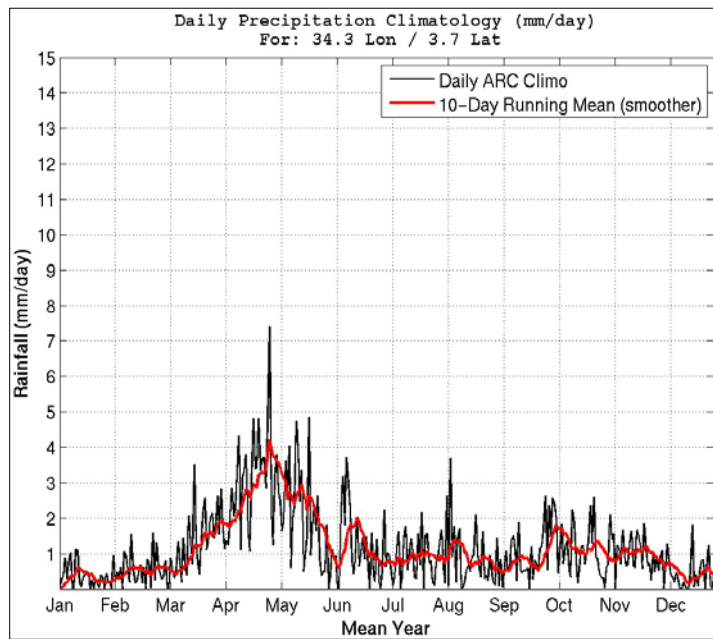
Agro-Pastoral Livelihood Systems

Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone

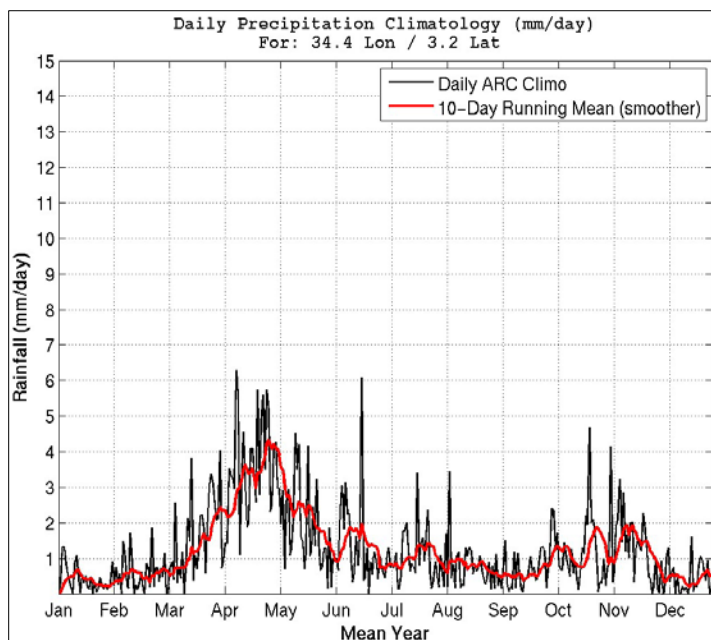


Pastoral Livelihood Systems

NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone



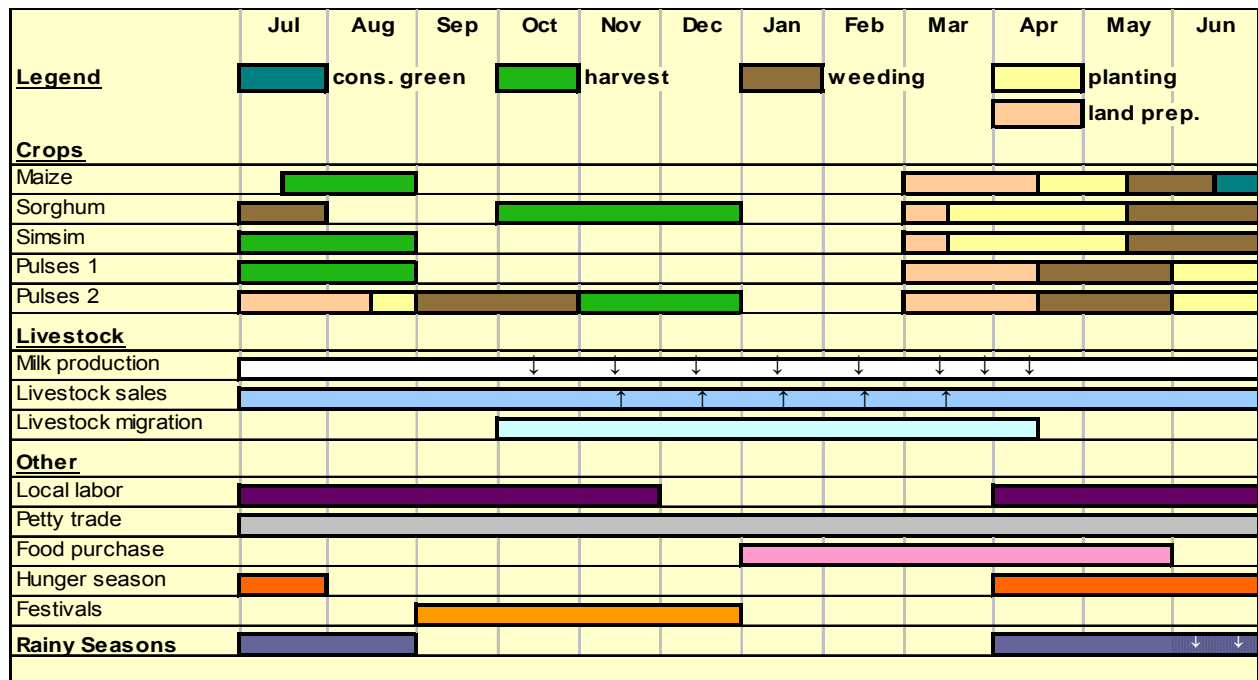
Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone



