



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU)

## LOOKING FOR WORK: WAGE LABOR, EMPLOYMENT, AND MIGRATION IN KARAMOJA, UGANDA

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a rapidly changing Karamoja, wage labor and employment have become increasingly important as more people look for work in urban and peri-urban centers in the region, elsewhere in Uganda, and in neighboring countries. The main purpose of this assessment is to document and analyze trends in labor and employment in the non-pastoral labor sectors within and outside Karamoja, and to investigate how individual- and macro-level factors influence participation in the labor market. The assessment was based on the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from all seven districts in Karamoja, as well as from five cities in Uganda with sizeable migrant populations from Karamoja, and from Lodwar in Turkana County, Kenya. The assessment collected information over a four-week period in May and June 2017. Individual interviews with wage workers, migrants, employers, and key informants, as well as focus group discussions, were conducted.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### **Characteristics of wage labor**

Karamoja's workforce is mainly in informal employment, with limited job security, labor rights, or associated benefits. Due to the daily nature of most jobs, the market is characterized by heavy competition in many of the unskilled sectors. This has a disproportionately negative effect on women who have childcare and household responsibilities. The labor market is stratified by skills, and the unskilled and pre-literate face the greatest challenges in labor market participation.

**Location and region:** Most job opportunities are urban based and include construction, domestic labor, service and sales work, and other casual labor such as loading/offloading, brewing, sorting cereals, fetching firewood and water, restaurant and hotel work, and working as hawkers. Agricultural labor and mining and quarrying are important in rural areas, and these are often combined with other livelihood activities such as petty trade. Employment options decrease significantly as distance from towns and urban centers increases. Regionally, the burgeoning towns of Moroto, Kotido, and Matany have the biggest markets. As a result, most, if not all, labor sectors are available in these towns.

**Seasonality:** In general, there are fewer wage labor options available during the dry season than during the wet season. This seasonal decline in work coincides with increased food insecurity, which has a substantial impact on women. Construction work increases in the dry season.

**Wage rates:** In general, wages are low and paid daily. Low wages limit the use of income for savings, investment, asset building, or education. Sectors dominated by women provide the lowest wages, e.g., agricultural labor and brewing. Urban service and sales jobs, which require numeracy and literacy, provide the highest wages.

**Employer's requirements:** Employers rely heavily on skilled workers from outside Karamoja and refer to the limited number of skilled workers in the region. Employers often prefer younger people, especially for physical labor.

#### **Factors affecting job options**

**Demographic factors:** Age, gender, and educational status are important determinants of labor market participation. As so much of the work involves physical labor, most workers are below 40 years of age. Certain sectors are either male or female dominated, but in general, there are more options for men than women. Nearly 45% of workers interviewed had no education, and even those with secondary or advanced education were not guaranteed a skilled job. Those with little education who have jobs in skilled labor were recruited through social networks. Those with no education—especially people from rural areas—have little resort but to look for work at random.

**Push-pull factors:** People seek income from wage labor primarily due to push factors such as a basic need to survive—especially after shocks. If people have access to livestock or a productive garden, they prefer to concentrate on these subsistence activities and only do wage labor as a supplementary activity. The need to earn money is the overriding reason why people work. Unskilled work is a matter of necessity, not choice, and any income provides a level of satisfaction. In general, only skilled or semi-skilled workers cite pull factors, e.g., better income and agreeable work conditions, as reasons for working.

#### **Formal and informal barriers:**

- Lack of organization in the labor market in Karamoja, limited options for workers to seek advice and information on their rights, and limited capacity of Labor Offices;
- Unpredictable and highly competitive unskilled labor sectors are where most jobs are found. Stable jobs are only available in the skilled or semi-skilled sectors;

- Limited education and skills, and language barriers prevent access to better jobs. Even for those with basic skills, only 43% are working in skilled labor;
- Employers and other stakeholders discriminate against Karamojong people; some businesses continue to bring workers from outside the region, even for unskilled positions;
- Alcohol abuse is a persistent and worsening problem; employers are reluctant to hire individuals who drink alcohol during work hours.

### ***Migrants and labor***

The labor issues affecting Karamojong migrants in Ugandan cities are similar to those affecting workers in Karamoja. The barriers to employment are particularly heightened for migrants because of the discrimination and abuse they face. Much like the labor market within Karamoja, some migrants find skilled and semi-skilled work. However, the majority of migrants continue to be in unskilled casual labor jobs with extremely low wages. In Lodwar, Kenya, migrant workers were often skilled/semi-skilled and educated, and a successful migration was predicated on social networks. Relative to migrants within Uganda, migrants' experiences in Lodwar were overwhelmingly positive in the area of intercommunity relations.

### ***Recommendations***

A critical concern is that although wage labor should be a particularly important livelihood diversification option for women, they have far fewer opportunities for paid work relative to men, and their work generates less income relative to men. Although our recommendations in Section 5 of the report fall into six main groups, a cross-cutting recommendation is the need to address the specific barriers to better employment faced by women. The six groups into which the recommendation fall are:

- Organization of the labor market and strengthening links between actors;
- Improving working conditions, including better representation and organization of workers;
- Education and skills, especially support to skills-based vocational training;
- Financial services and small business development to support employment;
- Behaviors and attitudes—addressing discrimination and alcohol abuse;
- Areas for further inquiry and information gaps.



## I. INTRODUCTION

### I.1 BACKGROUND

In recent decades, pastoralists around Africa have increasingly turned to a range of diversified and alternative livelihood activities to fulfill immediate nutrition and other household needs, as well as to mitigate risks from disease, drought, and insecurity (Little et al., 2001; Little, 2016). People living in Karamoja are no exception to this trend. Although they have always engaged in some forms of diversification, several distinct types of income diversification, including wage labor, have arisen more recently, in part due to the opening of new markets, greater urbanization, and better security (Bushby and Stites, 2016). The individual decision to diversify and a household's portfolio of livelihood activities depend on a range of variables, including livestock holdings, proximity to town or urban centers, household labor needs, and other opportunity costs (Fratkin et al., 2011; Little, 2016). However, the marked livelihood diversification among Karamojong<sup>1</sup> people, together with human population growth in the region, raises critical questions about the potential or lack thereof in the current non-pastoral wage labor sectors.

Karamoja sub-region lies in the northeast of Uganda and covers over 27,200 square kilometers, bordering Kenya to the east and South Sudan to the north. In its seven districts live approximately one million people who speak mutually intelligible languages. Karamojong communities have conventionally practiced both pastoralism and agriculture in varying degrees, depending on the livelihood zone in which they reside. The westernmost zone, or the agro-ecological livelihood zone, has the most rainfall regionally, and so multiple crop plantings are possible (Robinson and Zappacosta, 2014). In contrast, the easternmost pastoral livelihood zone is marked by high temperatures, high rainfall variability, and low soil fertility, and so pastoralism is the primary, and most suitable, livelihood strategy. Despite many external interventions to support crop production, semi-transhumant pastoralism still dominates as the most viable strategy for food security and is a critical mechanism for household insurance (Stites et al., 2016; Levine, 2010).

Average livestock holdings are generally low in Karamoja today,<sup>2</sup> and many families are too asset poor to adequately buffer themselves against risks. The causes of widespread livestock loss are multifaceted and household dependent. They include years of insecurity due to armed livestock raiding, detrimental state-imposed policies, livestock diseases, and drought. Droughts also lead to poor agricultural production, which in turn rapidly and frequently leads to crisis food insecurity levels. Households have been forced to resort to unsustainable coping strategies, such as liquidating livestock assets, and offloading grains early.

In the face of these constraints, Karamojong people today engage in various cash-generating activities such as brewing, construction, artisanal mining, casual wage labor, petty trade, natural resource extraction, agricultural labor, and service sector jobs. Participation in these activities varies daily, monthly, and seasonally. For example, while some individuals travel daily to peri-urban or urban areas for work, others have migrated permanently both within and outside the region. Participation in labor sectors is also crucially determined by location and presence of markets and urban centers, which have burgeoned in the past decade. Although several studies touch on issues of wage labor, employment, and migration (e.g., Burns et al., 2013; Stites and Akabwai, 2012; Stites et al., 2014), there is a need to further understand the labor and employment opportunities in Karamoja, the motivations for engaging in the various sectors, and how individual characteristics influence participation in the labor market.

#### Wage Labor

Wage labor and employment are by no means new phenomena in pastoral Africa (Hogg, 1986). Engaging in conventional and newly emerging forms of diversification is, however, contingent upon several characteristics ranging from age and gender to literacy and formal educational qualifications. Following USAID's Leveraging Economic Opportunities report (Mueller and Chan, 2015), we define "wage labor" as labor in which the worker does not own the primary means of production (Oya, 2013). Activities under wage labor include construction, domestic work,

<sup>1</sup> The word *Karimojong* in the local language signifies the region of Karamoja. The following communities call the land area of Karamoja their home: Matheniko, Bokora, Pian, Jie, Dodoth, Tepeth, Labwor, Nyangea, Ik, and Pokot. While the term *Karamojong* is used for all the people, we recognize the distinction of all the communities and identify them separately where appropriate. For the reader's benefit, we use the word *Karamojong* as the umbrella term.

<sup>2</sup> The latest Food Security and Nutrition Assessment from WFP (2016) shows that 53% of the households sampled had no livestock. However, counting livestock assets is a complicated undertaking. See *Sampling and data collection* section for more details.

sales and service jobs, and agricultural labor, among others. These are distinguished from omnipresent trade activities in Karamoja such as trade in charcoal, firewood, and other small items, where there is no employer–employee relationship. The latter would be better classified as “self-employment.”

Karamoja’s labor market also has to be considered in the wider context of Uganda’s national population and labor market issues, where rapid population growth has created a disproportionate number of employable individuals relative to job opportunities (Aglionby, 2017). National figures from March 2017 show that of 700,000 people joining the job market each year, only 90,000 (about 13%) find employment (The Monitor, 2017). Unemployment is particularly prevalent among youth; 64% of total unemployed people in Uganda were youth aged 18–30 years (Ahaibwe and Mbowe, 2014). Preliminary findings from a forthcoming report explain these trends by reference to generally slowed economic growth and lack of job creation, even in those sectors that have experienced economic growth, such as oil (Bargawi and Van Waeyenberge, 2017).

In addition, a critical aspect of employment in Uganda is that nationally, nearly 70% of the non-agricultural workforce is in informal employment (ILO, 2012b). Similarly, a large section of Karamoja’s workforce is also part of the “informal economy” (data unavailable). According to other reports, 90% of Ugandans of employable age are in informal employment, which implies little or no access to social protection programs (in relation to formal employment) or other labor-related benefits and rights (Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2016). For youth, the figure is similar. Ninety percent of those in non-agricultural employment are part of the informal sector, with little chance of advancement or other benefits (MasterCard Foundation, 2017; UBOS, 2013).

These factors have an important bearing on Karamoja’s wage labor market as well. Even though Karamoja has its unique challenges ecologically, politically, and historically, it is important to contextualize the issues and challenges in wage labor and employment in Karamoja within Uganda’s larger economic and labor market challenges. Additionally, analysis of migrant labor within and outside of Karamoja requires an understanding of rural-urban migration patterns and labor market competition in Uganda’s major cities. As will be discussed later in the report, all these factors are critical considerations when identifying opportunities for the improvement of Karamoja’s labor market.

## I.2 OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the assessment is to document and analyze the current labor, employment, and migration patterns in Karamoja, including such aspects as push-pull factors, labor conditions, and barriers to engagement, in order to provide a sound knowledge base through which to influence future policies and programming. Based on this aim, the following specific objectives have been identified.

### Documentation of the labor and employment sectors:

- A mapping of the labor sectors, highlighting options within and outside the region;
- An analysis of push and pull factors by sector and how demographic, economic, educational, and locational factors influence employment choices and options;
- An examination of work conditions and wage rates, including a focused view on differences according to demographic factors such as age, gender, and education level;
- An investigation into the views of employers within and outside Karamoja in terms of the qualities they require in workers and the extent to which people from Karamoja meet these expectations.

**Providing recommendations for policy and programming** through identification of those labor sectors and employment options that might enable a move out of poverty, including:

- A description of the sectors that provide the most economic and social benefits;
- An analysis of the sectors that are most economically sustainable for individuals and their households, as well as for future market growth.

### Migration

The sub-study on migration investigated aspects of migration to major Ugandan cities and across the border to Kenya, as well as the motivations behind migrating and the labor and employment options available to migrants. In that vein, our aims for the sub-study were to:

- Document the migratory process and shift in livelihoods;
- Investigate migration decisions, including push and pull factors and barriers in employment;
- Investigate how migration affects the household economy through remittances and/or social capital of the migrants.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Despite the major contribution of wage labor to livelihoods in Karamoja today, there is a lack of systematic reporting focusing on this issue alone. In recent years, three doctoral dissertations have analyzed aspects of wage labor and employment, including its role in class dynamics (Caravani, 2017), pastoralist risk management (Iyer, 2016), and how state security measures and development interventions influence involvement in wage labor (Mosebo, 2015). Likewise, various studies have investigated components and sub-themes of livelihood diversification, wage labor, and migrant labor. These include reports on: pastoralism and other livelihoods (Bushby and Stites, 2016; Stites et al., 2016); the informality of the wage labor and employment market, and the lack of opportunities therein (Burns et al., 2013; Levine, 2010); the lack of basic services such as transport, education and training, and financial services representing a barrier to market access (Burns et al., 2013; Gelsdorf et al., 2012); urbanization (Mosebo, 2015; Stites and Akabwai, 2012); migration, labor, and resettlement programs (IOM, 2014; Stites et al., 2014; Sundal, 2010); gender and gender-based livelihoods (Dancause et al., 2010; Howe, 2013; Livingstone and Ruhindi, 2013; Lombardini and Yoshikawa, 2015); diversification and food security (WFP, 2016); and the impact of natural resource extraction on income generation (Egeru et al., 2014). Given the expansion of gold, limestone, and marble extraction, several reports have explored the impact of artisanal and large-scale mining on lives and livelihoods, particularly in rural Karamoja (Hinton et al., 2011; Houdet et al., 2014; Mosebo, 2017; Rugadya et al., 2010).

The most well-documented sub-theme of wage labor is agricultural wage labor, and several reports highlight the potential importance of this particular sector as a way out of poverty (Fergusson et al., 2010; Gelsdorf et al., 2012; Mueller and Bbosa, 2016).<sup>3</sup> Most of these reports, however, also emphasize that their findings need to be contextualized within specific locations in Karamoja (the agro-ecological belt, for example) because of the various risks associated with a reliance on commercial agriculture (Burns et al., 2013; Bushby and Stites, 2016; Levine, 2010). First, a dependence on agriculture alone is particularly risky compared to having a diversified livelihood profile, due to high rainfall variability. Second, the expansion of the agricultural sector has led to the proliferation of agrarian settlements in areas of less-

favorable farming land, with more erratic rainfall patterns (Burns et al., 2013). Moreover, a shift in subsistence strategy to agriculture involves a decline in a milk-based diet, which potentially has a negative impact on child nutrition and maternal health (Stites and Mitchard, 2011). Most notably, the proliferation of agricultural settlements in primarily pastoral zones could also increase the risk of conflict over land and other critical resources (Bushby and Stites, 2016; Karamoja Development Forum, 2016). A dependence on agriculture and agricultural wage labor is particularly problematic for those residing in the eastern pastoral livelihood zone, where substantial investments in agriculture continue to show poor returns (e.g., Welt Hunger Hilfe, 2015).

