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# Feinstein International Center

Strengthening the humanity and dignity of people in crisis through knowledge and practice



## Life in Town:

*Migration from rural Karamoja to Moroto and Mbale*

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in Uganda



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### ***About the Feinstein International Center***

The Feinstein International Center at Tufts University develops and promotes operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives and livelihoods of people living in crisis-affected and marginalized communities. The Center works globally in partnership with national and international organizations to bring about institutional changes that enhance effective policy reform and promote best practice.

This report is available on-line at **[fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

This report presents the findings of a research study examining the experiences of migrants from rural Karamoja to the towns of Moroto and Mbale. The study and report are based on a research partnership between Save the Children in Uganda (SCiUG) and the Feinstein International Center (FIC) of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. FIC researchers (hereafter called the Tufts team) worked with SCiUG from 2009–2011 on a series of discrete studies to investigate areas of mutual interest in Karamoja. The research findings from these studies are designed to inform programming, planning and advocacy in the area of livelihood interventions.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of out-migration from Karamoja is well known and widely discussed both by rural residents in the region and by officials in receiving cities. The literature on this phenomenon to date focuses primarily on the experience of migrants in Kampala, including the forced returns perpetrated by the Ugandan government.<sup>2</sup> Attention of national and district government officials aims primarily at stopping or reversing the trend of out-migration, with on-going efforts to return people to their places of origin or to newly created settlements in areas deemed better-suited for agriculture.<sup>3</sup> Studies and programmatic responses have focused mostly on migrants who have left Karamoja and have not examined the patterns of internal rural-urban migration. Having worked in the region since

1 See Stites, E. and D. Akabwai (2009). *Changing Roles, Shifting Risks: Livelihood Impacts of Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda*. Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Stites, E. and L. Fries (2010). *Foraging and Fighting: Community Perspectives on Natural Resources and Conflict in Southern Karamoja*. Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

2 Sundal, M. (2010). "Nowhere to Go: Karimojong Displacement and Forced Resettlement." *Nomadic Peoples* 14(2): 72-86. Greany, K. (2011). *Education as Freedom? A capability-framed exploration of education conversion among the marginalised: the case of out-migrant Karimojong youth in Kampala*. London, London School of Economics. PhD. Stites, E., D. Mazurana, et al. (2007). *Out-migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda: The case of Kobulin, Bokora County*. Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Gackle, J. W., G. Lolem, et al. (2007). *Karimojong Street Children and Adults in Kampala, Uganda: A Situational Analysis Investigating the Root Causes, Issues Faced, and Current Responses*. Hadlow, UK, Oasis International. ASB (2007b). *Monitoring Protection Issues of Karimojong street children and their caregivers in Kampala*. Kampala, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V, ASB (2007c). *On the footsteps of Karimojong: Rapid situation assessment in Eastern Uganda*. Kampala, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. ASB (2007a). *Rapid Situation Assessment Report on Children Living and Working on the Streets of Kampala with a Special Focus on Karimojong Children*. Kampala, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V.

3 For instance, a letter from February 29, 2012 from the district officials of Napak to 19 international and national humanitarian and development organizations discussed reintegration of 1620 households of "Karimojong street families and children" from Jinja, Iganga, Mbale, Tororo, Busia, and Kampala to "the identified fertile areas of Napak." The letter sought to inform the organizations of the "noble undertaking" and to request support for seven months of food support, agricultural inputs and implements, resettlement kit and transportation.

2005, the Tufts team has witnessed the movement of people to urban centers both within the region and beyond its borders, and felt it was important to gain a more up to date understanding of the factors leading to migration as well as the livelihood experiences of migrants in urban and peri-urban areas. Working from the hypothesis that many people who give up rural livelihoods move first to towns and cities within Karamoja, we designed this study to focus primarily on Moroto municipality and surrounding areas. We conducted a smaller number of interviews in Mbale municipality, working from the assumption that Mbale (or similar nearby cities such as Soroti) is the first place of settlement for people who have moved out of Karamoja.

### ***Objective***

The objective of this research was to better understand the factors resulting in migration from rural to urban areas, the decision-making processes involved in these moves, the rural-urban networks that remained in place, and the livelihood experiences of migrants who had moved from their rural homes to urban areas on a temporary, seasonal or more long-term basis.

### ***Methods***

The Tufts team conducted field work in Moroto and Mbale in October 2012 to examine the experiences of people who had migrated from rural to urban or peri-urban areas or who had transitioned away from animal-based livelihoods. We gathered data in Moroto municipality, mining areas near to Moroto, Mbale town, and peri-urban areas on the outskirts of Mbale.

The primary method of data collection was individual semi-structured open-ended interviews. We held focus group discussions for the purpose of introductions and gathering basic background information on the areas. The Tufts team also interviewed local officials and staff from national and international non-governmental organizations working with the urban populations. Not including local officials or NGO staff, we interviewed a total of 59 individuals in Moroto and Mbale.

This report refers to “respondents” and the “study population.” As this was a small study, these results are not representative of the larger population of migrants from rural Karamoja or of urban residents. The data refer only to those people with whom we spoke (the study population).

### ***Characteristics of Respondents***

By gender, respondents were 52% female and 48% male; by location, 56% were in Moroto municipality, 27% were in Mbale municipality, and 17% were in rural locations outside of Moroto town. Respondents ranged in age from 17 years to



the mid-60s with an average age of 30 years.<sup>4</sup> They had been living in their current location or engaged in their current livelihood strategy for an average of 3.6 years.

We initially envisioned working only in the municipalities themselves—i.e., Moroto and Mbale. It quickly became apparent, however, that an exclusively urban focus would overlook an important sector of people who had transitioned away from animal-based livelihoods but might be working outside of the main town areas. The team thus also gathered data in sites of marble quarrying and gold mining near to Moroto (Kosiroi and Pupu/Lorukumo respectively) and in peri-urban sites around Mbale where some respondents were engaged in both rural and urban activities.

## FINDINGS

### *Nature of Migration*

#### **Motivations for Migrating or Changing Livelihoods**

The Tufts team gathered data on why people chose to leave their rural communities for urban areas. These findings are largely in accordance with earlier sources on out-migration from the region.<sup>5</sup> Responses fell into the following broad categories:

- Loss of livestock (and hence livelihoods) due to raids
- Loss of livestock due to disease
- Persistent insecurity
- Invited or encouraged by a relative to move to the urban area
- Lack of food in rural areas (due to loss of animals, crop failure, or both)
- Family problems (e.g., poor treatment by a step-parent, escaping revenge killings, divorce, domestic violence, injury/illness/death of a family member, loss of land by widows, detention of male household head)
- Tired of carrying firewood every day, coupled with insecurity in bush areas
- Inability to support children or parents in rural area

Many people described several years of hardship due to drought and insecurity but attributed the decision to migrate to a particular trigger event. Such triggers included large raids or the death of a family member. Other respondents explained

4 We were not able to specifically interview children as part of this study due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations and protocol when children are to be included as human subjects. Additional research adhering to ethical considerations for the sampling of minors should be undertaken to ensure adequate understanding of the needs of this group.