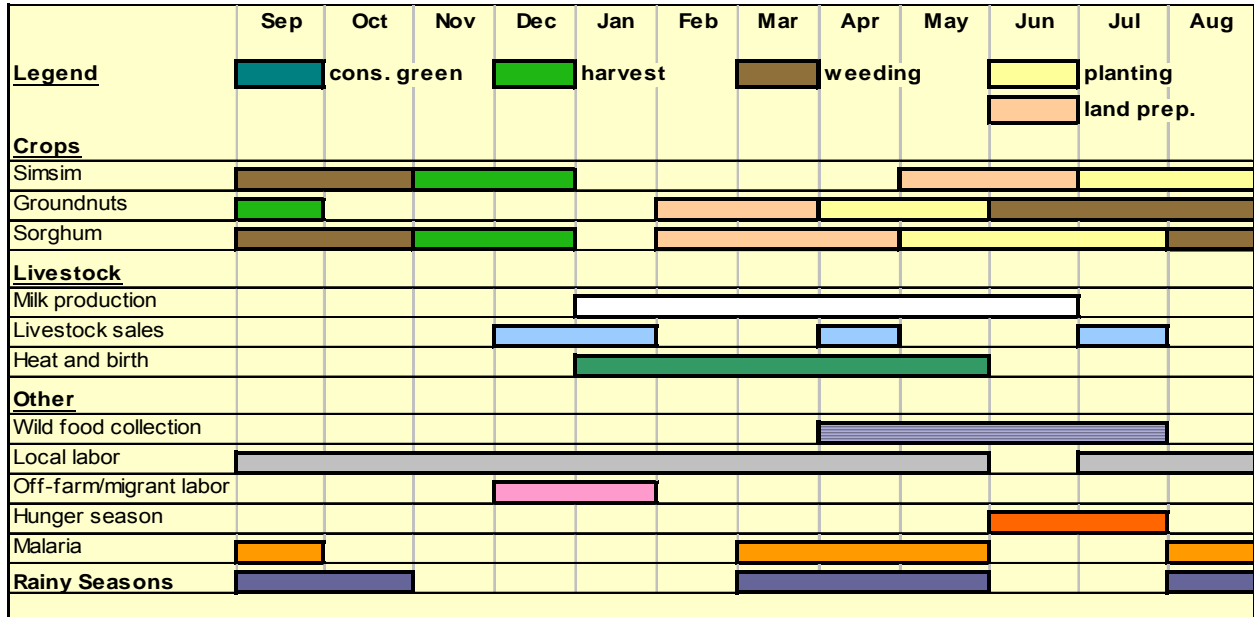
ANNEX II: SEASONAL CALENDAR

Agricultural Livelihood Systems

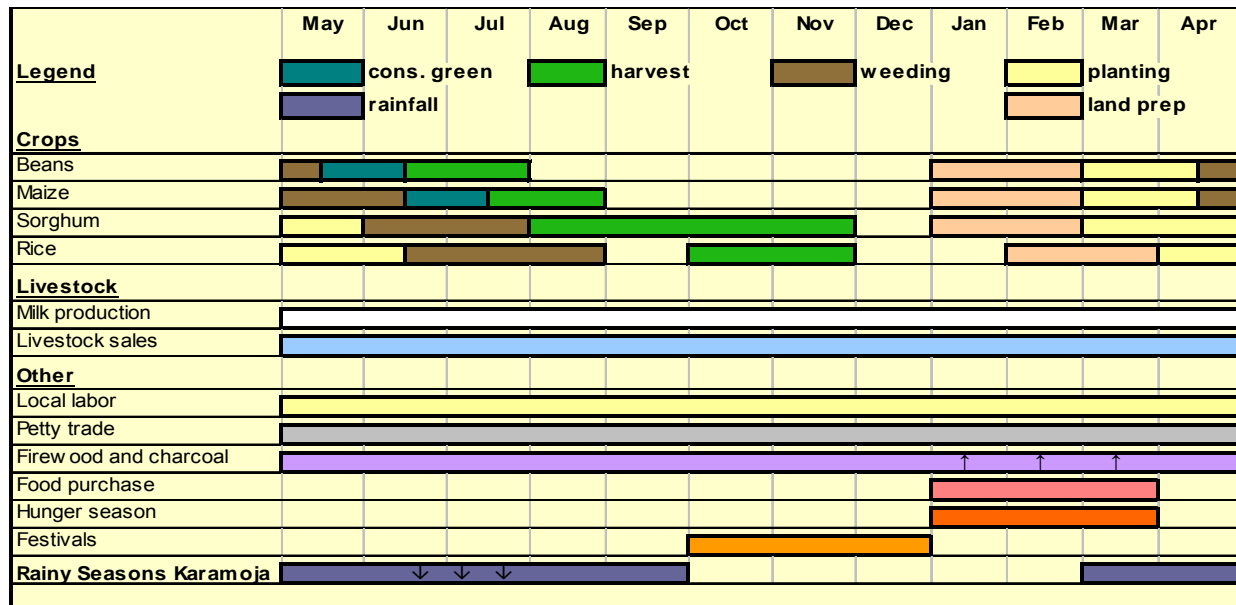
NE Sorghum, Simsim, Maize and Livestock Zone



South Kitgum - Pader - West Karamoja Simsim, Groundnut, Sorghum and Livestock Zone