In contrast to agriculture, livestock production is the dominant livelihood activity in Karamoja and has proven to be robust in the face of rainfall variability, raiding, and drought. However, during the recent disarmament program, a system of “forced *kraals*” was associated with a dramatic decline in livestock numbers and a situation today whereby livestock ownership might be highly skewed towards wealthier owners with large herds (Burns et al., 2013; Stites et al., 2016).<sup>4</sup> While households in Karamoja continue to engage in semi-transhumant pastoralism, combined with varying degrees of agriculture, livestock production works well as a livelihood only for those with enough livestock assets (see also Levine, 2010). For others, the trend is towards diversified livelihood activities, and wage labor is an important and relatively new activity for diversification. In general, as pastoralists lose animals and move out of pastoralism, they risk losing their social networks, in particularly their kin and non-kin exchange relationships, partly because key social ties are based on livestock-related exchanges. Yet social networks are central to managing and minimizing individual and household risks (Iyer, 2016; see also McCabe, 1990). It remains to be seen how wage labor influences individuals and households with few animals and the agro/pastoral livelihood system in Karamoja in the long term.

### Migration

Migration from Karamoja to other parts of Uganda is a well-known and previously researched phenomenon (IOM, 2014; Stites and Akabwai, 2012; Stites et al., 2007; Sundal, 2010). The reasons for migration, as shown by these studies, range from loss of livestock/livelihoods and

<sup>3</sup> There is only one extensive study on wage labor (Mueller and Bbosa, 2016), which had a geographical focus on Southern Karamoja. Thanks to the availability of greater arable land and abundant rainfall in the south (and other agro-ecological areas), there are several wage labor opportunities on agricultural production farms that are not present in the north.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to collect accurate information on livestock ownership in Karamoja.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

insecurity from raiding to food insecurity, violence, mistreatment from family members and inability to support family. Child migration is also an important reality of migration from Karamoja. A significant majority of child migrants are from Napak District, and their decision to migrate is both individual and household based (IOM, 2014). Both adult and child migration, ultimately, are related to the search for labor and employment opportunities (aside from street begging) in major Ugandan cities in order to ensure survival of self and family.

The migrant labor force from Karamoja in major Ugandan cities is stratified in similar ways as within Karamoja. Migrants can be unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled laborers. Consequently, a generalization on the state of migration and labor would be erroneous, and the conditions of migrants need to be analyzed within their socio-economic contexts. Migrating for work or after a shock to the livelihood base is not limited to those going outside Karamoja. Karamojong migration within the region is an age-old phenomenon, which was suspended to some extent during the period of insecurity. Many of the reasons for migration are similar for those migrating within and outside Karamoja, including the push-pull factors and the barriers and challenges they face in their new locations.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

For the assessment, we used an inductive reasoning approach and a mixed methodology. Individual wage workers, employers, and relevant government and development stakeholders were included in the participant pool for the assessment. We created two questionnaires, one for wage workers/migrants and one for employers, to collect data on all the assessment objectives. The questionnaires were administered using interviews. We also used participant observation and focus group discussions.

We collected qualitative data to understand barriers in employment, choice of labor sector, challenges in work, and push-pull factors, among other aspects, through semi-structured/open-ended questions on the interview schedule, participant observation, and focus group discussions (where appropriate). Quantitative data on demographic and income variables were also collected to identify how these factors might influence the choice of alternative labor options, as well as related push-pull factors and barriers.

A migration sub-questionnaire was used for migrants, both those within and those outside of Karamoja.

An open-ended interview schedule on regional policy and program progress on wage labor and employment issues was administered to government and development stakeholders.

#### 3.2 FIELD ASSESSMENT, SAMPLING, AND DATA COLLECTION

##### 3.2.1 Field assessment

Fieldwork was conducted between May 29 and June 23, 2017 in all districts of Karamoja, Lodwar (Turkana County, Kenya), and major cities in Uganda: Mbale, Tororo, Jinja, Kampala, and Lira. Data from the cities were used for the migration component.. For the list of sites and schedule, see Annex 1.<sup>5</sup>

The fieldwork was carried out by the lead consultant,<sup>6</sup> with the help of local field assistants (FAs). Prior to beginning fieldwork, the draft versions of questionnaires were finalized with input from FAs, including an in-depth discussion of linguistic nuances for certain questions. All

FAs, who are Karamojong individuals and have extensive field experience, also provided suggestions on site and sample selection, which were considered before finalizing the schedule. Finally, all questionnaires were translated and back translated (in both *Ngakarimojong* and *Pokot* for Amudat District) before beginning data collection. While there may be nuances lost when interviews are translated, the lead consultant was well versed in conversational *Ngakarimojong* to assure accuracy of translations.

FAs were trained and tested on the informed consent procedure for participant enrollment. Due to the sensitive nature of the project, especially those questions on working conditions and wages, an oral consent was administered to all participants, through which they were informed of the purpose of the assessment, confidentiality of data, and their rights as a participant. As far as possible, interviews were conducted away from spectators and, specifically, away from employers, since the presence of the latter within earshot would have had a significant effect on some of the responses. Due to the sampling procedure (explained below), individual appointments were made for a later time with participants if they were busy during our first visit.

The consultant accompanied the FAs on several interviews, both to seek permission from employers to interview employees and for quality assurance during the first week. The consultant simultaneously interviewed employers, government officials, and development stakeholders, while carrying out laborer interviews and participant observation at the sites. FAs and the lead consultant also conducted focus group discussions in three rural locations (see Annex 1).

##### 3.2.2 Sampling and data collection

Participants were selected through a combination of random and purposive sampling on site in the various labor sectors. The consultant and FAs decided on target labor sectors and conducted random sampling of individuals. To the extent possible, the field team strived to provide adequate representation of the various sectors. This was not always possible because, as will be shown, certain sectors employ a greater number of individuals. Likewise, the lead consultant used purposive sampling for employer interviews in an effort to represent as many labor sectors as feasible and to assure equal representation of male and female employers (as relevant). Each FA was asked to interview three participants a day. This number was arrived

<sup>5</sup> South Sudan was initially included in the scope of work but was later eliminated due to insecure conditions for fieldwork.

<sup>6</sup> Padmini Iyer.



at after consideration of the time needed to travel to various districts and to find willing respondents. Avoiding enumerator fatigue was also considered. We thus arrived at our total sample size for the wage labor and employment in the Karamoja part of the assessment ( $N = 106$ ;<sup>7</sup> see Table 4.2). For the sub-assessment on migration, we followed a similar process in some cities, while in others we did extended interviews with participants. For the sub-assessment on migration in Lodwar, Kenya, we used snowball sampling method.

Periodically, the consultant would check the distribution of gender and age groups in the sample, and would advise on purposive sampling if necessary (See Table 4.2). Although a concerted effort was made to have a near-equal distribution of men and women, and of various age groups (as relevant to the work) in the sample, the arrival of the weeding season impeded the participation for of this activity. More critically, as will be discussed in the *Findings and Conclusion* sections, several labor sectors are male dominated, which further resulted in the unequal representation of men and women in the sample.

Purposive sampling was also employed on ethnicity and place of origin. A significant proportion of the workforce in Karamoja, particularly in the service sector, construction, and other skilled and non-skilled labor sectors (not to mention the specialized workforce), is non-Karamojong. Naturally, all these individuals fall under migrant labor within Karamoja, some having lived here for decades. While we did interview a few non-Karamojong individuals to make our investigation as comprehensive as possible, we deliberately sampled locals (Karamoja ethnicities) as this was central to our objectives.

Finally, our sample is skewed, both intentionally and circumstantially, towards the largest urban center of Moroto where there are significantly greater wage labor opportunities than in other areas. Critically, all major labor sectors are represented in a rapidly urbanizing Moroto, whereas people in other districts rely on proportionally greater self-employment options, such as charcoal and firewood sales and petty trade in other items. Likewise, due to the focus on “wage labor” as opposed to “livelihood diversification,” the assessment is naturally skewed towards other towns and trading centers in the region. Nevertheless, we did conduct focus group discussions in rural locales in order to set up a comparative focus on livelihood opportunities, as well as to investigate the importance of and issues with wage labor in rural versus urban settings. We expound on the urban–rural nature of wage labor and employment and other geographic trends further in our *Findings*.

All data were entered and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. For qualitative data, we used two approaches. First, to summarize and synthesize general trends in variables such as push-pull factors or barriers to employment among others, we used both *a priori* and open codes, which were later refined for analysis in Excel. Second, for recorded and transcribed focus group discussions, we did initial and focused coding in Microsoft Word. All participant data were entered and finalized by lead consultant. Focus group discussions were transcribed by FAs and verified by the lead consultant through recordings.

#### 3.2.3 Additional notes on methodology for migration

For the migration sub-study, we collected data in Abim, Lira, Soroti, Tororo, Mbale, Jinja, and Kampala. We also looked at cross-border labor migration in Lodwar, Turkana County, Kenya. We held focus group discussions in two cities (Tororo and Jinja), and we collected individual-level data in others. A total of 26 individuals were included in the study. Due to the stringent timeline of the entire study, which included such large and critical topics as wage labor and employment within Karamoja, we believe the findings on migration that follow largely echo previous publications on the issue (e.g., Stites and Akabwai, 2012), while adding a few new observations. To gain a better understanding of the contemporary employment and labor situation of migrants and the role of remittances, particularly in order to formulate policy and program recommendations, a longer period of field research dedicated solely to these questions would be required.

### 3.3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Although the household is commonly used as a unit of analysis in various surveys and studies on Karamoja, we did not use this approach in the assessment for several reasons. First, using the household as an analytic unit is problematic due to the fluid and temporal nature of household composition. At any given time, a household may comprise the main members, but it can also include various and sundry relatives and friends, part-time residents, and migratory members. Also, to investigate issues of wage labor, the part or full-time migration of “household members” poses a problem in the analysis. In addition, a multistage cluster sampling of households would require an extensive time commitment, which was beyond the scope of this assessment. Lastly, since the focus of the assessment was the nature and structure of the wage labor sectors and the influence of *individual* economic and demographic variables (age, sex, education, etc.) on employment and migration trends, we approached the work from the perspective of individuals and therefore used the individual as the unit of analysis (also see Stites et al., 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Although the total  $N$  for the assessment is 106,  $N$  in tables and figures represents either the relevant number of people for the particular factor being described or the number of people who answered the question. As this is an assessment, we did not impute any missing data.

A second, related issue is the effect of livestock loss on shifting labor practices. In Karamoja, measuring wealth using livestock holdings is a complicated undertaking. As is well known, pastoralist peoples around Africa, including Karamojong, are generally guarded about their livestock assets (in much the same way we would be about our assets), and the accurate measurement of “household” or individual livestock assets can be an impossible task. Critically, an outsider having a one-shot encounter cannot expect to be privy to such privileged information. Even where available, livestock holdings tend to be a facile interpretation of wealth due to the complex network of Karamojong exchange relationships, which entail a frequent movement of animals into kin or non-kin herd management units, under an intricate cultural-economic rationale (Iyer, 2016). Although other methods of pastoralist wealth ranking are far superior to counting livestock (e.g., Grandin, 1983, 1988), they require a sustained engagement with the community, which the current assessment’s timeframe did not allow. While we do report the effect of livestock holdings on various aspects of wage labor, we strongly caution the reader against drawing conclusions on this issue.

### 3.4 LIMITATIONS

The greatest limitation of the assessment is the timeframe. A protracted period of fieldwork would no doubt yield deeper insights into the state of wage labor, employment, and migration in Karamoja. Because of the project duration, the sample size is also limited. Therefore, the resulting trends in the sample data may not be representative of the larger population. However, we have made a concerted attempt in our data collection and analysis to present a broad preliminary picture of the various wage labor sectors and migration patterns.

In addition, we do not consider several forms of lucrative employment such as government, development sector, medical sector, and upper-level private sector jobs, which are mainly reserved for the educated or certified. We also exclude work in the “shadow” or unregulated economy such as commercial sex work. Lastly, street begging, a primary income-generating activity of a great number of Karamojong migrants, including and especially children, is only mentioned briefly. All of these forms of work require assessments in their own right, particularly street begging, which is strongly influenced by rural–urban linkages and migration (see IOM, 2014, on child migration).

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 TYPES OF LABOR

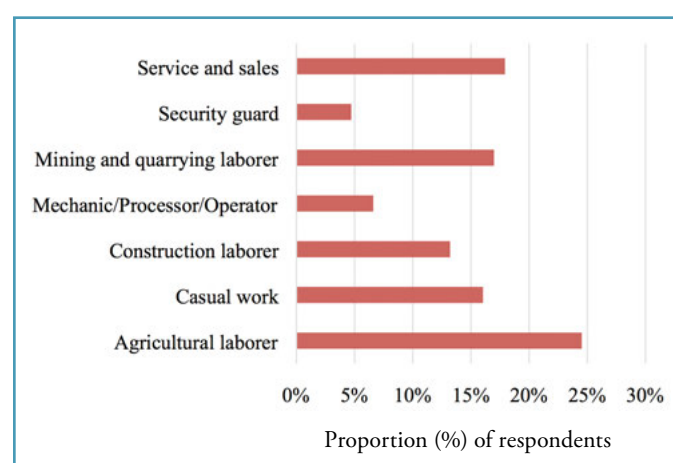
In Karamoja's urban centers, a wide range of labor sectors have emerged over the last decade in conjunction with the decline in insecurity from intercommunity raiding and a flourishing of markets. Agricultural wage labor, on the other hand, remains a primary source of income generation in selected rural areas with adequate rain. Whereas some of the wage labor options mentioned below (Table 4.1) have a long history in the region, particularly local alcohol brewing and agricultural labor, other sectors are gradually appearing as the urbanization process and the extraction of natural resources (especially marble and limestone) continue. Given the widespread loss of livestock, attributed to disarmament and animal diseases (e.g., Burns et al., 2013), as well as the risks associated with rain-fed agriculture, the importance of wage labor has steadily increased in the region, both to meet immediate household needs as well as for longer-term investment in livestock, education, or self-employment.

A significant number of individuals in Karamoja are involved in *Elementary Occupations* (International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)), which require the use of hand-held tools and involve physical effort (see Table 4.1). Consequently, over 75% of the labor sectors covered in the assessment fall under ISCO *Skill Level 1* (see Figure 4.1),

which includes occupations that involve performance of simple or routine physical or manual tasks (ILO, 2012a). However, a few jobs are categorized under *Skill Level 2*, which requires numeracy and literacy skills as well as vocation-specific skills (e.g., motor vehicle mechanic jobs).

Finally, while working as a mining and quarrying laborer does not make someone a "wage worker" per se, as the natural resource is sold to the company or business and middlemen, we did consider it wage work in our research due to its importance as a new coping livelihood strategy in several areas.

**Figure 4.1. Major labor sectors of assessment participants (N = 106)**



**Table 4.1. Major labor sectors by skill level**

Sector	Context	ISCO Skill Level
Agricultural wage labor	Rural	1
Brewing	Rural and urban	1
Casual work <sup>8</sup> (e.g., cleaners, water collection)	Rural and urban	1
Construction (incl. loaders)	Primarily urban	1
Domestic labor	Primarily urban	1
Grinding mill operators	Urban	2
Mechanics	Urban	2
Mineral and stone processing plant operators	N/A	2
Mining and quarrying labor	N/A	1
Security guards	Urban	1 or 2
Service and sales	Urban	1 or 2

<sup>8</sup> The word *elejilej* is often used to describe only "casual work" in the literature on Karamoja. However, *elejilej* in the Karamojong language refers to any work done for someone else in exchange for payment—i.e., excluding own subsistence work. In other words, *elejilej* in the vernacular may technically include any of the categories of work listed.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and education status, undoubtedly influence involvement in wage labor in general, as well as in specific sectors. Other factors, such as livestock holdings and marital status, also play important roles in a fast-changing pastoral setting and in rapidly expanding urban centers. The role of livestock holdings on labor participation is described throughout the report, but particularly in the *Rural and peri-urban wage labor/livelihoods* section (Section 4.3). However, as mentioned in *Methodology*, collecting accurate data on individual or household livestock wealth was outside the scope of the assessment. An in-depth exploration of the relationship between marital status and livelihoods was also outside the scope of the work. Despite this, the assessment shows that marriage, which often means starting a family rather than a ceremonial marriage, forces people, particularly in urban centers, to look for work due to the additional expenses

**Table 4.2. Sample characteristics<sup>9</sup>**

Gender	Sample size
Male	63
Female	43
Total	106
Age group (years)	Proportion of total sample
13–20	24%
21–30	37%
31–40	23%
41–50	8%
51–60	6%
61+	3%

from having a child. Moreover, widowed women are particularly dependent on wage labor to meet household needs (Stites et al., 2014). Future work is needed to investigate gender dynamics in livelihoods within a household to more fully understand household economic behavior.