5 Sundal, M. (2010). "Nowhere to Go: Karimojong Displacement and Forced Resettlement." *Nomadic Peoples* 14(2): 72-86. Stites, E., D. Mazurana, et al. (2007). *Out-migration, Return and Resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda: The case of Kobulin, Bokora County*. Medford, MA, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

that they had grown tired of repetitive rural hardship after an extended period. Family problems serve as either a sudden trigger event (such as the sudden death of a relative) or as a more gradual influence on someone's decision to leave. When gradual, these factors often combine with a variety of negative aspects to push someone to migrate, as evident in following explanation:

*I left home because of poverty, and hunger. My husband used to beat me a lot so I decided to leave the village and come to town. Later all our animals were raided by Loputuk raiders.<sup>6</sup>*

Overall, men and women within the study population have similar reasons for migration, with some important nuance by gender. Women were more likely to cite insecurity and family problems as a motivating factor for leaving their home areas, whereas men more commonly cited loss of livestock and ensuing idleness. A number of women also discussed their inability to provide for their families (often including parents as well as children) in the rural areas and said that this was an important factor in their decision to move to town.

Interesting differences exist in the motivating factors among respondents who have given up previous livelihoods but have not left their home areas—such as those working in the quarries at Kosiroi outside Moroto. Unlike migrants to urban areas who leave home in search of new—but uncertain—opportunities, those who shift to new livelihoods in the same area have a clearer understanding of the potential opportunities and hardships inherent in the new activities. These livelihood strategies were likely done by at least some sector of the population for an extended period, and thus are familiar to those in the surrounding area. The major difference may be in the type of household, individual, or number of individuals engaged in these specific livelihood activities. In Kosiroi, for example, poor people have long worked in the marble quarries but households with livestock largely did not engage in this type of labor. These wealthier households found that they had limited livelihood options following the loss of livestock to raids:

*We lost animals that were the main source of livelihood, there was no way other than going to quarry marble that was formerly... done by those poor households.<sup>7</sup>*

Individuals from the better-off households did not relish the shift to quarry work, but had a clear understanding regarding the conditions and the rate of pay, and were thus able to make informed decisions about the change they were undertaking. Similarly, information on pay was particularly relevant for respondents who had shifted from marble quarrying to gold mining. As one man explained:

*Before coming here I had been quarrying marble, but I found that gold mining has more value. One gram of gold is 100,000 Ush, one "point" 10,000 Ush, and a half "point" 5000 Ush. A tipper full of marble is 40,000 Ush, which is less paying! Before coming*

6 Woman, age 58, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

7 Woman, age 28, Kosiroi, Moroto, October 18, 2011.

*to mine I was a shepherd and I used quarry marble at my free time.*<sup>8</sup>

Finding gold in adequate amounts to reap such dividends is certainly less reliable than loading a lorry, but the availability of this information means that respondents can make these decisions from an informed perspective. This is in marked contrast to those respondents, particularly young people, who travel to urban areas with no job, few connections, and no clear idea of what to expect upon their arrival.<sup>9</sup>

### **Process of Migrating**

Most respondents in the study population reported that they had made the decision to migrate on their own due to the combination of hardships, a specific trigger episode, or simply the belief that they would be able to secure a better life in an urban area. Several women who migrated with their husbands reported that the decision was made by their husbands, but did not express objection to the decision. None of the respondents in the study population reported that he or she had been compelled or pressured to leave home for an urban area.

People departing from the rural areas following a trigger event often left abruptly, whereas those who moved due to the culminating impacts of hardships described a more gradual decision-making process. A young man described the suddenness of his family's departure from Rupa:

*The decision to come here was communal. Everybody had to leave the village after the devastating raid. Everybody ran away for fear of being attacked again. I left everything behind just to save [my] life. This raid was so devastating. I was shot on the left leg and all animals [were] taken away. Everybody left in panic leaving all belongings behind. We came here empty handed.*<sup>10</sup>

Respondents who moved to Moroto town were familiar with the town before migration and did not have to pay for transport when they relocated. Moving to Mbale, on the other hand, required more logistical planning and financial savings. The effort expended to reach Mbale is indicative of both the draw of the urban area and the extent of hardship that motivated people to leave their home areas. Respondents came to Mbale via bus (paying between 6,000 and 15,000 Ush) or lorry (10,000 Ush) and raised the money for transport gradually through the sale of firewood or digging in other people's gardens. Saving adequate fare would likely have taken weeks or months given the low rate of pay for these tasks. Asset

8 Man, age 30, Lorukumo, Moroto, October 17, 2011.

9 In earlier research, one of the authors was told that young girls moving to Kampala expected to make a living in the city from burning charcoal in the bush. The lack of understanding of life in urban areas was one of the motivating factors to conduct this study on the earlier stages of rural-urban migration.

10 Man, age 18, Moroto, October 17, 2011.



sales—sometimes of a final asset—generated the money needed for transport more quickly. Following the death of her husband and father in a raid, a young woman from Kaabong sold her last animal in order to travel to Mbale:

*Only a calf was left. I took it to the market but people wanted to exchange it with maize. I pleaded with them that I just needed bus fare to go to Mbale. They bought the calf at 30,000 Ush. I immediately boarded the bus to Moroto, then to Mbale.<sup>11</sup>*

She left home without telling anyone where she was going, and is facing extreme hardship in Mbale. A young man explained that he did not let his lack of funds stand in the way of moving to Mbale:

*I boarded a trailer carrying charcoal late evening in Matany Trading Centre without transport money---not even 100 Ush. So when we reached Mbale at night immediately the trailer stopped, I jumped down ran to escape from the driver and turn boy because I did not have the 10,000 Ush they were demanding from me for fare!<sup>12</sup>*

Of the respondents in our study population in Mbale, about half had come straight to Mbale from rural locations in Karamoja, while the other half had stopped for a period of months or longer at interim locations including Mbale, Tororo, Aleklek (Iririri), and Kachumbala before deciding to continue on to Mbale.