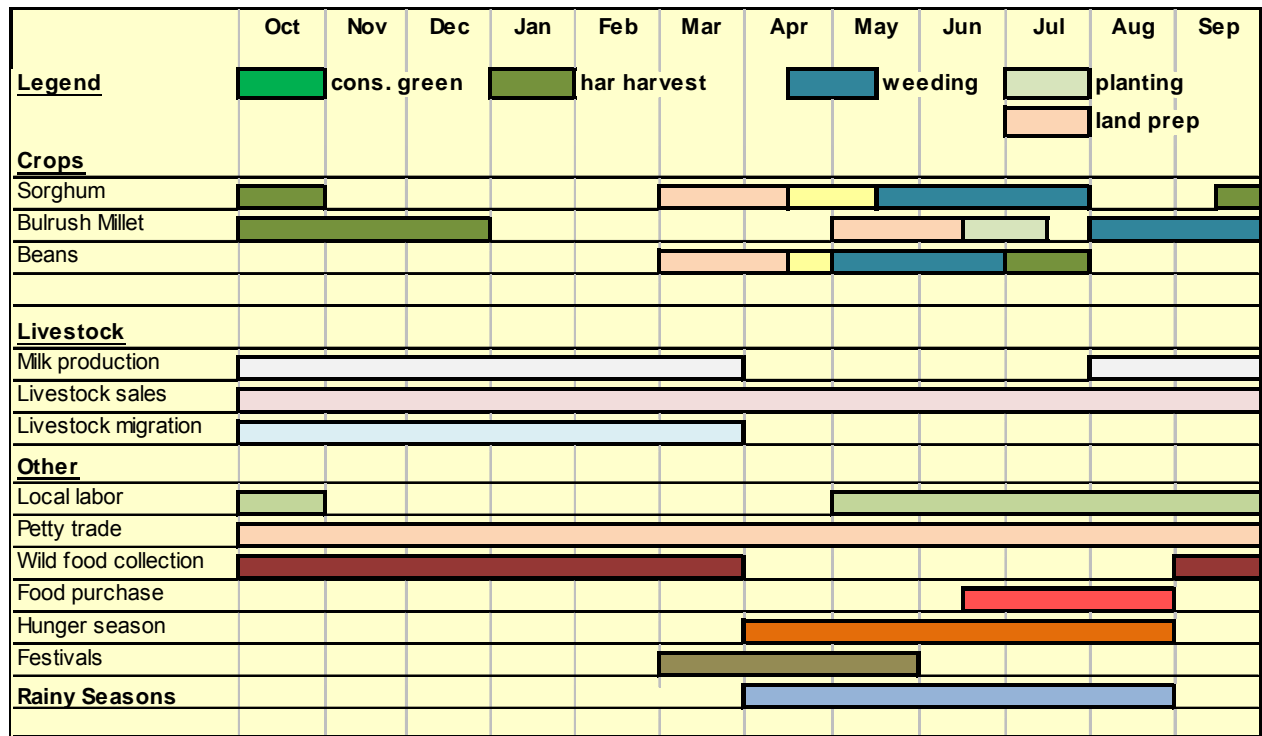


Eastern Lowland Maize, Beans and Rice Zone



Agro-Pastoral Livelihood Systems

Karamoja Livestock, Bulrush Millet and Sorghum Zone



Pastoral Livelihood Systems

NE Karamoja Pastoral Zone and Central and Southern Karamoja Pastoral Zone