### 4.2.1 Gender

Gender intersects with wage labor and employment issues in critical ways, particularly for rural and peri-urban areas, and for preliterate and unskilled women. Gender issues are mentioned throughout the report where relevant, but here we present a brief note on the female- and male-dominated sectors. First, as is readily visible in Table 4.2, there were many more men in the sample than women. This is both due to the start of the weeding season at the time of the assessment (weeding is primarily women's work), as well as the nature of labor sectors. More wage labor opportunities are available for men (see Table 4.3). Women, especially rural women, rely on brewing and petty trade of firewood, charcoal, and other goods for income generation. In terms of wage labor, men are mainly recruited to fulfill physically strenuous activities, such as construction labor and loading/offloading of sacks and other items (e.g., for hardware stores or even at construction sites). Interestingly, an NGO representative told us that the organization had previously tried to encourage young women to join their skills programs in the areas of carpentry and construction, but the proposal did not meet with success. Other skilled male-specific sectors include motor vehicle mechanics and security guards.

Women, on the other hand, depend on wages from brewing (working for large-scale brewers and/or retail sale), domestic and cleaning work, and agricultural labor. Women have fewer options available to them than men, which becomes even more pertinent when correlating the sectors with other variables such as seasonality and

**Table 4.3. Gender and labor sectors**

Female-dominated sectors	Male-dominated sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural labor</li> <li>• Brewing</li> <li>• Casual work: cleaning</li> <li>• Domestic work</li> <li>• Hotel work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boda boda (motorcycle) driving</li> <li>• Casual work: loading</li> <li>• Construction labor</li> <li>• Grinding mill operation</li> <li>• Mechanic</li> <li>• Mineral and stone processing plant operation</li> <li>• Security guard</li> </ul>
Neutral sectors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual work: fetching water</li> <li>• Mining and quarrying</li> <li>• Miscellaneous service and sales</li> </ul>	

<sup>9</sup> Does not include sample size for migration sub-assessment.

location. Agricultural labor, for example, is conditional on both seasonality and location (see Section 4.3 *Rural and peri-urban wage labor/livelihoods* and Section 4.9.2 *Seasonality and location*). Similarly, domestic work, cleaning in offices and compounds, and hotel/restaurant work are predominantly urban labor sectors. Thus, brewing remains the most stable and widespread option for women in all seasons, although it seems not to be a viable sector for the purposes of future development programming. Service and sales jobs, which employ both men and women, can be dependent on education and/or linguistic abilities, and may thus exclude a large population.

#### 4.2.2 Age

Most people engaged in wage labor are youth and/or under the age of 40 (see Table 4.2). Many employers prefer hiring young people because many of the unskilled jobs demand considerable physical strength. Age and gender also have an interesting relationship vis-à-vis participation in the labor force, because the gender balance shifts according to age. In the “41 years and above” category, 55% were women and 45% were men, whereas in the “51 years and above” and “61+ years” categories, 80% of participants were women. For rural people, men either devote all their time to livestock management or trade, for those who have animals. Others may work as miners. However, older women continue doing wage labor to fulfill basic needs and pay school fees, because many of them have become the primary caregivers of orphaned grandchildren. Moreover, widowed women often have no other option than relying on wage labor (e.g., see Stites et al., 2014).

From our findings, there does not seem to be a substantial child labor force in Karamoja, but this finding should be interpreted against the goals and time constraints of the assessment. Child labor has important implications for the household economy, as the accepted definition of child labor does not apply to all contexts (e.g., urban vs. rural). However, the sample included seven individuals below the age of 15 years, working as domestic workers (girls), agricultural laborers, and one as a grinding mill operator (girl). Much of the time, young people contribute to the household economy due to the inability of the family heads or other elders to sustain family needs. In one instance, we met two resourceful young cousins, both 14 years old, who spend their school holidays mining artisanal gold. They use their wages to pay their school fees and continue their education.

#### 4.2.3 Education and skilled versus unskilled labor

As will be shown in Section 4.6 on *Wage rates, contracts, and conditions*, skilled labor, predictably, provides higher wages and generally better and more stable work conditions than unskilled labor does. Skilled labor in our sample is classified as *Skill Level 2* according to ILO standards (mechanics, boda boda drivers, machine operators, service and sales, and security guards<sup>10</sup>). A comparison of the skilled labor sectors with the gender analysis shows that women have fewer opportunities for skilled or semi-skilled labor. Out of the 29% of all participants engaged in skilled labor, 19% were women. They were all in service and sales jobs, except one woman who was working as a grinding mill operator (semi-skilled labor).

**Table 4.4. Sample education levels**

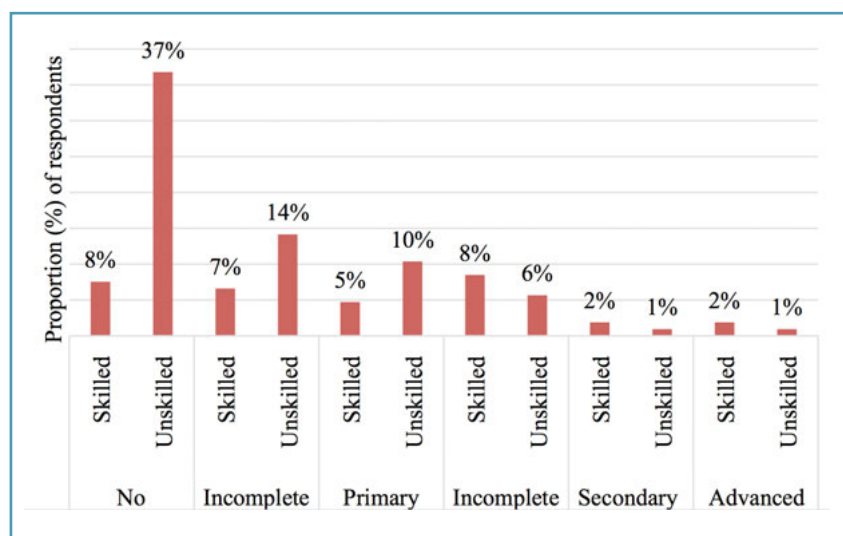
Education	Gender	Proportion of respondents
No education	Women	56%
	Men	37%
Primary education	Women	7%
	Men	21%
Secondary education	Women	0%
	Men	5%
Incomplete primary	Women	26%
	Men	17%
Incomplete secondary*	Women	9%
	Men	17%
Advanced education	Women	2%
	Men	3%

\*Completed either S4 (without taking O-Level exams) or completed O-Level exams but did not proceed to S5/S6.

<sup>10</sup> Service and sales workers and security guards may also be considered as semi-skilled depending on the nature of the job. For instance, literacy and numeracy are not strict requirements. For the sake of analyzing the skill levels across education, however, we thought it best to include these two categories.



Figure 4.2. Skilled vs. unskilled jobs across education levels (N = 106)



While ILO (2012a) definitions of *Skill Levels* state that skilled labor sectors often require a basic level of literacy and so would exclude those with no education, seven people with no education in our sample are in fact working in skilled labor sectors (see Figure 4.2 and Table 4.4). Notably, all of them found this work through their personal networks, except for one migrant laborer working as a security guard. Given that almost half of all participants in our study had some education, our sample is not indicative of the general education level in Karamoja. Critically, Karamoja is mainly a rural region, and although literacy rates have improved, the overall literacy rate is still only 12% (Irish Aid, 2016). In addition, the size of the rural population in Karamoja remains at 90% as of 2015. This factor, coupled with the literacy rate, has critical implications for future policy and programming in wage labor and employment.

Primary school dropouts show similar trends as those with no education. Of those with some education (55% of the entire sample), 37% dropped out before completing primary school, yet a quarter (27%) of them work in skilled labor. Of those who finished primary school (P7), 34% work as skilled laborers. We also have 15 secondary school “dropouts,” i.e., those who did not proceed to the later years of secondary school (S5–S6), of which 40% work in unskilled labor sectors. Of the incomplete secondary school participants in skilled labor, all but two acquired their jobs through their social network.

The assessment clearly shows that even with an incomplete education, people could find semi-skilled or skilled work (service and sales, security guard, mechanic). In these cases, it was their social network that was very important in their recruitment to skilled labor. The ratio of skilled to unskilled labor greatly increases with education level. Six out of 15 who finished S4/O-Level and 2 out of 3 who finished S6/A-Level work in skilled labor. One of the 3

people in our sample who had proceeded to education beyond high school works in skilled labor within her field, while one person has his own business (he has a Bachelor's degree); the third person worked in unskilled agricultural labor despite having a certificate in agriculture. These cases are noteworthy because having higher educational qualifications does not automatically lead to employment in the field of study.

Many employers reported that they struggled to find skilled labor in Karamoja, and thus they hired non-Karamojong for skilled positions (see Section 4.7 on *Employer requirements*). Realizing that there may be other sector-specific skills and competencies that factor into this, it is noteworthy that out of all the people with some education (meaning that they have the basic skills of literacy required for the *Skill Level 2* labor sectors in Karamoja), only 43% worked in skilled labor. .

### 4.3 RURAL AND PERI-URBAN WAGE LABOR/LIVELIHOODS

Over 90% of Karamoja is still considered rural, which has important implications for wage labor and employment. When considering employment options, it is evident that the number of opportunities increases as distance from urban centers decreases. For example, sub-counties and villages located closer to the urban centers of Moroto, Kangole, Matany, Kotido, and Kaabong Towns witness a daily migration of laborers doing casual or other jobs. As distances are traversable in a day, many individuals, both men and women, travel daily to towns to look for work. This daily migratory trend influences the labor profile of the region, where individuals living closer to urban centers can, in theory, participate in several sectors, such as service and sales jobs, cooking in restaurants, and daily domestic labor. Individuals in more rural areas cannot access these jobs so easily.

In contrast, rural households engage in other types of livelihood activities (see Table 4.5). The first and most noteworthy aspect of rural livelihoods is the predominance of livestock management and (opportunistic) agriculture. Although engagement in diversified livelihood activities has increased over the years, people still expend considerable time in cultivating their gardens when the prospect of rain is good and in taking care of their livestock throughout the year. Both of these activities require a substantial labor and time commitment. In those areas of Karamoja where urban centers are negligible, such as Kaabong and Amudat, a household's livelihood profile may be skewed towards these activities. In general, people in rural areas use diversified activities to provide supplementary support to the household and as a risk management strategy, where these activities are a way to delay distress sales of livestock and grains. Nonetheless, most rural households use diverse income sources, ranging from firewood and charcoal sales to various casual jobs.

Regionally, people in rural areas of Moroto District, such as those in Rupa and Tapac sub-counties, are also heavily involved in mining. Participants in these areas described

mining as the most important source of income (Focus group discussion, Rupa sub-county). During the extended drought of 2015, for instance, even those who relied mainly on traditional modes of subsistence in Moroto District turned to mining to meet household needs (Iyer, 2016). Unlike wage labor, mining does not require any contracts and in most cases can be considered "self-employment" in which groups of individuals (or even individuals alone) can participate in the breaking of limestone and marble for onward sale to companies. Although the return from mining is negligible considering the time and cost of labor, it currently serves as a profitable dry season livelihood activity due to better transport conditions and the frequency with which buyers come to Karamoja. This is also true for the artisanal gold mining that is practiced heavily in Kaabong (and less so now in Moroto). For more information, see Box 1 on mining.

For rural women, some of the main ways of earning income are selling brew (whether one's own or retail sale), fetching water (generally in peri-urban areas), construction of huts, agricultural labor, and sale of charcoal and firewood. The decisions on the type of work to engage in at

**Table 4.5. Examples of rural and peri-urban livelihood activities**

	<b>Napak District</b>	<b>Moroto District</b>	<b>Kotido District</b>
<b>Types of labor</b>	Agricultural labor (M/F) Bricklaying (M) Construction labor (M) Building huts (F) Domestic work (F) Fetching water (M/F)	Brewing (F) Bricklaying Construction labor Domestic work Fetching water Mining and quarrying (M/F)	Agricultural labor Bricklaying Construction work Domestic labor
<b>Other sources of income</b>	Firewood (F), charcoal (M/F), and building pole sales (M) Livestock trade (M)	Charcoal making and selling pots (F) Livestock trade	Firewood and charcoal sales (F) Planting trees (M/F) Petty trade in vegetables (F) Road clearing (M/F)
<b>Subsistence activities</b>	Agriculture Livestock management	Opportunistic agriculture Livestock management	Agriculture Livestock management
<b>Reasons for engaging in wage labor</b>	Livestock poverty Harvest failure	Harvest failure Income	Livestock poverty Harvest failure Income

M = Predominantly male activity; F = Predominantly female activity

a given time are individually determined. Women, who bear the primary responsibility for feeding the household, must resort to any activity that they can find. Often, due to competition in daily wage labor, a day's livelihood activity may need to be modified. For example, daily wage labor of fetching water, assisting wholesale brewers, and casual domestic work are all sometimes dependent on the time of arrival at the location in question. These jobs may not be available if the worker is delayed.

Both men and women may find temporary “wage labor” in activities such as access road clearing, tree planting, dam construction, and other food-for-work or cash-for-work activities sponsored by development partners or government initiatives. Those commuting daily to urban centers may also find casual work as loaders, construction laborers, domestic workers, or brewing helpers. As such, the scope of wage labor is fairly limited in rural areas and often requires travel to peri-urban or urban areas. Those living far from towns may earn income through mining, livestock trade, or other periodic trade activities. However, for rural to urban commuting laborers, the additional challenges of rent and other amenities (including food) is less of a concern, as they continue to maintain their own homesteads in the villages and presumably have greater access to livestock than those who have exited pastoralism entirely (see Stites et al., 2014). Moreover, maintaining a residence in villages may confer benefits of kinship and friendship networks during times of distress, which urban unskilled wage laborers, particularly those who have permanently migrated to towns, cannot rely upon. Finally, it should be noted that, above all, a large portion of the rural population is effectively cut off from accessing *Skill Level 2* jobs in or near urban centers, due to lack of education and/or the inability to speak English. We further explore these and other barriers in Section 4.11 on *Formal and informal barriers to wage labor*.

#### 4.4 REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

##### 4.4.1 Comparing districts across Karamoja

The rural–urban differences outlined above also largely explain regional differences in labor opportunities. There is a proportionally higher number of sectors and options available for those in Moroto District than those in any other district (see Table 4.6). Moroto Town is the headquarters of the region and is the fastest-growing urban center. It has had a noticeable spike in population in the last few years. From 2002 to 2014, the population of Moroto Municipality more than doubled—a sign of regional and extra-regional migration to the area (2015 estimate: 15,100 individuals (UBOS, 2014)). Although the data are not readily available, many residents of Moroto reportedly come from other regions and districts of Uganda to work in a variety of wholesale and retail businesses, as well as in the public sector and development sector. Moroto Town is also home to the field offices of

most humanitarian and development agencies working in Karamoja. These factors, coupled with the ongoing natural resource extraction in the district, make Moroto Town the biggest labor market in Karamoja. As a result, most labor sectors are well represented there. Agricultural wage labor, however, is less frequent in Moroto District due to its location in the pastoral livelihood zone, which is characterized by low rainfall and poor soil quality (excluding town and some other areas). Petty trade in charcoal, firewood, household goods, and vegetables (mainly from the mountainous zone), as well as mining and various casual jobs, enable income generation. Agricultural wage labor is, on the other hand, an important source of income in the agro-ecological zones of Napak, Nakapiripirit, and Abim. The latter also attracts migrants from Kotido and Kaabong for agricultural labor.