### ***Urban Livelihoods***

#### **Activities**

Respondents in the study population engage in a range of activities in urban and surrounding areas. Activities are gender specific for the most part. We asked respondents to list their main livelihood activity as well as any additional activities they did to support themselves or their families. The table below lists the range of livelihood activities reported by respondents within the study population:

<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Washing clothes*	Making & selling wooden handicrafts
Sweeping maize from factory floors	Pushing wheelbarrows at the market *
Selling charcoal	Hawker*
Brewing	Fetching water*
Selling local brew (hired by brewer)	Breaking/piling/loading stones at quarries*
Frying grains for brew (hired by brewer)*	Butcher's assistant

*Continued on next page*

11 Woman, age 20, Mbale, October 26, 2011.

12 Man, age 22, Mbale, October 24, 2011.

<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Domestic servant	Hired agriculture labor†
Collecting fallen grains (akidep)*	Cleaner/assistant at a lodge*
Cooking at a lodge*	Roasting meat for sale
Begging*	Shoe repair & shining*
Fetching water*	Night watchman*
Grinding grains*	Butcher*
Barmaid*	Slashing grasses*
Breaking/piling/loading stones at quarry*	Selling building poles from forest*
“Booking”* brew (selling brew for a brewer for small profit)	Making bricks*
Selling boiled sweet potatoes*	Shepherd†
Washing dishes*	Carrying bags to/from shops
Smearing huts with dung*	
Gold mining*	
Stocking a bar*	
Tobacco seller	
Selling firewood*	
Cleaning shoes*	
Hired agricultural labor†	
Selling canes of dried maize†	
Sweeping rubbish at a lodge*	
Buying/selling chicken giblets*	
Cultivating gardens*	

\*Done in conjunction with one or more additional activities.

†Reported in Mbale peri-urban settlement.

As indicated by the high number of activities done in conjunction with other activities, very few migrants are able to find steady work with regular pay to meet their needs. Many urban respondents said they did *leji-leja* for work, meaning multiple casual jobs. Those doing *leji-leja* move through town looking for any possible piecemeal tasks for pay, ideally taking on three to four small jobs a day. These jobs are found by knocking on doors, waiting in markets, or returning to people who have hired them in the past.

Social networks from home areas are important in securing employment or learning the skills required for new urban livelihoods. Migrants found other types of more regular jobs (such as working in lodges or for a brewer) usually through a friend who was already in a given line of work. Activities requiring specific skills (such as working as a butcher or butcher’s assistant) are normally learned through an informal apprenticeship with a friend or relative.

Payment varies for the different types of labor, but all reported jobs are paid piecemeal and in proportion to the activity completed (e.g., trucks filled with stones, bricks made, jerry cans of brew sold, etc). Some jobs are paid in cash, while others are paid in food or residue. Certain jobs, such as night watchman, are remunerated only with a place to spend the night, which is valuable due to the high rents that pose a problem for many migrants. Some activities are payment in and of themselves, such as *akidep* (collecting fallen grains in a market or warehouse). The women engaged in *akidep* either sell or consume the grains they have collected. Not surprisingly given the day-to-day nature of payment, the lack of job security is cited as a major source of anxiety among respondents.<sup>13</sup>

The absence of capital is the most common obstacle to expansion into more lucrative livelihoods. For example, a certain number of utensils are required in order to brew *agwee*, the local brew. A woman in Moroto explained that she had rented other people's utensils in an attempt to start her own *agwee* business, but was not able to make sufficient profit to purchase her own utensils or to generate adequate income while using rented equipment.<sup>14</sup> Members of the study population who do have their own capital (stock for hawkers to sell, brewing or butchering utensils, tools for quarrying) are more likely to feel some security in their ability to provide for their families in a consistent fashion. In general, these respondents also consider themselves to be better off than they were prior to migrating to the urban area.

Employment in towns is experienced differently by men and women. Very few women in the study population have steady jobs with regular and reliable payments—most do *leji-leja* to string together enough small jobs to cover the daily expenses. Most women in the study population live with other family members, and are responsible for their on-going domestic duties while also engaged in their new livelihood activities. These domestic aspects would often have been more integrated into the daily routine in the rural areas. A woman in Moroto town commented:

*After working in the quarry, I find it difficult to do domestic work like cooking, washing -- and indeed the work is ceaseless!-- unlike men who after work go to relax at the drinking centers.*<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, women who commute to urban areas on a daily basis can face problems with their husbands at home if they are unable to procure enough work to feed their family in a given day. A woman who travels daily to Moroto from Rupa sub-county implied that her situation was common:

*Domestic violence is [normal] in the household when a woman fails to get something for*

13 Sundal (2010) and ASB (2007b) report that people from Karamoja are paid less than others for the same work.

14 Woman, age 30, Moroto, October 17, 2011.

15 Woman, age 22, Moroto, October 19, 2011.

*feeding in the household that day. Men beat their women. My husband drinks on credit and expects me to pay the debt.*<sup>16</sup>

Domestic violence also exists in rural areas and in the context of traditional livelihoods, but the introduction of wage labor for women and idleness experienced by men are stress factors with the potential to increase the incidence of domestic abuse in these households.

Social connections assist people in finding work and housing in the urban areas, but respondents overall find a qualitative decrease in the nature of their social relations. The absence of the robust social networks like those found in the villages makes it more difficult to manage in the face of hardship. Comparing her previous life to that in town, a woman in Moroto said:

*[S]ometimes when you don't have food the neighbors offer freely unlike town where each is for his or family and none else....Neighbors in town do not have an obligation to know how the neighbor is, for instance starving to death, sick or has problems—[it] is not their business.*<sup>17</sup>

### **Accommodation**

One of the most difficult adjustments for people moving to urban areas is the sudden reliance on cash for all aspects of daily life. A young man in Moroto explained, “Here everything is money –food, water, housing, firewood, school –everything.”<sup>18</sup> Rent is the most pressing and largest expense for most respondents. On average, respondents pay approximately 15,000 Ush (approximately 6 USD) per month for accommodation, though this is often in the form of a room shared with many other people (relatives or strangers). Landlords routinely lock people out (or in, according to Sundal’s research in Kampala<sup>19</sup>) when they are late on rent. Many respondents, especially in Mbale, reported that they are unable to afford accommodation and that they often spend the night in the open or on the verandahs of shops.

Due to the high cost of rent, jobs that include accommodation – such as a domestic cleaner, night guard, or worker at a lodge—are appealing. Such arrangements, however, rarely entail a dedicated place to sleep, but rather simply the promise of a roof overhead for the night. As a result, the people in the study population who have these jobs are not able to bring their families with them to the urban areas.

Some respondents are able to avoid onerous rents through reliance on social or kinship networks. This is normally done by staying with a relative who already

16 Woman, age 27, Moroto, October 15, 2011.

17 Woman, age 22, Moroto, October 19, 2011.

18 Man, age 18, Moroto, October 19, 2011.

19 See Sundal 2010.

resides in the urban area and contributing to rent or other expenses when possible. Interestingly, of the small number of Tepeth in the sample, none in Moroto town pays rent. The tight social network of Tepeth in the Singila neighborhood enables migrants to find free accommodation, as described by a young man, “I stay in Singila with friends: no rent... We the Tepeth people love each other; where I sleep is not a problem.”<sup>20</sup>

People who come to the urban areas with their families have the benefit of sharing space with family members as opposed to strangers. In the converse, the situation is the most difficult for young people in urban areas without family members and with limited connections. A young man in Mbale explained that this was especially the case for young women:

*Girls have problem of housing. About 7-10 girls rent just a room. It is this same room that they also bring their male friends. This is very risky because they can contact and spread diseases like HIV and AIDS. However, the girls are very healthy because they eat very well.*<sup>21</sup>

The fact that these girls “eat very well” illustrates the flip side to the hardships and trials experienced by many urban migrants from Karamoja—they may be better off than at home in certain aspects, such as food security, while experiencing increased risks in other areas. The benefits to living in urban areas are discussed in more detail later in this report.

### **Access to Social Services & Sanitation**

The study gathered information from respondents on their ability to access health care, education, latrines and water sources. We sought to understand the ways in which access to and the nature of these services had changed following relocation to urban centers.

Overall, urban migration is not seen as having a major qualitative impact on access to health care. Access to health facilities for migrants in Moroto town had improved by virtue of proximity—they are closer to health care providers when living in town—but they are accessing the same treatment centers and paying the same fees as when they were living in rural locations. All respondents in Moroto rely first upon the government hospital where treatment is free of charge but payment required for the “prescription book.” People purchase medications from private clinics (2000 to 5000 Ush) when drugs are not in stock at the hospital (a commonly reported occurrence). The private clinics in Moroto town are seen as preferable to the hospital, but are only accessible by those with the means to pay for treatment. Respondents borrow money from friends or relatives in order to buy medications or, in the absence of access to funds, rely on herbal remedies.

Respondents living and working at the quarries near Kosiroi face greater problems with health care. A health center at Kosiroi provides treatment for 1,500

20 Man, age 20, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

21 Man, age 20, Mbale, October 24, 2011.

Ush and up, but more serious problems require transfer to Moroto or Tapac. One man working at Kosiroi explained that injuries are common when loading stones onto the lorries, and that it is extremely difficult to access timely medical treatment in these cases or in the event of serious illness.<sup>22</sup>

Like those in Moroto town, members of the study population in Mbale rely first on state-run health facilities and then on private clinics if funds allow. Most respondents reported going first to the local government health center and then to the hospital. (In contrast, in Moroto people do not report visiting a local health center prior to the hospital.) Payment is reportedly required for the prescription book, medicines and syringes at the hospital. One woman reported having to pay 35,000 Ush in advance before being admitted to the main hospital when extremely ill.<sup>23</sup> There were no accounts of borrowing from friends or relatives to cover the costs of medication or treatment in Mbale, possibly due to the less robust social network than found in Moroto town. A young Dodoth woman who had been living off *akidep* (picking up fallen grains) until the main market closed for scheduled demolition and renovation reported that she had no access to health care as she did not have enough money for even the prescription book.<sup>24</sup>

All respondents who had children with them in the urban areas reported that schools are available, but the extent of school attendance is mixed. Those that do not send their children to school attributed this to inability to pay for the uniforms, pencils, books, or other outlays (such as firewood contributions) required of parents. One male migrant in Moroto explained that the multiple costs of sending children to school—including such items as soap for uniforms—prevent some recent migrants from accessing education.<sup>25</sup> In other instances, children need to work in order to help cover the essential costs of living in urban areas, such as food and nightly accommodation. The combination of the costs of education coupled with the loss of income generated by children is a difficult burden for households. A young woman in Mbale explained that some children raise their own money for school expenses:

*Only a few children here go to school. Whenever they go, they are asked to go back and bring money. When they do not get any money from parents they resort to collecting scrap metal which they sell to get some income. They just get 200 Ush. Bring to the parent 100 Ush and use the other 100 Ush for himself.<sup>26</sup>*

22 Man, age 24, Kosiroi, Moroto, October 18, 2011. This young man's niece had recently died on her way to the Tapac health center after experiencing an illness that "made her eyes yellow."

23 Woman, age 22, Mbale, October 22, 2011.

24 Woman, age 20, Mbale, October 26, 2011. We do not know if being Dodoth in an area where most migrants were Bokora or Matheniko may have made it difficult for this woman to find support through a social network.

25 Man, age 32, Moroto, October 16, 2011.

26 Woman, age 18, Mbale, October 26, 2011.



Although access to schools is uneven among the study population, a number of urban migrants in the study population did have clear views regarding the benefits of education. Some respondents saw their children's education as key to improving their own personal lives. For instance, a night watchman in Moroto stressed that he would continue to find ways to cover education expenses for his four children (two in secondary school and two in primary school): "It is my belief that when my children complete school successfully I will be out of this job – of sleeping in the open."<sup>27</sup> A few respondents said that the benefit of being able to access education was one of the main factors that kept them in urban areas. In particular, the combined positive attributes of school access and improved security in the urban areas are major reasons to stay in the towns despite other hardships or challenges. Cultural aspects linked to childhood expectations also come into play. A Tepeth woman explained her reasons for staying in Moroto:

*I don't know how long I will be here but I don't feel like going back to the village. I will stay here and keep my children in school because if I go back my daughter will be married off at [an] early age.<sup>28</sup>*

Still others believed that the future would be better because of education today; one man believed that things in the region would improve because "town life has changed people" and the "next generation will be the best because people have sent children to school."<sup>29</sup> However, economic reality continues to pose a major challenge to realizing educational goals for children. The Tepeth woman who wished to prevent early marriage for her daughter said:

*I am interested in educating my children but I don't have the capacity. We the Tepeth women are left out because of culture so the only way to come out of this problem is by taking our children to school especially girls.<sup>30</sup>*

Access to sanitation is highly varied within the study population. Those with the best access have pumps and latrines within the compounds where they live or have access to these facilities as part of their employment (such as domestic workers or night watchmen). Many respondents pay for water from boreholes for washing and cooking at approximately 100 Ush for a 20 liter container, while others are able to access boreholes without charge. A sizeable portion use water from rivers or small dams for consumption and washing. Latrines access also varies, with a large number of respondents in Mbale and Moroto unable to access latrines. In both locations, respondents use the bushes "at the riverside" to relieve themselves. These rivers are the water sources for those people unable to access boreholes.