Due to the growing private sector in Moroto, especially in the sales and service industries (e.g., hotels) and construction, the scope of casual employment is greater than in any other urban center in Karamoja. This is particularly true of road construction, where the priority is given to hiring locals. However, many private businesses bring workers from their own regions in Uganda, even for unskilled labor positions. This is frequently mentioned as a barrier by people in Karamoja and is supported by our observations at the various labor sites. For example, at one major construction site near Moroto Town we did not find a single local person, and we were told that the only Karamojong person working there was tasked with fetching water. This situation is understandable for some skilled work (e.g., in women's salons, due to the scarcity of individuals skilled in hairdressing), but the lack of local laborers in many unskilled jobs was a concern.

Although not at the same scale as Moroto, other urban centers—such as Kotido, Nakapiripirit, Kaabong, Matany, and Namalu—have also grown in size and scope in the last few years. Among these, Kotido is the largest town in northern Karamoja and provides various employment and livelihood options to individuals (see also Stites, et al., 2014). Like Moroto Town, commuter laborers from rural areas seek work in Kotido Town in such sectors as casual labor, brewing, construction, and service and sales. As in Moroto, many of the small retailers and restaurant owners are from outside Karamoja (from Soroti or Mbale) and tend to have either a mix of staff, or only staff from their own districts. The trend of commuter labor from peri-urban and rural areas to urban centers is also evident in Napak, Kaabong, and Nakapiripirit Districts.

Due to different weather conditions between districts, gardening and agricultural labor is a primary source of income in southern Karamoja. Agricultural labor is especially important in the Namalu area, and some irrigated agriculture projects provide work well into the dry season.

Table 4.6. Labor differences in Karamoja by district

	<b>Moroto</b>	<b>Napak</b>	<b>Kotido</b>	<b>Kaabong</b>	<b>Nakapiripirit</b>	<b>Amudat</b>	<b>Abim</b>
<b>Predominant labor sectors</b>	All sectors available; mining of limestone, marble, and some gold active	Agricultural labor; other sectors in urban centers	Most sectors available	Gold mining	Agricultural labor	Wage labor less important	Agricultural labor
<b>Livelihood zones</b>	Pastoral livelihood zone	Agro-ecological zone/agro-pastoral zone	Agro-pastoral livelihood zone	Agro-pastoral livelihood zone	Agro-ecological zone	Pastoral livelihood zone	Agro-ecological zone
<b>Market</b>	Large urban center	Small-scale urban center	Small-scale urban center	Trading center	Trading center	Trading center	Small-scale urban center
<b>Migration patterns</b>	Moroto Town and mining areas attract many migrants from Karamoja	Many migrants within and outside Karamoja are from Napak	Migration to Abim	Migration to Abim	Attracts many migrants for agricultural labor; many women fleeing mistreatment	Mainly to support transhumance; free migration between Uganda and Kenya	Sparse information available

#### 4.4.2 Wage labor in Amudat District

Amudat District differs from other areas covered in the assessment in that most of the wage labor in the main trading center is done by migrants. For instance, in Amudat we found only one person working for wages within the town who was a local Pokot individual. People from neighboring Nakapiripirit District or from outside of Karamoja (particularly Mbale) have set up businesses and provide wage labor in Amudat Town. In contrast, Pokot communities continue to rely heavily on traditional livelihood activities, especially livestock keeping and opportunistic farming.

Other activities such as firewood and charcoal sales are solely an ex post coping mechanism. As reported to us and observed by us, the individuals involved in firewood and charcoal activities in the Amudat trading center are non-Pokot. Similarly, in the border town of Karita there has been an influx of Sebei and Bugisu people in the recent years for trade activities. Whereas there was no tree felling in the past, these “outsiders” have, reportedly, started burning charcoal and chopping firewood. Pokot communities have an extremely negative view on chopping trees for firewood and charcoal, and those caught doing so

are often admonished or chased away from the community. Until recently, communities did not even want access roads near villages because building them would cause trees to be felled. Pokot resistance to tree cutting comes from the belief that the activity results in the faster drying of the rangelands due to harsh temperatures and that there would be no pasture left for animals. Trees also provided security in the time of raids due to the camouflage and cover they provide. Whereas firewood sales increase during a drought, this activity is far less evident in Amudat relative to other parts of Karamoja. Instead, income for food purchases is derived from livestock sales to Kitale or Nairobi in Kenya and Soroti/Mbale in Uganda. People also sell honey within Uganda and in Kenya.

It is commonly reported that Pokot people do not willingly engage in wage labor for others, and we only found one person from the district who was involved in wage labor. Even in the case of agriculture, individuals called to work on someone else’s plot are not seen as laborers, but rather as social helpers. People’s resistance to wage labor is attributed to their “pride.” They think of wage labor as “slave labor.” Even jobs such as construction are not really done by locals,

but by outsiders (Karamojong or non-Karamojong). This also applies to migrant labor, and Pokot migration is mainly linked to transhumant pastoralism and not wage labor.

It seems that the Pokot resistance to wage labor is due to their relative wealth in livestock, which allows them to meet household consumption needs through animal husbandry. According to informants, it is rare to find a malnourished Pokot child, and the malnourished children around the urban center are usually non-Pokot. While we did not collect data on food security, these observations are consistent with World Food Programme (WFP) Food Security and Nutritional Assessments from the past few years, which report that Amudat has the lowest food insecurity in Karamoja. Moreover, unlike in other parts of Karamoja, people do not start brewing maize (unlike in other parts of Karamoja, sorghum is not a main staple for Pokot communities) until later in the season.

Another reason for the Pokot resistance to wage labor is its association with poverty. If a household still has access to animals, it is believed that there is no need to do wage labor. This same “pride” is also reported as the reason for the lack of begging in Amudat District compared to other districts. It is believed that those seeking casual labor or resorting to begging and other activities are not well insulated by their traditional social networks during times of disaster or hardship. Similarly, migration of impoverished herders to other areas in search of wage labour has not been observed among Pokot people (Bollig, 2006).

The same negative view does not apply to business and trade, and some Pokot individuals have opened shops in town. Trade in animals and food products is commonly undertaken by Pokot. On market day on Saturdays, Pokot women sell clothes, *mandazi* (donuts), *gither* (maize and beans dish), and tea to market-goers. We also observed women from villages selling milk in the trading center, which they said would enable them to buy other food (the rains were delayed during the assessment period). In short, diversified livelihood activities are seen as truly alternative for Pokot, who only engage in them periodically. This contrasts with other parts of Karamoja, where diversified activities are extremely important, especially for people with few or no animals.

#### 4.5 SEASONALITY

Seasons have a critical impact on wage labor and employment opportunities for individuals, particularly those who are pre-literate or uneducated. Karamoja has a unimodal rainfall pattern where a six-month rainy season (April–September/October; *akiporo*) is followed by a six-month dry season (*akamu*). Agricultural activities, including preparing the land, weeding, and harvesting, can

start as early as April and extend up to late September/October. People living in agro-ecological zones with sufficient rainfall are heavily invested in subsistence agriculture at this time and associate self-reliance with full granaries rather than wage labor. Not only is subsistence agriculture a priority for many households living in zones with sufficient rainfall, the wet season is also the time of agricultural wage labor in Napak, Nakapiripirit, and Kotido. Both men and women do agricultural labor, but we found a greater number of women involved in the activity.

The wet season is also conducive to artisanal gold mining, which requires water for sifting and washing soil. In Kaabong, for example, miners told us that they would prefer to leave fewer household members back at the homestead for subsistence agriculture, so that they could mine gold during the rains. We assumed that this behavior relates to the potentially large profits from gold mining. In addition, some households rotate members between the mining site and the homestead to ensure both adequate cash generation at the mines and continued agricultural activities at home. Although primarily a wet season activity, artisanal gold mining is also done in the dry season. However, it has been estimated that a person can earn up to UGX (Ugandan Shillings) 6,000–7,000 (~ USD 2)<sup>11</sup> per day in the wet season as compared to UGX 2,000–6,000 (~ USD 0.50–1.70) per day in the dry season (Houdet et al., 2014).

Critically, women are heavily involved in artisanal gold mining in the wet season where available (e.g., Moroto, Kaabong). A study by Houdet and colleagues (2014) estimated that 90% of miners in Rupa sub-county were women. However, in the dry season, wage labor opportunities shift to various constructions jobs (including concrete work), which primarily employ men. Since sudden rainfall or prolonged rain may interrupt construction, the dry season is reserved for most of these activities. Bricklaying is also mainly practiced in the dry season, and the demand for stones at quarries increases in the dry season. One participant reported that in ten days, a family of workers could potentially earn UGX 120,000 (USD 33.80) from breaking stones. This figure appears to be an upper limit estimation and depends heavily on the number of family members involved in the activity. Quarry work, particularly breaking stones, is one of the lowest-paying activities we encountered. A basin of stones fetches only UGX 400 (USD 0.11). Both men and women may be involved in quarry work, unlike construction.

The dry season is also amenable to limestone mining because of better road conditions. Participants reported the ability to sell more stones due to the presence of more trucks in the dry season than in the wet season. For Tepeth agro-pastoralists who live around the Kosiroi limestone

<sup>11</sup> All dollar conversions in the report are based on average historical rate for June 2017 (OANDA), where USD 1 = UGX 3,549.5. Amounts are rounded to two decimal places.



mining area and depend heavily on agricultural produce for household needs, limestone mining has become a central cash-generating activity in the dry season, or during a prolonged drought period as a way to manage risk (Iyer, 2016). The Kosiroi trading center also serves as the main market in the area, due to the distance from Moroto Town, and has seen a proliferation of traders over the last few years.

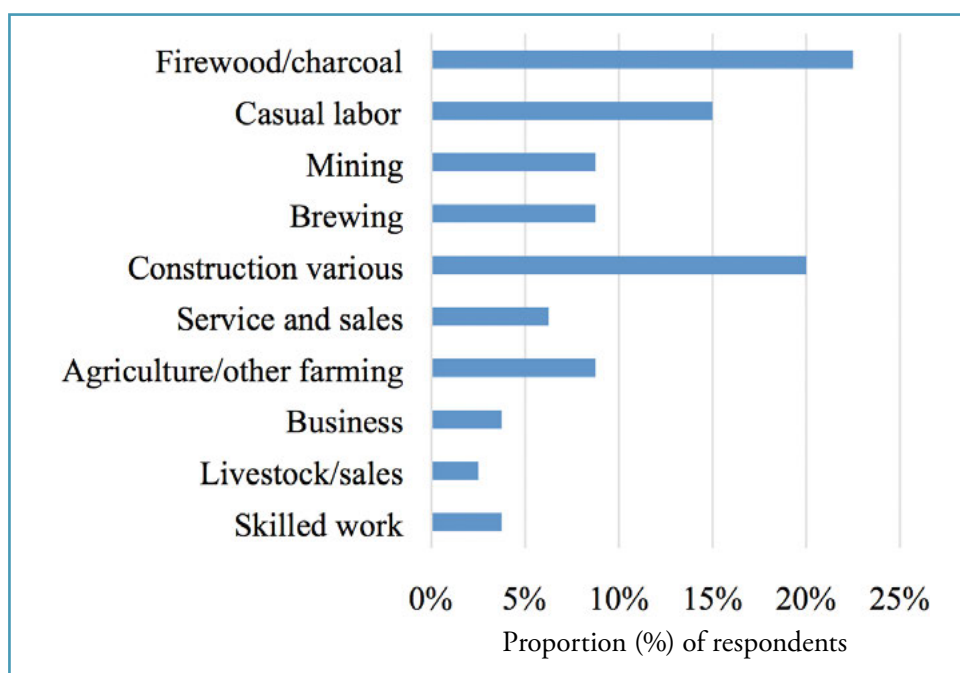
It is critical to note the interaction of seasons and wage labor opportunities from a gender perspective. The assessment shows that the wet season is generally favorable to female wage workers, including miners, due to the proliferation of better-paying activities (agricultural labor, artisanal gold mining). While men are also involved in these, cash-generating opportunities for women shift dramatically in the dry season, when they earn a living primarily through firewood, charcoal, and other petty trade, or quarry work, all of which yield relatively poor income. Men, on the other hand, find relatively lucrative employment in the construction and concrete industry in the dry season. Similarly, earnings from limestone mining, where men are more heavily involved than women, also rise in the dry season. Despite these trends, it is equally important to note that while men and women in a household maintain “separate purses,” money may be redistributed in the household for meeting essential needs. Nonetheless, as the burden of household nutrition, particularly of children, falls on women, the discrepancy in wage labor opportunities between the seasons seems to influence them most.

A major all-year activity for many Karamojong women is brewing of local alcohol (*ngagwe*). Brewing is an important source of income in both seasons, according to participants. Local brew is often provided to agricultural wage laborers by their employers as compensation for their work, thus making it a viable activity in the wet season. Conversely, brewing is also lucrative in the dry season due to a common risk management strategy of replacing food with local brew. Brewers, both producers and retailers, become important sources of credit and cash redistribution in village networks (Iyer, 2016).

Women may either be wholesale brewers<sup>12</sup> around trading centers and within towns, or sell brew on retail (“booking”) in villages. In areas of poor agricultural production, such as Moroto District, the majority of brew sold in villages comes from urban centers. Notably, large-scale brewing businesses often employ young and older women alike to help with the processing of brew or fetching water. Workers are either paid in cash and/or dregs; some may be compensated in brew. Although it is the brewing business owner who reaps the most benefit economically, and workers have little to no guarantee of employment and generally poor wages, working for big brewers remains a crucial wage labor strategy for Karamojong women.

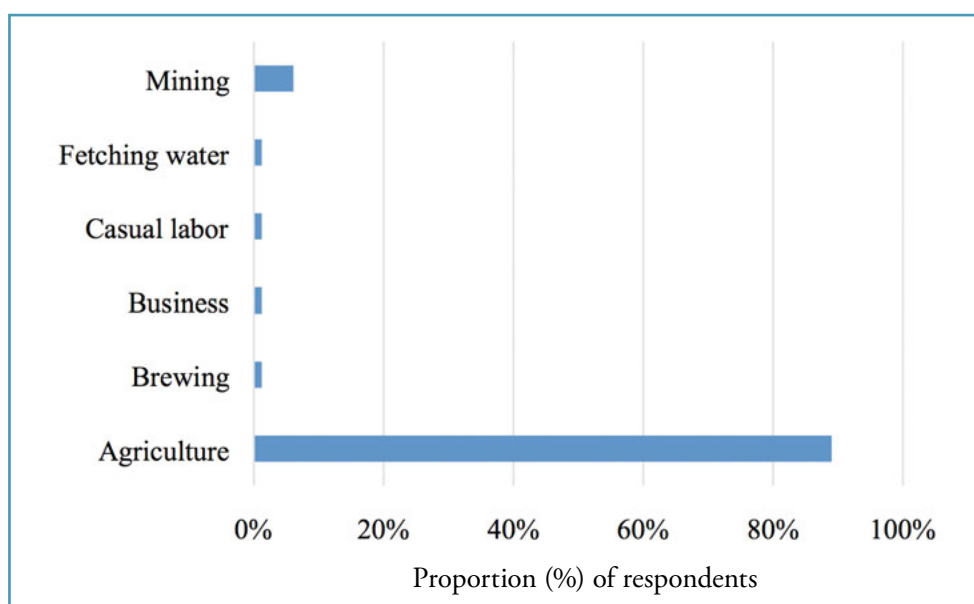
Finally, to assess the strength of various labor and livelihood strategies in the different seasons, we asked participants to name the “most profitable work for the household in the dry and wet seasons” (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Our motivation to ask these questions was to

**Figure 4.3. Most useful/profitable work in the dry season (N = 80\*)**



\*Excludes full-time urban workers (e.g., mechanics, service and sales staff, construction workers, etc.)

<sup>12</sup> Many non-Karamojong women own large-scale brewing businesses around urban centers in Karamoja.

**Figure 4.4. Most useful/profitable work in the wet season (N = 82\*)**

\*Excludes full-time urban workers (e.g. mechanics, service and sales staff, construction workers, etc.)

ascertain what participants considered the most profitable use of time for a particular livelihood in the two seasons, among the multiple livelihoods they generally maintain.<sup>13</sup> Almost 90% of participants mentioned agriculture as the most profitable work for the household in the wet season, whereas the options in the dry season were variously distributed. There is no seasonal effect for those in semi-skilled or skilled work, such as mechanics and salespersons, who generally reside in urban centers and depend on the same livelihood throughout the year.

The assessment focused on wage labor, and therefore the participants were not primarily livestock keepers or sellers. However, some participants were involved in livestock management, sales, and butchery. Like most peri-urban or rural Karamojong, they manage multiple livelihood activities. These participants noted the persistence of livestock-related activities throughout the year, e.g., a butchery business earns income throughout the year, as does livestock trade. So, while other labor sectors may play an important role in generating income at other times of the year, livestock gain greater significance in the dry season, when trade or sale may fetch more income than casual wage labor. Clearly, the sale and slaughter of animals for income is greatly dependent on household and individual livestock holdings.

#### 4.6 WAGE RATES, CONTRACTS, AND CONDITIONS

As we expected, wage rates in Karamoja were low, especially for day laborers. However, low wages in Karamoja reflect a national problem in Uganda, where the minimum wage by law has stagnated at UGX 6,000 per month (USD 1.7) since 1984 (also see Table 4.7). This national minimum wage was especially set for those working in sugar factories, mills, ginneries, and agricultural and mining estates (Wambuga, 2016). Although the Minimum Wages Advisory Council later proposed a new minimum wage rate of UGX 75,000 per month (USD 21.1) in 1995 for unskilled workers, this proposal was not adopted (Nalugo, 2013). Most recently, in early June 2017, the Minimum Wages Advisory Board proposed a minimum wage of UGX 136,000 per month (USD 38.3) for any category of worker—professional, skilled, or unskilled (Kafeero, 2017). The proposal awaits Cabinet approval. However, some policy analysts fear that a stringent Minimum Wage Bill, which penalizes employers for non-compliance and is not supported by adequate monitoring and enforcement, may in fact exacerbate Uganda's unemployment problem by discouraging investment and trade (Twaha, 2017; Wambuga, 2016). Conversely, to prevent exploitation of workers and to promote productivity, minimum wage legislation is needed, especially to account for rising living costs in Uganda.

<sup>13</sup> Excludes full-time urban skilled workers such as mechanics, service and sales staff, etc.

Table 4.7. Median monthly wages for people aged 14–64 years in Uganda

Characteristics	Median wages (nominal) (UGX)	Median wages (real 2005–06) (UGX)
Male	132,000	65,941
Female	66,000	32,970
Urban	209,000	104,406
Rural	75,000	37,466
Public	330,000	164,852
Private	99,000	49,455

Adapted from: National Labour Force and Child Activities Survey 2012/2013; UBOS, 2014

Overall, wage workers in Karamoja are paid *daily* in such sectors as agricultural labor, brewing, domestic work, construction, and quarry work. Sometimes even mechanics are paid on a daily basis. Those employed in service and sales, as security guards, and as machine operators are usually paid monthly. Moreover, it should be noted that income from brewing can vary from day to day, depending on the employer or the work agreement. Similarly, income from mining cannot be standardized and is predicated on both the natural resource as well as the nature of extraction. For example, while artisanal gold miners may work individually (although they also work in groups), limestone mining mainly occurs in groups, which implies that the amount earned from the stones depends on the number of people involved in the labor. In addition, limestone or marble mining usually earns less income than gold mining in certain areas, as reported to us. For example, a lorry load of limestone, which may take weeks to a month to process, fetches between UGX 150–175,000 (USD 42.26 - 49.30), but gold mining *can* fetch that amount in a week to ten days, according to participants (in Kaabong). Houdet et al. (2014), however, report estimated earnings of UGX 24,000 (USD 6.76) per person per day (at the rate of UGX 8,000 (USD 2.25) per point<sup>14</sup>) at the Rupa gold mining sites, which we cannot confirm in our findings due to the large variability in acquiring gold.

Although many labor sectors do not provide adequate wages (see Table 4.8), sectors dominated by women, such as brewing and domestic work, fetch the least amount. Agricultural wage labor employs a significant number of women (see also Mueller and Bbosa 2016) but also has extremely low wages. This is a concern because so many

people are employed in agricultural wage labor in Karamoja, especially in areas with higher rainfall.<sup>15</sup>

The problem of low wages is compounded by wage deductions. For example, in Kotido an agricultural laborer reported that although the daily wage was UGX 3,000 (USD 0.85), the employer deducted UGX 1,000 (USD 0.28) if refreshment of any kind was provided during work. In addition, agriculture-related wage labor may also have “task rates;” planting a certain number of trees, or clearing or weeding a specified area of land, earns a specified amount (see also Mueller and Bbosa, 2016). The only exception to these low agricultural wages were reported by participants involved NGO-sponsored projects, where a monthly salary of ~ UGX 100,000 (USD 28.17) was possible. However, this was restricted to the Namalu area.

Very low wages are also paid for all types of work classified as “casual labor,” such as fetching water, working in construction or quarries, and cleaners. For example, fetching water does not guarantee any specific amount per day because wages are based on the number of jerrycans fetched; one jerrycan can fetch as little as UGX 200 (USD 0.06). While no employers explicitly mentioned the high labor supply relative to demand as a reason for driving down wage rates, it is commonly understood that many daily laborers would work for any amount, given the competition. Moreover, for certain jobs, such as agricultural labor and other casual work, wage rates are usually standard in a particular locality or area, and most employers follow these locally determined rates.

<sup>14</sup> 10 points = 1 gram (see Houdet et al., 2014, page 65)

<sup>15</sup> See World Food Programme, 2016, page 23, for proportions of people by district involved in agriculture-dependent income sources.

Table 4.8. Average wage rates by sector in Karamoja (N = 92\*)

Sector	Average monthly salary (UGX)	Range (day/month) (UGX)
<b>Agricultural wage labor</b>	89,000 (USD 25.07) **	2,000–5,500 per day (USD 0.56–1.55)
<b>Brewing</b>	82,000 (USD 23.10)	1,500–4,000 per day (USD 0.42–1.13)
<b>Casual labor</b>	N/A	2,000–3,000 per day (USD 0.56–0.85)
<b>Construction</b>	215,000 (USD 60.57)	3,000–15,000 per day (USD 0.85–4.23)
<b>Domestic work</b>	73,000 (USD 20.57)	1,000–4,000 per day (USD 0.28–1.13)
<b>Mechanic</b>	193,000 (USD 54.37)	5,000–10,000 per day (USD 1.41–2.82)
<b>Mineral and stone processing plant operators</b>	Limited data	180,000–530,000 per month (USD 50.71–149.32)
<b>Security guard</b>	98,000 (USD 27.61)	30,000–120,000 per month (USD 8.45–33.81)
<b>Service and sales</b>	Various	e.g., petrol pump sales: 250,000–400,000 per month (USD 70.43–112.70) Hotel workers: 50,000–150,000 per month (USD 14.09–42.26)

\*Daily wage rates converted to monthly for average calculation based on 31-day month. All wages in the table are rounded.

\*\* USD 1 = UGX 3,549.5 (June 2017)

Variable wages also apply to work by mechanics or boda boda drivers. Mechanics are paid according to the nature of the work, and the number of vehicles serviced in a day. According to one mechanic, there is more potential for earning in the dry season because more cars come for repairs (because of dust affecting the engines). Similarly, for boda boda drivers, the owner of the motorcycle (if the driver does not own it) takes a set amount per day, usually around UGX 10,000 (USD 2.90), which can potentially result in great variation in daily or monthly earnings. It is also very important to note that while our calculations in Table 4.8 show *possible* monthly earnings, especially for those in agriculture, brewing and casual work, these are maximum estimates given the variability in wages (depending on area and employer), seasonality of sectors, the general daily nature of labour, and the fact that many people don't work 6 days a week.

As noted in the *Background* section, a substantial proportion of employment in Uganda and Karamoja is informal, with little recourse to formalized agreements,

labor rights, or benefits. Whereas around 45% of all workers in the assessment<sup>16</sup> had some form of agreement with the employer, only 11% of them had a formal agreement (e.g., a letter). The remainder had verbal or informal agreements on wage rates, frequency of payment, and other benefits. Of those who had some form of agreement with employers, 24% had negotiated with the employer on wage rates and conditions. In general, employers decide the daily rate; according to the standard in the area (peri-urban center or rural location).

About half of the workers received benefits, besides wages, as part of their work. Additional benefits included meals at work, food grains to take home, local brew, and, in one case, medical treatment.<sup>17</sup> In addition, 14% of all participants<sup>18</sup> received accommodation as part of their work; all but one of these individuals were service and sales staff (one person was in a skilled job for a company). One service and sales employee reported a reduction of UGX 60,000 (USD 16.90) per month in wages, if meals were provided by the employer.

<sup>16</sup> Excludes mining and quarrying laborers since they are not wage employees of the company (N = 82).

<sup>17</sup> This individual works in a medical facility.

<sup>18</sup> Excludes mining and quarrying laborers.

Among all sectors, our preliminary assessment shows that predictably, the better off were those in skilled work, and those in service and sales, particularly in major towns. Several service and sales jobs offer attractive benefits, particularly accommodation and all meals, and usually present lower health risks relative to, for example, limestone mining or agricultural labor. However, conditions in service and sales jobs are not necessarily close to meeting certain labor standards. We explore overall challenges in labor and employment, both regionally and sector-specific, in the following section.

### 4.7 EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

The employers interviewed had mixed origins—Karamojong, non-Karamojong Ugandans, and long-term and short-term migrants from other places such as South Asia and China. We interviewed employers in different sectors (motor vehicle repair shops, hardware stores, large-scale construction) to gain an understanding of the qualities they look for in workers and to what extent Karamojong people can meet their expectations. The qualifications and competencies required by employers of their workers can be divided into four categories:

- Required skills for the work at hand;
- Language skills;
- Appropriate age category;
- Personal traits and behaviors.

#### 4.7.1 Skills required

While employers reported that they did not discriminate in hiring for unskilled and skilled positions on the basis of ethnicity (Karamojong versus non-Karamojong), there is a clear pattern. Typically only unskilled positions are given to Karamojong, whereas skilled positions go to workers from other regions. It is a common perception among employers that they cannot find skilled labor in Karamoja; hence the frequent use of people from outside the region. Some of the employers specifically mentioned a willingness to hire locally when the skills pool in Karamoja improves. Some also were willing to be part of the improvement by providing practical training. One employer reported having done so already but unfortunately had a negative experience with the person trained and employed.

It is a commonly reported grievance among skilled and educated Karamojong that they are bypassed in recruitment processes when people come from outside the region and set up businesses or offices (e.g., private sector,

government, NGOs). However, we lack empirical data on this issue, and more evidence is needed to show the actual employment pattern.

#### 4.7.2 Language skills

Language can also be a barrier in the recruitment process. People who do not speak English and/or Swahili may find it difficult, if not impossible, to find work in particular positions in urban centers. This is particularly challenging for the rural and/or pre-literate if they aspire to work in, for instance, a janitorial or other unskilled position at an organization where non-Karamojong Ugandans and foreigners work. One female, a non-Karamojong Ugandan employer, specifically stated that she hired local women only, because of their ability to speak *Ngajie*, the local language spoken in Kotido District. However, the far more common outcome is that people fail in the recruitment process, or are not even considered, if they only speak a local language. In some cases, this may relate to genuine safety concerns. There are labor sectors or situations where a swift response and close cooperation is needed to avoid accidents, e.g., when a team of construction laborers are setting up scaffolding. In our sample, language was a barrier primarily for individuals seeking cleaning jobs in offices.

#### 4.7.3 Appropriate age category

Most employers report hiring young people because a lot of the labor is physically strenuous (e.g., construction). However, a few employers also specifically mentioned that they took precautions against hiring very young individuals to avoid being involved in child labor. The assessment team observed that in most workplaces where child labor was found, the children were working for relatives (child labor was also more prevalent in northern Karamoja than around Moroto). The issue of child labor within Karamoja requires further investigation and analysis. The Employment Act of 2006 sets the minimum age for light work at 14 years and hazardous and heavy work at 18 years.<sup>19</sup> There are grey areas over the definitions of “light” and “heavy” work, but the intent of the law seems to be to avoid situations such as a 17-year-old male school dropout loading sand on trucks, or a 14-year-old girl digging in fields in the heat of the day.

#### 4.7.4 Personal traits and behaviors

The three negative behaviors described by most employers as recruitment barriers or reasons for firing, were laziness, alcohol consumption, and theft. Moreover, a few employers added traits based on gross generalizations such as “the Karamojong are rude” or “the Karamojong like to disturb people.” This issue will be addressed in Section 4.11.4 on *Discrimination*.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.africapay.org/uganda/home/labor-laws/fair-treatment/minors-and-youth>.



A few employers reported efforts to avoid negative behaviors by working with employees to build trust. One employer mentioned that they required information on personal background and health status, confirmed through recommendations from the Local Council <sup>120</sup> and the police in the worker's home areas, when recruiting unskilled labor. On a more positive note, one employer reported preferring working with Karamojong because of their appreciation of whatever is offered and their culture of sharing.

#### 4.8 CHALLENGES

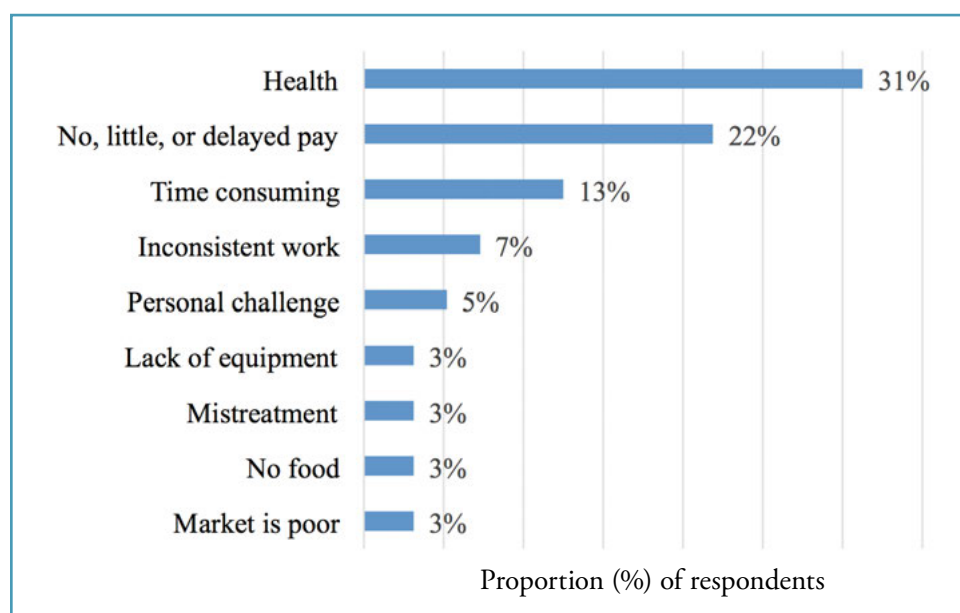
Wage workers in all sectors reported a host of challenges associated with either their particular sector or another individual-level characteristic. The most common complaint across most unskilled sectors was health related (see Figure 4.5). Health issues were a major complaint for laborers in construction, mining, agricultural, quarrying, domestic work, and brewing. Frequently, laborers complained of the work being “heavy” and adversely affecting their health. Of these, a large number noted “chest pain” as the main work-related health problem. As younger individuals frequently identify chest pain as a major health hurdle, this observation requires further investigation.