27 Man, age 40, Moroto, October 16, 2011.

28 Woman, age 40, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

29 Man, age 20, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

30 Woman, age 40, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

## **Urban Markets**

People have much better access to markets after moving to urban areas. Migrants rely on these urban markets for all needs other than food received as in-kind payments and any commodities brought by relatives in rural areas (relief food or produce). Respondents reported careful calculations to ensure they are saving enough to meet the food needs of their families, whether these families are at home in the rural areas or with them in the towns. Several respondents in Moroto explained that they set aside one-half of their daily income for food and keep the other half to cover their accommodation and other town expenses.

More regular access to urban markets also provides important livelihood opportunities for extended households. For instance, one young man in Moroto purchased a crate each of beer and soda and took these to the village for his relatives to sell for a profit. After this initial success he was planning on buying a bundle of salt to send home for similar purposes.<sup>31</sup>

Improved access to urban markets is not seen as uniformly positive. Several female respondents bemoaned the purchases made by their male relatives who have newfound access to both cash and spending opportunities: “Men buy mobile phones when families sleep hungry. Women are [the] sole caretakers in terms of feeding and providing medical treatment to their households.”<sup>32</sup> With cash comes increase consumption of alcohol by both men and women, and various respondents made associations between a rise in domestic disputes and beer drinking.

## **Benefits and Challenges of Urban Life**

There are major challenges to living in urban areas. Most migrants in the study population preferred their lives and livelihoods in the rural areas to those in the towns. Many respondents, particularly men, spoke longingly of their lost herds and of the benefits of not relying on outsiders for basic needs. Urban migration, however, is not without its benefits. One of the most widely cited benefits to living in urban areas is improved food security. A widow who had moved to Moroto with her seven children explained, “I decided to come to town on my own after losing my husband and all animals to raiders.... Here at least you can’t miss a meal like in the village as long as you are hard working.”<sup>33</sup> The “hard working” aspect was also raised by a young man in Mbale, who explained that when he had money he could buy all sorts of food not available at home (chapatti, sugarcane, and *matoke*), and that “when there is no money I go to Children’s Park where I can get some work like cleaning or collecting rubbish and be given food to eat.”<sup>34</sup> This example highlights

31 Man, age 25, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

32 Woman, age 27, Moroto, October 15, 2011.

33 Woman, age 40, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

34 Man, age 22, Mbale, October 24, 2011.

the diversity of possible coping strategies available in urban areas in comparison to rural locations.<sup>35</sup>

No respondents in the study population found life in urban areas to be purely positive; even those who cited benefits to urban living also talked about the hardships. Some respondents recognized both personal difficulties and the potential for broader positive gains. For instance, one young man who complained about the lack of regular work to provide for his family discussed what he saw as positive changes for those who had moved to Moroto town:

*Town life has changed people, they know about good hygiene, school, bathing, washing clothes, Christianity, pay less attention to witch doctors. More land will be opened for agriculture; [more] inter-marriages.*<sup>36</sup>

Some members of the study population pointed to the acquisition of new and specific skills as a benefit to urban life. A young man who had become a successful trader making 220,000 Ush/month after a year in Mbale was planning to expand his business back into Karamoja; previously he had not had enough money to buy clothes, shoes or even food.<sup>37</sup> The benefits of business skills were explained by a man who worked at a lodge in Moroto town:

*Life in town is better because it has taught me how to do business. This was not possible when I was in the village... This is a better job for me. I am given cash every month and I am free to buy anything I want. Herding was also good but was full of risks. You can die any time.*<sup>38</sup>

Not all of the newly acquired skills involved business acumen. Respondents in a peri-urban settlement in Mbale also felt that they had gained unique and positive skills during their tenure as hired agricultural laborers. They felt that these farming skills would be useful to them in Karamoja, but worried that the rains in Karamoja were not reliable enough for survival from agriculture. They felt that the best livelihood option would be to maintain homes in both Karamoja and Mbale and to move back and forth according to the local conditions.<sup>39</sup>

The better safety and security in urban as opposed to rural areas was a resounding positive change for many migrants in the study population. Aside

35 Some of the options for securing food and other essentials in urban areas would likely include engagement in illicit activities or those that increase personal vulnerability. Begging was the only activity that might be considered illicit within the data collected from the study population, but we can assume that illicit and risky activities are used as a means of last resort by people across urban areas.

36 Man, age 20, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

37 Man, age 20, Mbale, October 24, 2011.

38 Man, age 25, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

39 Group interviews, peri-urban area, Mbale, November 27, 2011.

from minor thefts, very few people reported safety concerns in the urban areas. Even for those experiencing marked financial hardships, the guarantee of better physical security was one of the main reasons they did not return home. To note, important exceptions to personal security arose in the few mentions of sexual exploitation and sexual assault or abuse.<sup>40</sup> Local councilors (LCs) in two areas of Mbale mentioned the problem of early pregnancy among migrant populations and said that such incidents were sometimes the result of rape.<sup>41</sup> A young woman living in Mbale said that the lack of regular and unprotected sleeping areas was particularly a problem for women, and she felt that the threat of rape in these places was high.<sup>42</sup> Sexual harassment as a problem for domestic workers was only mentioned by one respondent, but she implied that this was a widespread problem for women working inside people's homes.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the issues of continuous need for cash and the high cost of accommodation, discrimination and harassment are problems for migrants, particularly for those in Mbale. All respondents in Mbale complained of some form of harassment, discrimination in finding work or in the amount of pay received, or outright abuse. Many reported verbal abuse:

*People here do not treat us as human beings. We are being despised, humiliated, insulted and even beaten. As we struggle looking for some work to do, we are being shouted at: "Karamojong, Toka hapa! [Leave here!]"<sup>44</sup>*

Physical abuse was a problem for some respondents. A woman in Mbale said such abuse occurred when women were struggling to collect fallen maize, and reported that a pregnant woman had miscarried after being kicked in the stomach.<sup>45</sup> It was unclear, however, if such incidents were aimed specifically at people from Karamoja or were a result of general melee at such locations.

### ***Urban-Rural Links***

#### **Remittances**

40 Incidents of sexual exploitation, assault and abuse were rarely mentioned by members of the study population. This may have been due to a variety of factors, including speaking to male members of the study team (though abuse was not mentioned to the female team member either) and the general discomfort with raising this issue.