Health issues were also a concern for agricultural wage laborers, who work under direct sunlight for long hours in

the period leading up to the harvest, when there is greatest food insecurity. Often, recurring health issues appear to be linked to hunger. The lack of food prior to and during work hours creates physical problems for those doing strenuous agricultural labor. In cases where local alcohol or other food was provided by the employer, the wages were drastically reduced. Moreover, no tools are provided for agricultural labor. The laborer is responsible for acquiring them.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, a few participants reported the increasing use of ox ploughs in some areas, whether as a development intervention or household decision. In these cases, the laborer's work (and employer's need) is reduced, and the laborer is only hired for weeding and clearing. The work is also “heavy” due to the rudimentary nature of tools used in agriculture in Karamoja. Other health hazards include occupational hazards in artisanal gold mining, road accidents in boda boda driving, and heat and dust exposure in several sectors (quarry, mining, construction).

No, little, or delayed payment was the second-most-frequent source of complaint from workers. As previously mentioned, in some sectors obtaining employment and, consequently, payment are contingent on customers, such as for mechanics, or on a first-come-first-served basis, as in casual and agricultural labor. However, the issue of delayed or no payment spans the sectors, especially those that employ unskilled workers. The wage rates were also a major grievance, considering the labor and time investment in

**Figure 4.5. Challenges in work (N = 92)**



\*Excludes: 1% Competition; 1% Insecurity; 1% Uncooperative coworkers; 2% No challenges.

<sup>20</sup> Uganda has a decentralized government system. In the system of government elects, the highest level is the Local Council V (LC5), which functions on the district level, and the lowest level is the Local Council I (LC1), which functions on the village or neighborhood level in the case of towns (<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN029080.pdf>. Accessed 09.19.17).

<sup>21</sup> A hoe (*ejembe*) may cost up to UGX 15,000 (USD 4.23).

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

tasks. Workers felt they were not compensated adequately. Examples include quarry work (only UGX 400 (USD 0.11) for a basin of stones), fetching water (only UGX 200 (USD 0.06) for a jerrycan), agricultural labor, brewing, and others. Lastly, for those working in service and sales, not having strict accounts of sales and any non-payment from customers lead to a reduction in a worker's salary.

Time investment and division were major concerns for all workers. Long working hours, particularly in agricultural wage labor, left no time for own subsistence and household activities. This problem is especially acute for women because of their primary responsibility for household food provisioning and agriculture. More importantly, individuals who might earn higher daily wages by combining multiple livelihood activities found it less possible if the primary sector consumed most of the day. Once again, complaints of time investment were frequently linked to low payment. Workers felt inadequately compensated for the amount of time invested. Nearly 50% of our participant sample reported working seven days a week, whether in construction, service and sales, security, brewing, domestic work, or other casual work.

In the assessment, the issue of mistreatment at work was gender specific and was only raised by women. Mistreatment was related to owners "quarreling" with workers over different issues, from payments to work responsibilities. In one case, a brewing business owner did not allow a worker to talk to the assessment team and noisily objected that we were affecting her productivity. Another major complaint of mistreatment was by female service and sales staff at hotels, who raised the issue of male customers at the hotel pressuring them for sexual favors. They reported a hostile work environment for female staff at guest houses and hotels, as well as the risk of

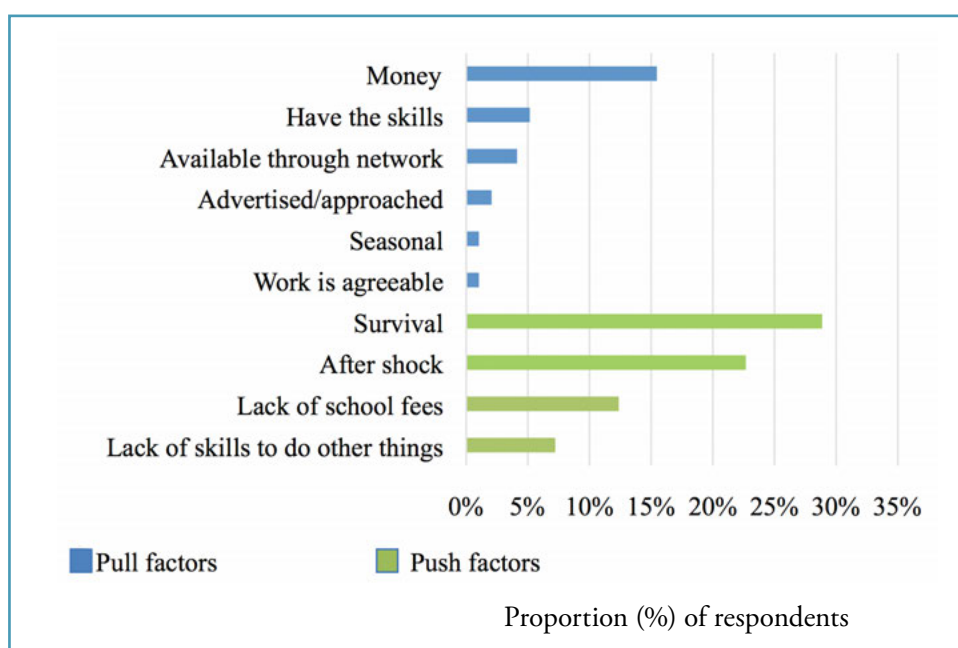
HIV transmission. Whereas in our Karamoja sample no domestic worker stated sexual abuse as a grievance, we were told by Karamojong migrants in Mbale that this is one of the main reasons they avoid domestic work.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, participants stated the lack of work for them at times as a major challenge. In addition to the informal nature of employment in Karamoja and high demand for work, there is heavy competition for daily wage labor. Therefore, someone who is delayed in arriving at a potential work place may be left without work on that day. Again, this issue especially affects women because of their household and child responsibilities, which may set them back during the early hours of the day. Moreover, rural women are disproportionately affected by this due to the time it might take them to commute to peri-urban or urban locations. In other words, both finding work and adequate payment are characterized by low predictability. While the months leading up to and during the agricultural season might appear to be an ideal time for being employed in agricultural labor, as an example, finding this work is predicated on such factors as household needs and gender. Competition for daily labor, then, has a cascading effect on food security, health, and future investments.

### 4.9 PUSH-PULL FACTORS

As there is increasing engagement in wage labor in Karamoja, we examined the push and pull factors related to this trend. We defined push factors as the unfavorable conditions and forces that drive someone into wage labor through necessity, while pull factors are those conditions and forces that attract people into it, by choice. Figure 4.6 illustrates the findings, based on the question, "Why do you engage in wage labor?"

**Figure 4.6. Push and pull factors for engaging in wage labor (N = 97)**



Overall, 71% of people reported push factors. The two most common responses, “survival” and life-altering “after shocks,” comprised 52% of all responses. Among people reporting “after shocks” as a reason for seeking work, 64% cited loss of livestock as the shock in question, and 34% reported the death of a caretaker. These findings are consistent with other reports (e.g., Stites et al., 2014).

The frequent reporting of “survival” indicates the rather desperate situation of many people in Karamoja. It implies that the daily priority of finding enough money and food to survive outweighs any opportunities for saving surplus income or asset building. The shock of loss of livestock further shows the lack of household resilience. Although labor supports survival and food security, wage rates are usually so low (see Table 4.7) that livestock asset building after shocks is not viable.

The two other push factors, “lack of school fees” and “lack of skills to do other things,” are answers that reflect a wish to be doing something different from the wage labor a person is actually doing. The people reporting “lack of school fees” all had been forced to drop out of school; this is very often related to the death of the caretaker in charge of a child’s schooling (Mosebo, 2015). Predominantly, fathers are named as the main caretaker in charge of schooling, but often, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and uncles can take on this role as well. Many people report having lost their caretakers “during the time of raiding” (a common phrase) without specifying whether the parents were directly harmed from raids, or died of related causes like hunger after livestock loss. The people reporting “lack of skills to do other things” demographically belong to the same group, but for them the failure to pursue education was not the main factor in engaging in wage labor. Instead,

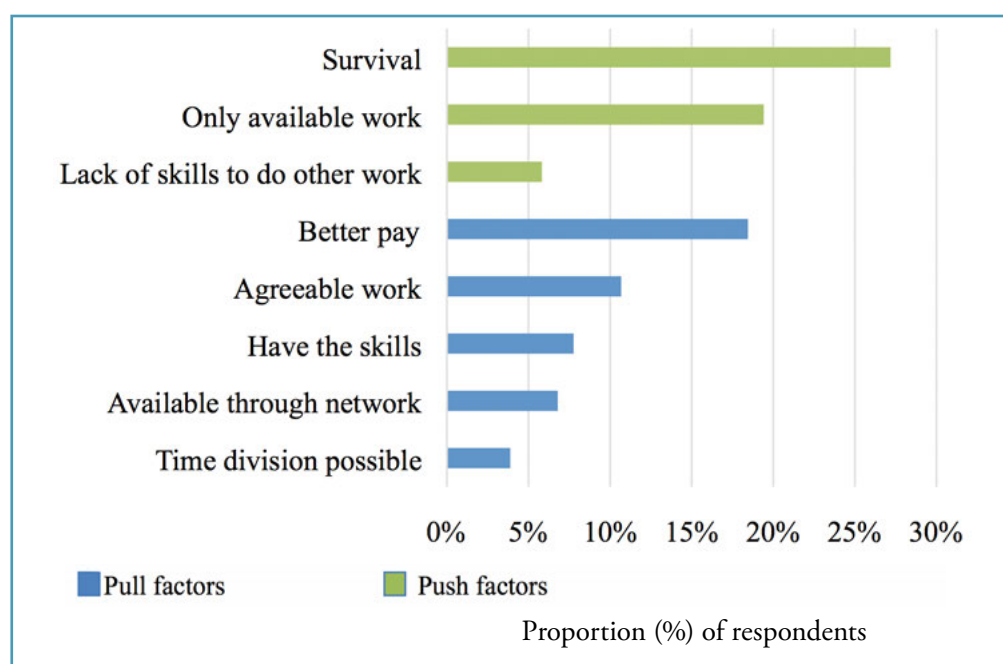
their level of education simply explained why they were not in jobs that require higher education.

Most of the pull factors were responses from people working in more stable jobs, such as mechanics, security guards, and people in service and sales. Typically, these are people who were not forced into wage labor by circumstances of life, but who were able to make choices and seek employment in these sectors. This division becomes clearer when investigating answers to the question: *Why did you choose the work you do?* (see Figure 4.7). Among respondents in less-stable jobs with lower pay, only three casual laborers and two agricultural laborers reported pull factors, viz. “money is better” and “seasonal.” With the latter, laborers engaged in the wage labor only in the dry season, enabling them to work on their own farms in the wet season.

The push factors “lack of skills for other work,” “survival,” and “only available work” again reflect limited choices for the people concerned and a need to find wage labor because it is the only way to survive. These people are restricted to these jobs because they either lack the skills or education to choose another job, or they are constrained by their location. Work options are for example limited for people engaged in agricultural labor in rural areas of Nakapiripirit and Irriri sub-county in Napak (also see the rural–urban differences in Table 4.4.)

The pull factor answers “time division possible,” “work is agreeable,” and “better pay” were given by people who chose their jobs because of the advantages of that particular job. These advantages could be a better salary, someone approached them and made the work available to them, a good employer, good co-workers, or food and/or

**Figure 4.7. Reasons for choice of labor sector (N = 103)**



accommodation were provided, thus relieving them of some of their expenses and increasing their surplus income. Answers about the possibility of dividing one's time meant that people could engage in multiple livelihood activities, e.g., being a construction worker during the day and a security guard at night, or engaging in wage labor while having time for one's own garden. Having one's own garden reduces expenses towards food, which again increases one's surplus income.

Concerning surplus income, 18% of people reported "better pay" as a pull factor. Many of these people mentioned the advantage of having sufficient income to save or make future investments to build their resilience to future shocks. Conversely, this indicates that a large proportion of the respondents (up to 80%) do not earn enough to support asset growth. In a similar vein, 18% of people reported having livestock. Out of these, 75% gave pull factors when asked why they were in wage labor. Our interpretation of these findings was that when people have livestock, they have less need for cash income for survival. This was supported by responses during focus group discussions as well. People prefer dedicating their time to livestock management and subsistence agriculture, and only engage in wage labor when they need the extra cash, if it is made available to them, or if they have skills sought after by an employer.

### 4.9.1 Skilled and unskilled labor

People working in skilled jobs used both push and pull factors to describe why they went into wage labor, while

people in unskilled labor offered mainly push factor reasons (all except two). Additionally, two distinct patterns arise from the responses (summarized in Table 4.9.). All but one person working in skilled labor used pull factors to explain their decision to choose the job they were in. All the people who cited "survival" and "only available work" are engaged in unskilled labor. They are not necessarily unskilled or uneducated people, but the work they do is unskilled.

Out of the 29 school dropouts who participated in the assessment, only 3 went into skilled labor, and all 3 were working in service and sales jobs that required English language skills and literacy/numeracy. The rest are in unskilled labor, working for survival or because they "lack skills to do other things," which in their case probably refers to the skilled work they had in mind when they were still in school (see also Mosebo, 2015).

### 4.9.2 Seasonality and location

While 23% of laborers (skilled and unskilled) reported "shocks" to their livelihood as a reason for engaging in wage labor (Figure 4.6), two location-specific findings were evident. First, no participants from Napak reported "shocks" as a reason for engaging in wage labor. While this could be coincidental, it is striking that most people involved in migration out of Karamoja were from Napak, just as there are many from Napak who moved to Moroto Town after shocks (Mosebo, 2015; also see *Migration* section). Second, in Amudat no one reported push factors in general as a reason for engaging in wage labor, but the

**Table 4.9. Push and pull factors in skilled vs. unskilled labor sectors**

	Skilled labor	Unskilled labor
<b>Why do you engage in wage labor?</b>	Push and pull factors	Push factors predominant
<i>Push factors</i>	After shock	Survival After shock
<i>Pull factors</i>	All	Better pay (but < 3% of the unskilled labor force mentioned this as their reason to be in wage labor)
<b>Why did you choose the work you do?</b>	Pull factors	Push factors predominant
<i>Push factors</i>	None	All
<i>Pull factors</i>	All	Better pay (but < 10% of the unskilled labor force mentioned this in their choice of work) Work is agreeable (but < 6% of the unskilled labor force mentioned this in their choice of work) Time division possible (but < 2% of the unskilled labor force mentioned this in their choice of work)

people in wage labor all had rather stable jobs in service and sales and as security guards (note that all but one wage laborer in Amudat were migrants).

In Napak, the people engaged in agricultural labor in Irriri sub-county reported “survival” or “only available work,” while all but few of the laborers in the peri-urban centers of Matany and Kangole gave pull factors as reasons. Likewise, in Nakapiripirit, where 75% of the participants were engaged in agricultural labor, only three people gave pull factors as a reason. They were all skilled laborers (two in service and sales and one mechanic) working within the town center.

The majority of people who cited “only available work” were involved in agricultural wage labor, and notably, this work was only available in the wet season. Thirty-three percent of all the respondents reported working in jobs contingent on seasons. Out of these, 52% were in agricultural labor, while the rest had unpredictable jobs. Construction work, for example, is only available periodically. As agricultural labor is the predominant wage labor opportunity for rural people in Napak and Nakapiripirit Districts, especially for women, many women report resorting to greater natural resource extraction (firewood, charcoal) in the dry season, which is environmentally unsustainable. Generally, as mentioned in 4.3. *Rural and peri-urban wage labor/livelihoods*, rural people have very few options for wage labor, although the people of Kaabong and Moroto may be involved in mining activities, which is a year-round activity (see Box 1).

## 4.10 SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY ATTRACTIVE LABOR SECTORS

For the benefit of programming and policy making, we examined the wage labor sectors in terms of social and economic advantages. While section 4.6 *Wage Rates, Contracts, and Conditions* provides some information, the assessment included questions on level of work satisfaction, work preferences, and on the importance of wage labor. This was to supplement the structural factors with social and personal ideas on what is considered to be “good work.”