41 LC1s in Mvule and Marule cells, Mbale, October 26, 2011.

42 Woman, age 24, Mbale, October 26, 2011.

43 Woman, age 27, Moroto, October 15, 2011.

44 Man, age 18, Mbale, October 26, 2011.

45 Woman, age 24, Mbale, October 26, 2011.

The links between urban and rural areas remain extremely important for respondents within the study population.<sup>46</sup> We expected links to be strong from Moroto to the rural areas due to the relative proximity, but also found strong remittance networks from Mbale. Of 23 respondents in Moroto from whom we have data regarding remittance behavior, ten reported not sending anything home. Of these ten, however, two reported that the entire community had dispersed due to pronounced insecurity (i.e., there was no one to send remittances to), and two reported that they did not send anything home because they had moved their entire families to the urban area. This leaves only six respondents with relatives in rural areas not sending remittances to these relatives. Of these, three of the respondents receive food and support from the rural areas.

We have data on remittance behavior from 14 respondents in Mbale. Of these, only three are not sending anything home. About half of those sending are sending cash regularly, and the others are sending food back with travelers or returning several times a year with gifts, including food. Only one respondent in Mbale reported receiving food from relatives back home (cowpeas), and he sends oil, beans and salt to the same relatives.

Respondents in Moroto town reported regular visits from rural relatives. Many said that their relatives specifically came to visit the children living in town. Those who migrated from nearby locations make regular trips to their home areas. In contrast, only one respondent in Mbale reporting being able to make regular trips home, and no respondent in Mbale reported visitors. This is a function of greater distance and increased travel cost for the trip from Karamoja to Mbale. Many respondents in the study population reported that they use cell phones to keep in touch with their relatives back home.

The regularity and extent of remittances to rural areas illustrates the potential value of having a relative living in town. Even though migrants to the towns reported various hardships, it is clear from the frequency and amount of cash and food sent to rural areas that they consider themselves better off than those who stay behind. Many of the migrants said that they were the main provider for those remaining in the rural area.

### **Engaging in both rural and urban livelihoods**

Urban life is a means of livelihood diversification—as opposed to more permanent migration—for a certain number of respondents in the study population. These individuals are engaged in both urban and rural livelihoods, usually on a seasonal basis. For example, one 50 year old man in Moroto makes bricks during the dry season and returns to his gardens in the wet season to grow maize, simsim, and sorghum.<sup>47</sup> Some respondents, mainly those engaged in mining, have diversified out of purely livestock-based livelihoods but with the clear intention of using their

<sup>46</sup> Of particular interest here is that previous work by the Tufts team in rural areas has rarely picked up information on remittance receiving by rural residents, even though out-migration to urban areas is common in areas where we have worked. Data from this study indicate that the remittance links are strong, but that rural respondents are reluctant to discuss such aspects.

<sup>47</sup> Man, age 50, Moroto, October 20, 2011.

cash income to rebuild their herds. In contrast, those who are making only small amounts of money by stringing together casual labor jobs in the towns (while also supporting relatives back home) have a much more difficult time saving sufficient funds to rebuild depleted herds or continue with any aspect of livelihoods back home.

Keeping one foot in the town is also viewed as insurance against increased insecurity. A woman in Moroto explained that she “preferred to be in both the village and town” because in the village “something can go wrong, so I may need to take refuge in town.”<sup>48</sup> This bifurcated existence is more costly and requires social capital and proximity in order to maintain the linkages in both locations. As such, this split existence—or aspiration towards it—is more common among the study population in Moroto than in Mbale with the exception of a few better-off individuals in the Mbale study population.

### ***Child-specific aspects of urban life***

Children face a particular series of challenges and opportunities when living in urban areas. Our study population did not include minors themselves, but we sought to gather information regarding children from respondents and sampled as many people in their late teens and early 20s as possible. Although the stereotype of out-migration from Karamoja is of single able-bodied youth, many of the respondents—both male and female—had brought their children and other relatives with them to the urban area. This was particularly the case in Moroto town, and may indicate that this easier and less distant move more commonly involves entire families. (More in-depth research will be needed to definitively assess this aspect.) While moving to an urban area with one’s parents is clearly preferable to travelling as an unaccompanied minor, being in the company of adults does not guarantee safety, better livelihood outcomes, or freedom from want or exploitation. These children are experiencing the same hardships and lack of certainty faced by their parents. The lack of regular and reliable accommodation is a pressing problem, and brings with it security concerns with particular relevance for children, including sexual exploitation and abuse. When accommodation is available, it is likely to be more crowded than in rural areas, exposing children to greater risk of communicable diseases and hygiene-related ailments.

As discussed in the section regarding access to social services, many children of migrants are not attending school for financial reasons (either because of school-related expenses or because their labor is needed to meet high costs of living). Were we to consider the entire population of urban migrants, however, we can assume that overall access to education is better than in rural areas, but it should not be assumed that urban migration leads automatically to school attendance.

Children who are not in school in urban areas are working to contribute to the financial needs of their households. Among respondents in the study population who had children who worked, jobs included fetching water, carrying firewood,

48 Woman, age 29, Moroto, October 17, 2011.



collecting and selling scrap metal and working at the markets. LCs in Mbale reported that children of migrants were also begging and collecting food from dumps and rubbish bins. Children are paid significantly less for the same jobs done by adults (such as fetching water). Activities performed by children clearly bring exposure to risk, including vulnerabilities specific to urban areas such as traffic, financial exploitation, and environmental hazards in rubbish dumps. It is important to remember, of course, that children in rural areas who are not in school are also working to support their families and that these activities also expose them to risks. Boys in rural areas are herding animals, sometimes far from home and often alone or only in the company of age-mates. They are exposed to insecurity as well as natural hazards such as rivers, snakes and wild animals. Girls are more likely to be involved in domestic labor (in both rural and urban locations), but rural risks include fetching water and collecting wild fruits, vegetables and firewood—all of which bring risk of physical insecurity, attack and exposure to natural hazards.

A more subtle but likely important difference for children living in urban versus rural areas is the nature of the larger community and the corresponding social network. Children in rural areas are surrounded by grandparents, cousins, co-wives of their mothers, and close neighbors. Young children are rarely far from adults whom they know and trust, even when their parents are out searching for firewood or herding animals. This is a profound difference for children who have migrated with their families to urban areas. The adults must work outside of the home, and it can be difficult or impossible for women to bring young children with them to their place of employment or when searching for multiple casual jobs over the course of a given day. Even those children who are in school are likely to have some hours of the day without adult care and supervision. This has clear implications not only for children's safety, but also for the intergenerational learning and exchanges that can be acquired only through regular and close contact with extended families and close-knit communities. It is possible that urban migrants do and are rebuilding close-knit communities with social networks similar to those they left back home. Additional research on the nature of urban communities will be required to assess this aspect.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

**W**e knew before starting this study that rural to urban migration was extremely prevalent in Karamoja and that the urban areas within and beyond the region were host to a growing number of migrants. While there are several in-depth academic analyses of the experiences of urban migrants,<sup>49</sup> much of the readily available information comes from anecdotal sources and the media, and much of it focuses on hardships and risks. Over the course of this research, we found that while hardships are multiple and widespread, there are also many opportunities and benefits for migrants in urban areas. Consider, for example, the two main and