### 4.10.1 Satisfaction

Contrary to our expectations, when using a simple “yes” or “no” question on work satisfaction, 69% of respondents reported satisfaction in their work, compared to 28% who reported dissatisfaction. However, as explained below, this general finding overlooks the reasons for these responses, and in particular the tendency to relate job satisfaction to an appreciation that any type of work could actually be found. The implication was that in many cases, people were “satisfied” because they needed to accept any type of work, even if wages were very low.

Out of the 29 people who answered that they were not satisfied, 4 were working in skilled labor. All of them justified their dissatisfaction in monetary terms: either the pay was considered too low or varied according to the work (e.g., number of cars repaired). The other 25 people who said they were dissatisfied gave one or more reasons (see Figure 4.8).

### Box 1. Mining, labor, and wages in Karamoja

While mining of industrial minerals (marble and limestone), and to a lesser extent gold, in Moroto District and gold mining in Moroto and Kaabong Districts are not within the definition of wage labor because most people are self-employed, it cannot be disregarded in this study because of its importance as an income source for both men and women. In fact, when looking at studies of artisanal mining in Uganda, Karamoja stands out in terms of the gender effect, whereby far more women than in any other place are engaged in mining (up to 90% in some locations; Hinton et al., 2011)

Despite its position as a profitable income source, the mining of industrial minerals in Moroto District earns significantly less compared to the work involved in gold mining in Kaabong. For example, a whole lorry load of stones, which may take weeks to a month to break, fetches UGX 150–175,000 (USD 42.26 – 49.30), an amount gold mining can fetch in a week.

In terms of challenges associated with mining, in Moroto, all people reported the main challenge in their work was health related. Not only is the work strenuous in terms of digging pits, it also exposes miners to dust and direct sunlight. “Chest pain” was once again a common complaint. The gold miners in Kaabong reported conversely that the biggest challenge was not finding the gold, but rather the risk of pit collapses as well as the risk of being robbed by the neighboring Turkana pastoralists.



## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

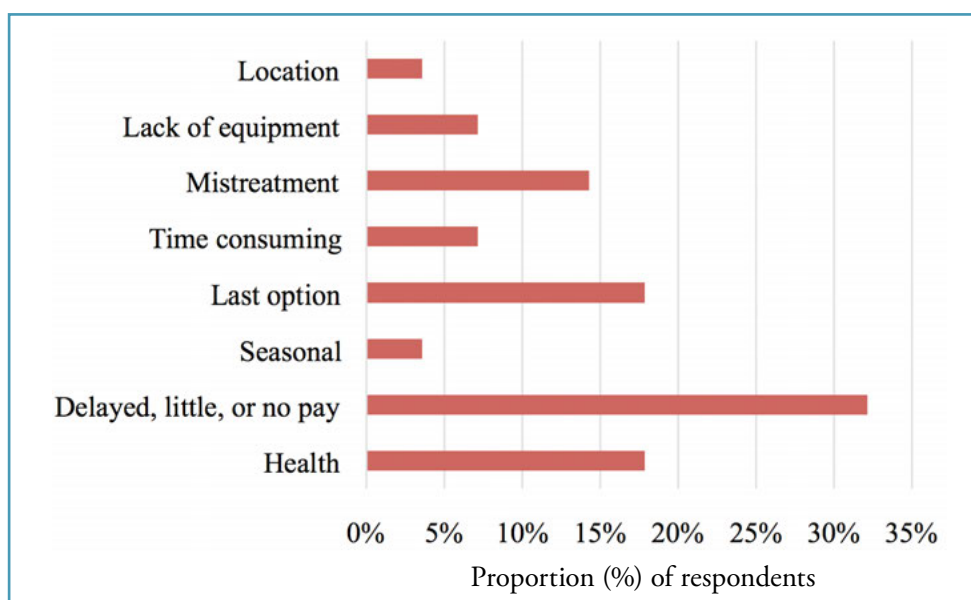
As Figure 4.8 shows, 32% of people reported monetary problems as the main reason for their dissatisfaction, ranging from low wages and delays in payment to not being paid at all. “This is my last option” is an answer provided by people engaged in wage labor after a life-altering shock or due to a lack of school fees. They were not necessarily dissatisfied with the particular work conditions. Their dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that they were not engaged in the activity of their preference, namely livestock management or education.

In a similar vein, the answer “time consuming” means people were not able to divide their time between wage labor and work in their own gardens. The other answers—mistreatment, lack of equipment, and health problems—

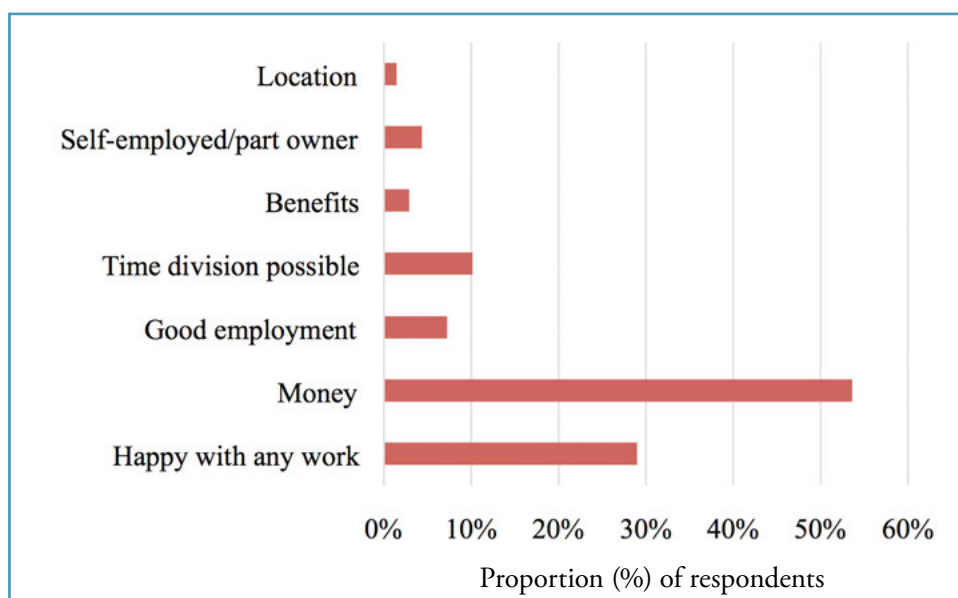
are self-explanatory. One person mentioned that the work was only available in the wet season, thus leaving him unemployed in the dry season. Of interest is that one person who gave “location” as a reason for dissatisfaction was a migrant to Amudat, who was far from her family and unable to communicate with them. She also reported the language barrier and mistreatment as challenges in her work. This provides an insight into some of the obstacles that lone migrants face when they leave their social networks behind to work in distant locations.

Overall, the high satisfaction rate on the “yes/no” question does not provide a positive view of the wage labor situation in Karamoja, but rather the opposite. Two results stand out in Figure 4.9, “money” and “happy with any work.”

**Figure 4.8. Reasons for dissatisfaction with work (N = 29)**



**Figure 4.9. Reasons for satisfaction with work (N = 75)**



“Happy with any work” is an answer provided by people in unskilled labor, who also all cited push factors when asked why they were involved in wage labor: “after shock,” “survival,” and “lack of skills to do other things.” The two skilled people who said they were “happy with any work” are a mechanic and a hardware shop attendant, who went into wage labor after losing their livestock. It is interesting to note that none of the people who reported “lack of school fees” as a push factor reported being “happy with any work,” while a few of them did say that “this is [their] last option.” They could not be happy with any work, because, as mentioned earlier, they had had different career expectations.

We categorized just over half of the responses (54%) using “money” as a collective term, and these responses are provided by both skilled and unskilled laborers. For unskilled laborers, money was a big pull factor. Although 47% were satisfied because they received wages in a stable and timely manner, the income met only their basic needs. While 32% directly stated that they earned enough money for school fees, the remaining 22% simply said that they consider themselves to be well paid. Stable or predictable payment is a major satisfaction factor, and good payment even more so. This mirrors the answers related to dissatisfaction above, i.e., “delayed, little or no pay.”

#### 4.10.2 Work preference

Only 40% of the total sample offered responses on whether or not they would prefer a different kind of work (relative to the work they were currently doing). This most likely resonates with previous answers signifying a sense of being stuck in a particular type of work, such as “this is my last

option” or “lack of skills to do other things.” Out of the 60% who did not give a work preference, only one person said that she already had the best job imaginable (service and sales).

Among the answers for work preferences, there is no clear pattern that demonstrates preference for certain sectors among study participants. Indeed, all sectors are presented as a work preference. This implies that people provided answers very much relative to the work they were already doing and within their current skill set. No one named sectors that are not available in Karamoja, and only one person gave an answer that would require further education (as a police officer). While the data show no clear patterns of preference for specific wage labor sectors, two livelihood opportunities stand out: business (17%) and having a garden (21%) (even though the latter is not really a labor sector).

People’s reasons for preferring a particular type of work are summarized in Figure 4.10. Again, monetary reasons outweigh other factors. As mentioned in *Section 4.6 Wage Rates, Contracts, and Conditions*, increasing earnings from wage labor often means enhanced skill levels, because skilled labor provides higher wages. However, skills enhancement was not mentioned in relation to work preferences. We interpreted this finding by reference to the cost of education or skills development and the likelihood that many people could not afford these services. Although most people might welcome an offer of skills enhancement, they might not include it in their own imagined trajectory of life because the decision lies with others—in this case, government or development initiatives.

Figure 4.10. Reasons for work preference (N = 44)

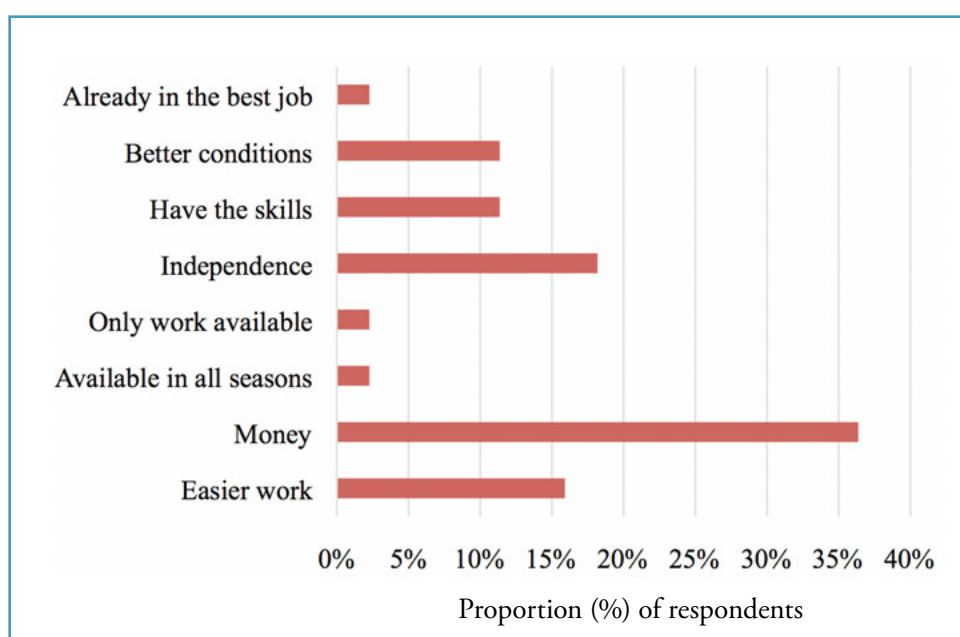


Figure 4.10 also shows that “independence” is an important reason behind work preference. It was mentioned by people who wanted to start their own business or invest time and energy in their own garden, and by one boda boda driver who wanted to own his motorcycle (rather than work for someone else). Independence also relates to several of the factors people provided for good work conditions: not depending on an employer for wages; stability or at least some sense of control over income; time division between multiple livelihoods; less physically stressful work; and the reduction in food expenses. Similar to school fees, these livelihood activities can all be regarded as providing more sustainability than engaging in wage labor, which for the majority of people provides basic needs for day-to-day survival.

Our findings on “work satisfaction” and “work preference” also illustrate how people are caught in poverty traps. Due to both macro- and micro-level factors, individuals are unable to move out of a set of livelihood activities—including poorly paid labor—because these activities do not lead to sufficient changes in savings or productive assets to move them out of poverty (Barrett and Carter, 2013). This is most apparent when people describe being stuck in a certain situation because they lack the skills to find other work, or other work is not available. Poverty traps have an important bearing on stockless pastoralists or those exiting the pastoral system and reflect an inability to acquire enough animals to return to pastoralism or protect themselves against shocks (McPeak and Barrett, 2001). Similarly, on the most common use of wages among participants (see Figure 4.11), our data show that 50% of all participants reported food as their main expenditure, and only 24% mentioned expenditure on education, livestock, garden, savings, and business. In Karamoja,

where wealthier herders or wealthy non-pastoralists may be able to self-insure, poorer households generally rely on diversification, including wage labor, and social networks as coping strategies.

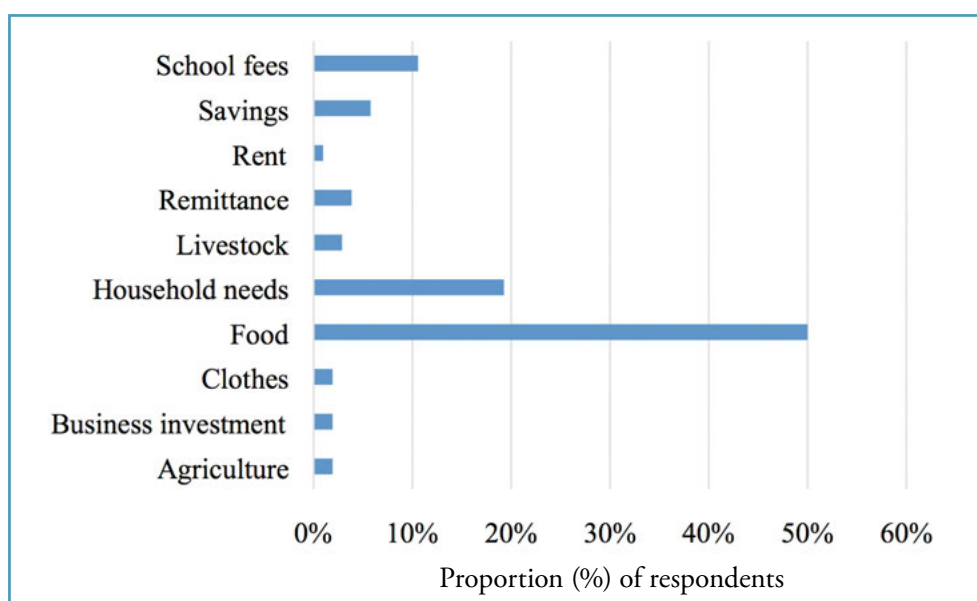
### 4.10.3 Conclusions

Skilled labor and service and sales jobs provide the most economic benefits to employees, but these jobs are restricted to those who are educated, urban, young, and able-bodied. In contrast, most other people who are engaged in wage labor in Karamoja face uncertainties due to demographic and contextual factors. Agricultural labor, bricklaying, and some construction work are dependent on the weather and location. Boda boda driving, mechanics, grinding mill operators, security guards, domestic workers, and service and sales workers are limited-supply jobs as well as dependent on location, since they are largely urban.

Pulling together all the various factors—seasonality, location, and availability of jobs—brewing, casual work, and construction labor are the most sustainable at the present time. These are relatively continuous and stable opportunities, especially for the pre-literate and peri-urban population. Since alcohol production is a grey area in terms of formal policies and programs, the two remaining sectors where recommendations for future programming might apply are improving casual labor and construction labor. These are largely male-dominated, urban sectors and as yet less relevant to rural people, particularly women. Although both sectors may be available to unskilled laborers, there is fierce competition for daily labor in Karamoja.

It is also critical to note that in Uganda nationally, most new jobs are created in retail trade (sales), and hospitality and personal services. While these jobs are characterized

**Figure 4.11. Most common use of wages (N = 104)**



by high entry of firms/companies, they are also marked by high exit rates and so are not considered a suitable option for sustained employment growth (Ministry of Finance, 2014). Our conclusions should therefore be interpreted within the macro-level constraints of the labor market in Karamoja.