49 Such as Greany (2011) unpublished PhD thesis and Sundal 2010.

recurring complaints that have been raised by respondents in rural Karamoja in the past seven years of research by the Tufts team: hunger and insecurity. Now consider these aspects as reported by the admittedly small study population in urban Moroto and Mbale: people talked about a struggle to provide for their families and the necessity of constant hard work, but, by and large, did not report going hungry in urban areas. Also, most complaints of insecurity referred to small thefts and burglaries, in addition to some isolated (but presumably underreported) accounts of sexual abuse. The common thefts are a far cry from the rampant raids that wiped out the livelihood assets of many households and killed and injured numerous residents, especially men in their prime economic years. The most telling aspect of urban versus rural life is the ability of urban dwellers to send money and food back home to their rural family members. This finding alone illustrates the extent of economic opportunity to be had in the towns.

This relative safety, greatly improved food security and ability to remit cash as reported by the study population does not, of course, tell the whole story, and moving to urban areas will not solve the problems for the vast majority of the population of Karamoja. We know that this research does not tell the whole story because we cannot extrapolate beyond those who were interviewed. Furthermore, even a representative sample in an urban area would miss the key group of those who *did not* succeed and went back home. Likewise, by collecting data only in Moroto and Mbale we did not sample respondents who did not succeed in these areas but *could not* go back home (due to financial, family or security reasons) and hence may have moved to other cities, including Kampala, Jinja, Iganga, Busia, etc. We can assume that those migrants who either went back home or moved on to another location did not find what they wanted or needed in their initial locales, whereas those who were interviewed for this study did, at least for the time being.<sup>50</sup>

Moving to urban areas will not solve the problems for the vast majority of the population of Karamoja for a number of reasons. Firstly, the problems in the region are not limited to the rural areas. As the data on, for instance, access to social services illustrate, urban residents experience the same quality of health care and financial obstacles to medical facilities faced by rural residents. Sanitation and hygiene problems are likely to be more pronounced in urban than rural areas, particularly as the urban population grows ahead of infrastructure development (which often does not develop at all in urban slums). Lack of infrastructure, low levels of economic development, and poor facilitation of local offices and officials are more apparent in urban than in rural areas. Secondly, some of the most pressing issues in the region relate to low levels of human capital, including inadequate access to formal and technical education, under-nutrition, and limited preventative healthcare. These underlying characteristics shape overall levels of vulnerability and resilience, including for migrants from Karamoja living elsewhere in the country. Thirdly, any economy can only support a limited number of new arrivals and job seekers. Many migrants from rural Karamoja compete for spots within the same

50 Sundal (2010) discusses the difficulties faced by female migrants in Kampala: "Many of them had found life in Kampala too difficult to manage and were simply waiting to have enough money for the journey back" (80).

niche markets in their urban destinations, such as working for brewers, engaging in petty trade, brickmaking, pushing wheelbarrows in markets, or *akidep* (collecting fallen grains). These markets become quickly saturated by the influx of unskilled labor, increasing competition (and thereby decreasing gain) for those already in these sectors. Similarly, urban slums continue to expand but receive minimal infrastructure or support for social services. Pressure upon existing facilities and housing stock raises prices and contributes to congestion, poor sanitation and hygiene, and the spread of disease.

In short, while people's lives and livelihoods are not uniformly better in urban as opposed to rural areas, we should also not assume that urban migration is necessarily negative. Urban migration brings hardships as well as opportunities, challenges as well as new and transferable skills, and benefits as well as a new set of vulnerabilities.

### ***The role of information in decision-making***

This study touches on the importance of information as a key element in migratory decision making. In some instances, potential migrants have limited information as to what opportunities they might find following relocation. The amount of information available is a factor of distance from the point of destination. At one end of the spectrum are individuals who have not left their home areas, but who have shifted into new livelihood opportunities such as marble quarrying, gold mining, or commuting to town to sell handicrafts or natural resources on a daily or occasional basis. These individuals have a clear indication of what to expect, either from their own experiences, observations, or through information from friends and relatives already engaged in these activities. At the other end of the spectrum are those who left rural Karamoja for Mbale with little information on what awaited them. The individuals in the study population who expressed the most dissatisfaction with their current situation were those who had had the least understanding of the circumstances at their point of destination. We can assume that the farther one goes from home, the less information is available regarding the conditions on the other end.

Although beyond the scope of this study, the media and anecdotal accounts of trafficking of people (and especially children) bear testament to the power of information. Trafficking and misinformation/lack of information go hand in hand; if people have a realistic understanding of the likely conditions that await them (or their children), they are less likely to fall prey to the persuasion of traffickers. One way to combat both the potential threat of trafficking and the movement of migrants who are ill-prepared and/or ill-suited for urban life (financially, socially, or otherwise) is to ensure that there is adequate information on the likely locations circulated back to the sending areas. This information would need to be accurate and balanced and geared towards allowing people to make up their own minds about a potential move, not to persuade them one way or the other. With such information, people would be better able to make educated decisions for the well-being of their entire households as well as specific family members.

### ***Acquisition of skills and knowledge***

While life in urban areas is filled with multiple challenges and obstacles, the experience of living in urban areas can result in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Some such skills—such as learning about business or drought-resistant crops—are directly linked to the new livelihood activities pursued by migrants. Others, such as learning to budget for monthly expenses, might not be considered “skills” by respondents but are important elements of adjusting to urban life. These positive aspects of urban life can be supported and encouraged through national and international programming and interventions aimed at both urban residents (from Karamoja and elsewhere) and at livelihood programs within the Karamoja region. Rural and peri-urban communities could benefit from programs on micro-irrigation, drought resistance crops, and kitchen gardening. Courses aimed at small scale entrepreneurs living in or commuting to urban areas that include basic numeracy, budgeting, book-keeping and inventory management could allow for expansion and diversification of micro-enterprises. Many organizations already include such elements in their livelihood programming, but may not be specifically targeting peri-urban populations.

The Tufts team collected data in several sites of natural resource extraction. For outsiders thinking about livelihood options, these mining areas are problematic due to their lack of regulation, often exploitative working conditions, unsafe mining practices, and unclear links to sustainable markets. In contrast, many local residents see these mines as opportunities for livelihood diversification and expansion. From a programming perspective, organizations in Karamoja promoting livelihood diversification may want to pay attention to these areas and the opportunities (and drawbacks) they offer and seek proactive means of engagement if and when these activities and the markets for them expand.

### ***Urban Slums***

Most of the people migrating to urban areas in the developing world will move to slums, defined by UN HABITAT as “settlements in urban areas in which more than half of the inhabitants live in inadequate housing and lack basic services.”<sup>51</sup> Uganda was one of the African countries involved in a United Nations initiative to upgrade urban slums, and by 2008 had released a national plan for slum improvement.<sup>52</sup> This strategy document details the various national policies that have been put in place over the years to address issues within urban slums<sup>53</sup> and points to the

51 UN HABITAT (2009). Participatory Slum Upgrading and Prevention Programme, Narrative Report. Nairobi, UN HABITAT.

52 Republic of Uganda (2008). A Situation Analysis of Slums in Uganda and National Slum Upgrading Strategy and Action Plan. Kampala, Department of Human Settlements, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development.

53 These include the including the National Human Settlement Policy from the mid 1980s, the National Shelter Strategy (1992), and the National Housing Policy (2005).

overarching problems in realizing improvements with these efforts, including lack of effort to integrate slum upgrading efforts into national legislation, policies or programs; the absence of an urbanization policy and associated unregulated growth of urban areas; and failure to take rural-urban linkages into account in economic and development programs and policies. The strategy document includes actions to address these gaps, such as “slum-sensitive urban planning,” improving information use and gathering, viewing slum residents as partners in the process of urban development, and recognizing the important economic value provided by people who reside in slum areas. Not surprisingly, the strategy document does not propose returning slum residents to the rural areas as a solution to urban growth, although this continues to be one of the primary government approaches to dealing with migrants from Karamoja.

The national strategy for slum upgrading is one of a variety of national, private sector, and non-profit examples of efforts underway in Uganda to improve high density urban areas. Progress will be incremental given the rapid rate of urbanization and the fiscal, logistical and practical challenges created by the mushrooming of high density areas, but it is important to note that a framework for progressive pro-poor slum improvements does exist at the national level. Policy makers, programmers and donors can advocate with government partners for adherence to these strategies when thinking about urban programs, including programs that target migrants from Karamoja. Programs for urban residents should be based on assessed need, not place of origin, and should work to build the capacity and understanding of local government structures in parallel to the constituents they serve.

### ***Protection***

Respondents in this study did not raise a large number of protection concerns, though this does not mean that there are no protection threats. Protection threats that do arise for migrants (and their children) often relate to the lack of regular and secure sleeping areas in the urban centers. People who are unable to rent a room by the month must find a place to sleep on a nightly basis, and even those who do have more regular accommodation risk being locked out if they are unable to pay the rent on time. Many individuals and families sleep on shop verandahs and in beer pavilions after the customers leave for the night. The lack of secure sleeping location exposes them to crime, potential police and civilian harassment, and possible sexual abuse. Municipalities aiming to discourage migrants from Karamoja are unlikely to support shelters and low-rent accommodation that might be seen as an additional pull factor. Short term and secure shelters and low-rent options, however, are likely to be the most effective means of addressing protection concerns for urban migrants, including those of children and women.<sup>54</sup> The longer term solution entails improving urban housing

<sup>54</sup> The NGO Dwelling Places converted an abandoned factory in the Katwe slum of Kampala into living quarters for migrants from Karamoja, but had to close it down after two months due to lack of funds (Sundal 2010).

stock and working to decrease discrimination and harassment of people from Karamoja. Targeted attacks based on ethnicity are likely to decrease in accordance with discrimination and harassment, and people from the region are more likely to take complaints to the police if they do not fear abuse and forced removal. Changing official discourse regarding people from the region is the first step in decreasing harassment and discrimination, and will require continuing media efforts and public outreach. (Progress is underway in this regard, including cultural events in Kampala highlighting cultural aspects of the region and growing interest by the national and international independent press in stories showing diverse aspects of the region.) Organizations working on social and livelihood programs in urban areas should have broad targeting criteria based on need that will lead to inclusive programs with beneficiaries from multiple regions.

Human trafficking is a major protection concern, though it is difficult to know the extent of actual trafficking versus household livelihood decisions that lead to the out-migration of children. A new initiative, the Coordinated Response to Trafficking in Uganda, is funded by the Norwegian government in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a number of NGOs and civil-society organizations. This project aims to identify and offer direct assistance to victims of trafficking as well as to provide community-based socio-economic services and awareness-raising and prevention. The combined rural and urban approach of this initiative has the potential to bring balanced information to the rural areas while also helping to quantify the extent and nature of trafficking.

### ***Status of urban migrants?***

In her 2010 article, Mary Sundal argues that violence and insecurity are almost always factors in the decisions of people from Karamoja to out-migrate, and that they should therefore be classified as internal displaced persons (IDPs) and subject to the protections and policies afforded by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and in accordance with Uganda's 2004 national IDP policy. She points out:

*Indeed, the IDP category has been routinely applied in Uganda in the case of people who have fled the districts neighbouring Karamoja as a consequence of violence originating from within Karamoja, and should therefore equally apply to Karimojong who flee Karamoja for the same reason (83).*

She argues that officially identifying migrants from Karamoja as IDPs would ensure UN protection during resettlement, limit displacement, and avoid human rights violations. While our study finds a combination of economic and security factors motivating most migration, pushing the IDP designation is an avenue worth considering on the part of NGOs and donors, especially if the forced removal of people from Karamoja from urban centers continues or intensifies. The merits of such a debate should be considered carefully given that it is highly unlikely that the Ugandan government would agree, but raising the validity of such a designation



would help to highlight the problems in the sending region and may slow the pace of removals.

### ***What next?***

One of the most important outcomes of this study is the realization that much more needs to be known about the growing population of rural to urban migrants in and from Karamoja. Urban migrants and urban dwellers face unique and specific livelihood challenges and protection risks. Many are also enjoying new livelihood opportunities, resulting in the emergence of new financial networks and systems of support for communities in rural areas of Karamoja. As urban populations of people from rural areas grow, social networks expand. Little is known of these financial systems or social networks and the potential livelihood and/or protection benefits these networks bring. We also know relatively little about the larger migration systems of how people move out from Karamoja, into towns such as Mbale and beyond, and what leads to success for some migrants but not others. Statistical information on the numbers leaving Karamoja would assist in the planning of appropriate programs in rural areas and town centers within the region as well as receiving municipalities elsewhere in the country. In addition, further studies should be designed to allow for interviewing of children (both accompanied and unaccompanied) in order to better understand their specific experiences, concerns and needs. Only through adequate levels of attention at multiple levels will we be able to understand and respond to the specific patterns of out-migration and urbanization as experienced by people from Karamoja. Only with such understanding will programs and policies to promote livelihoods and ensure protection be possible and successful.

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