## 4.11 FORMAL AND INFORMAL BARRIERS TO WAGE LABOR

Various challenges in the labor market in Karamoja have been mentioned throughout the report. This section explores some of these in detail. The main formal and informal barriers in Karamoja's current wage labor market are:

- Lack of organization in labor market;
- Limited stable employment and job opportunities;
- Limited education and skills;
- Discrimination;
- Alcohol consumption.

### 4.11.1 Lack of organization in labor market

Even though wage labor is hardly a new activity in Karamoja, various factors have, to some extent, destabilized the regional wage labor market. These include loss of livestock, droughts, infrastructural changes, and influx of the private sector, NGOs, and government initiatives. Given the recent upsurge in wage labor, the labor market suffers from a lack of organization.

Within Uganda, Karamoja has a long history of isolation from economic development (Barber, 1968; Närman, 2003). Today the region's wage labor market remains relatively disconnected from national labor standards and laws. At present, there are two labor officers in Karamoja, one in Moroto District and one in Kotido District, tasked with informing people of their rights as laborers, helping with grievances, and training people in negotiation skills and the benefits of group formation. However, the offices are highly under-resourced and under-staffed. Most unskilled workers do not know that these offices exist and so may not be aware of their rights, or know where to seek help if their rights are violated.

### 4.11.2 Limited stable employment and job opportunities

Throughout Karamoja, people reported a lack of stable job opportunities as a major challenge in life. While there are very few jobs for skilled workers, the unskilled labor force is so large that competition for unskilled jobs is extremely high. Many unskilled laborers have no option but to keep moving to potential work places and making themselves available. According to previous qualitative research, this

way of finding jobs has an extremely low success rate (Mosebo, 2015). The success rate increases substantially if a person knows someone who is already employed at the place or is known to the employer from a previous engagement.

The economic isolation of Karamoja is partly explained by decades of insecurity and delayed investment in the region by the private sector and the Ugandan government. Although the security situation has now improved, Karamoja still suffers from limited and selective private sector investment, which could provide opportunities in unskilled labor. The transport of raw products such as limestone and marble out of the region for processing elsewhere in Uganda stands as an example. Businesses that add value to raw products are not present in Karamoja. Therefore, a potentially large area of employment is not available. Until recently, the humanitarian sector in the region was mainly involved in providing food aid. People appreciate this assistance from NGOs, as well as NGO recruitment of skilled Karamojong in relief and development programs. Following better security since 2010, investments in the region have increased with tremendous speed, but it remains to be seen what impact this investment will have on the labor market in the long term.

### 4.11.3 Limited education and skills

Low education and literacy levels in Karamoja are major barriers to finding relatively skilled and well-paid jobs. The Ugandan government introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007 as policy tools to fight poverty (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015). Despite some success at national level, school enrollment in Karamoja has been disappointing. While school fees may be relatively low, there are a number of hidden costs such as materials, uniforms, and examination fees, which greatly reduce the affordability of education for many families in Karamoja (and Uganda nationally).

In addition, the fees for secondary education are rather high, with costs ranging from between UGX 150,000 to 300,000 per term (USD 42.26 to USD 84.51). With 18 school terms from Senior 1–6, the total costs of secondary education fees can exceed UGX 5 million (USD 1,408.64). Compared to average wage rates (see Table 4.7), these costs appear insurmountable for those in daily wage labor. Also, higher education institutions are scarce in the region. This prevents secondary school graduates from pursuing further education because it entails a move to a different city and the associated costs of such a move. While a few universities have recently set up satellite campuses in Moroto, absenteeism of lecturers and lack of rigor in teaching standards were reported.

There are now several government-sponsored technical

institutes in Karamoja, which provide a relatively cheaper option for those who cannot pursue the traditional education route. It costs approximately UGX 600,000 (USD 169.03) to get a Junior Technical Certificate after completing primary school.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, due to their focus on vocational training, technical institutes can provide a pathway to a Bachelor degree in engineering, via a non-traditional yet cost-effective route. However, there is limited awareness among secondary and primary school students on both the value and the existence of technical education. A further constraint is that bursary (scholarship) programs provide funding primarily for traditional education and so do not contribute to programs for certification in technical skills. In turn, this limits the number of people in the skilled labor force. While there have been a number of skills training programs conducted by development partners, a more long-term and sustainable strategy would be to raise awareness on the value of technical education.

#### 4.11.4 Discrimination

One cannot go to Uganda and mention Karamoja without being faced with numerous discriminatory generalizations about Karamojong people. Going back to colonial times, Karamojong have been perceived as savage and primitive, and to this day, Karamojong individuals face abuse, mistreatment, and even violence on account of their ethnicity (see also Gackle et al., 2007). Of particular relevance to this assessment is the prevalent perception that the “proud” pastoral people of Karamoja will not demean themselves by doing wage labor. While this may have some truth in specific areas (see 4.4.2 *Wage labor in Amudat District*), it no longer applies for many Karamojong, who are willing to work for cash. The common prejudiced complaints one hears from non-Karamojong employers—Karamojong are lazy, drunk, rude, and thieving—are not ethnic traits, but human traits of individuals. These gross generalizations are holding the wage labor situation in Karamoja back, because many employers view Karamojong people in a negative light. The practice of bringing workers from outside the region violates Uganda’s Equal Opportunities Act (2007), which seeks to eliminate discrimination based on, among other things, ethnicity<sup>23</sup> (Asiimwe et al., 2012). The discrimination faced by Karamojong workers is not limited to the private sector. It is also rife in the public and development sectors.

#### 4.11.5 Alcohol abuse

Alcoholic beverages locally brewed from sorghum, cassava, millet, or maize have conventionally played an integral role

in the social and ceremonial life in Karamoja. Men, in particular, join together in drinking groups for socialization, networking, advice, and moral support. The most commonly consumed local brew, referred to as *ngagwe*, has some nutritional value, especially in its residue (Dancause et al., 2010).

However, excessive alcohol consumption is becoming increasingly problematic in Karamoja. First, people have started consuming other forms of alcohol, such as the locally brewed or distilled *waragi* (gin, also known as *eliralira* or *etule*), which has a high alcohol content, reduces appetite, and poses a higher risk in terms of alcohol-related disease. A recent study by the Moroto Diocese Health Department showed an alarming spike over the last five years in both inpatient and outpatient cases related to alcohol abuse. In 2015–16, death from liver disease was the most common cause of mortality after malaria in Matany Hospital in Napak district neighboring Moroto. Additionally, there has been a four-fold increase since 2013 in alcohol-related psychiatric diagnoses in Moroto. Second, many people have started drinking in a so-called anti-social or uncultivated way, i.e., drinking during the day in place of breakfast and lunch, drinking alone, or drinking to reduce anxiety and stress.

Nearly half the employers (48%) interviewed for this assessment name alcohol consumption during the day, or excessive alcohol consumption at night, as a major barrier to employing Karamojong people. Alcohol consumption is viewed as making workers unreliable and creating safety issues in potentially hazardous work. One employer also reported the side effect of fighting among inebriated workers, which leads to their expulsion from the job. Likewise, many Karamojong people describe excess alcohol consumption as a major detriment to the general quality of life, especially family life and in childcare.<sup>24</sup>

While alcohol consumption is a national—if not global—problem, its damaging effects on people in Karamoja are significant because of the pre-existing low levels of economic and physical resilience.

## 4.12 MIGRATION

The condition of many migrants in the urban cities of Mbale, Jinja, and Kampala, among others, remains precarious and deplorable. This is particularly true of those residing in the large urban slums of, for example, Masese in Jinja and Kisenyi in Kampala. As we will discuss, many

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Deputy Principal, Kotido Technical Institute.

<sup>23</sup> In the Ugandan Constitution, marginalization of ethnic minority groups is prohibited under Article 32 (1), and Article 36 guarantees specific protection of the rights of minorities (Asiimwe et al., 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Authors’ personal observations and fieldnotes from long-term fieldwork in Karamoja.



of these migrants make a living from casual, unskilled labor with very little opportunity for advancement or improvement. On the other hand, there are also those who have found more stable employment opportunities in both unskilled and semi-skilled sectors, which has enabled a move out of poverty for them.

#### 4.12.1 Internal migration, within Karamoja

About 38% of our sample within Karamoja in the wage labor study ( $N = 106$ ) were internal migrants. Some of the reasons for migration, in descending order of importance, were: looking for work or better opportunities; lack of school fees; family conflicts (especially for women); reuniting with family members; hunger; and after a shock (raiding, death of patriarch, etc.). Some migration decisions were also pointedly economic. One woman told us that since local brew costs more in Moroto than in Nakapiripirit, she decided to move in order to make more money from her business.

These migrations have varied timelines ranging from over twenty years ago to the time of data collection in June 2017. Consequently, every migrant was in a different stage of his/her migration cycle. Those who had migrated decades ago had settled in their “new” locations, often having married and had children there, while others who had arrived a few months ago could still be considered temporary. Several migrants moved when a job was offered to them, with the assumption that their home base remains their place of origin.

The distinctive aspect of internal migration in Karamoja is the various positive benefits that participants listed as having resulted from migrating (Figure 4.12). Besides gaining income and work opportunities, migration has

allowed individuals to invest in livestock and skills development. In addition, migration has resulted in new friendships and social support networks, and for others allowed them to reunite with family members living far away. Many migrants also mentioned that migration allowed them to become “independent.” Naturally, the benefit most frequently cited by participants was their ability to provide for themselves or their families. However, these positive benefits, particularly the growth of social networks through friendships and independence, are in marked contrast to the experience of migrants outside of Karamoja (as will be shown in later sections of this report).

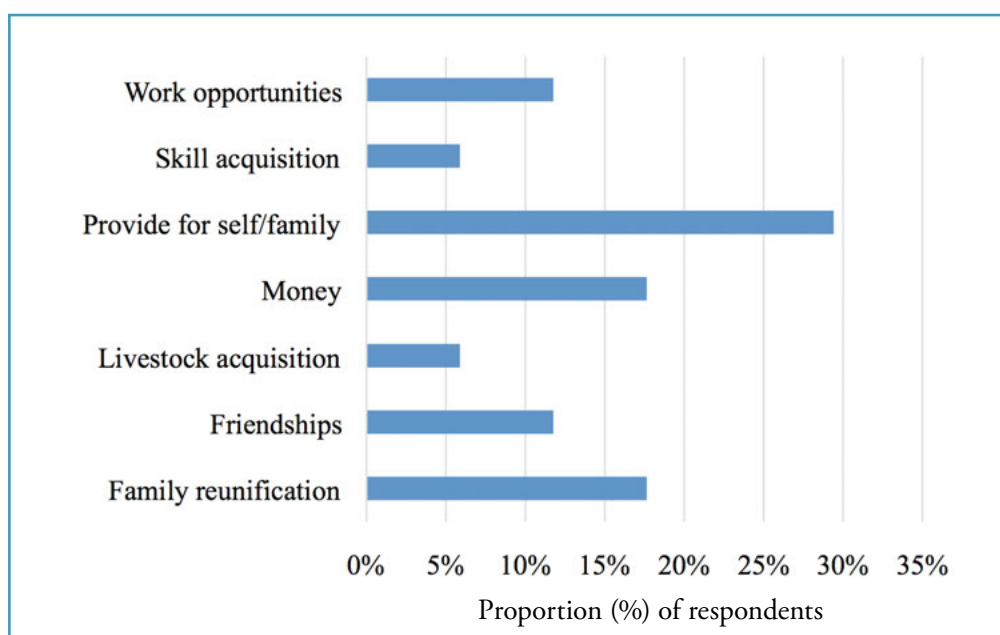
Finally, while the question of remittance in Karamoja’s context is often considered in the urban to rural context, there is, unquestionably, remittance flowing within Karamoja as well, both from urban to rural and within the rural context. Nearly 80% of the internal migrants send money to family members and various relatives in the village or trading center of origin, either through people travelling there or through the MTN Mobile Money service. How these remittances influence household economies within Karamoja, particularly for subsistence activities and productivity, is a critical topic of inquiry for the future.

#### 4.12.2 External migration, outside Karamoja

##### a. Timeline of migration

The question of migration and what to do about Karamoja’s migrants is extremely complex given that some of the “migrants” were born to Karamojong parents who migrated in the 1970s and 1980s. This has serious implications for any resettlement program for this kind of “migrant” because of the erosion of parents’ social

Figure 4.12. Karamoja internal migrants—benefits of migrating ( $N = 17$ )



networks back in Karamoja. During our interviews with participants and in focus group discussions in Jinja, Tororo, Mbale, and Kampala, we met individuals who, although considered “Karamojong migrants” by the host communities, have never in fact visited Karamoja.

There are also those who left at various times in the last 30–40 years, have married non-Karamojong individuals in their new cities, and have had children with them. These factors impede their relocation to Karamoja. A significant portion of their adult life has been spent in new cities, and their children have grown up in these places. Finally, there are those who arrived in the cities from Karamoja in the same month as the field research. This drastic variation in timeline of migration logically complicates formulation of policy and programs for a successful return and resettlement of migrants back in Karamoja.

As previously reported (Stites et al., 2007), many migrants we met in major Ugandan cities, particularly in Eastern and Central Uganda, come from Napak District. This trend has been attributed to the uneven disarmament process in Karamoja, which led to a shift in balance of power and increased raiding on Napak’s communities from neighboring groups. We also met a few people from Moroto and Nakapiripirit, but their numbers were low compared to migrants from Napak. In Abim and Lira, on the other hand, much of the migrant population is from Kotido and Kaabong, presumably due to the proximity of these districts. Migrants from Kotido and Kaabong also provide temporary and seasonal labor in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. However, migration to the south of Karamoja (e.g., Busia, Mbale, Jinja, Iganga, Kampala) far outweighs migration to Northern Ugandan areas (e.g., Lira, Kitgum, Gulu). The assessment team found only a few migrants in Lira, for instance.

### *b. Reasons for migrating*

Every migrant’s story of migration and coping strategies in a new city is different. To find true trends in the data, we would need a larger sample size. Nonetheless, some of the main reasons people migrated were insecurity, hunger, drought, lack of work, and death in the family. Migrants also recount decrease in livestock assets or loss of livestock as a reason for migration. We heard several instances of women fleeing from mistreatment by their husband or other family member. Nevertheless, not all migrants were “pushed” out of their location. Young men in semi-skilled work, such as security guards, relocated to Kampala or Lira with a job offer in hand.

Another “pull” factor was a result of the social network effect. If an individual or groups of migrants who return home to Karamoja briefly come back successful (in terms of money), it encourages others to seek their fortunes in cities as well. This finding stands in contrast to Stites and

Akabwai’s (2012) study, which reports that none of the respondents had been pressured to leave home by others. In our research, for instance, a female casual worker in Mbale told us that she was encouraged to migrate by her family when they witnessed other migrants’ ability to earn money in Mbale. Others in Tororo and Jinja echoed this response. Whether this can be viewed as a “push factor” (pressured by others) or a “pull factor” due to positive social network effect is debatable.

In analyzing push and pull factors for migration, therefore, it is essential to consider the labor sectors in which migrants find themselves. Those with skilled or semi-skilled work are generally “pulled” into migrating. On the flipside, semi-skilled workers’ motivation for migrating can be considered a “push factor” because several mentioned their inability to continue education as the motivation for accepting their jobs. Coupled with aging parents and order of birth (first-born children are generally responsible for household needs), it became the migrants’ responsibility to provide for the family, since going back to school was no longer an option.

### *c. Migrants and labor*

Stratified by skill level, a large proportion of migrants continue to engage in unskilled casual labor, as previously reported. In looking for this work, Karamojong migrants face heavy competition from groups of migrants from other parts of Uganda, or from local casual workers. We were only able to find a handful of migrants who had more stable jobs and better working and living conditions than the majority. The main casual work done by migrants is loading/offloading (men), brewing (women), sorting cereals (women), working in supermarkets, casual construction work, fetching firewood and water, agricultural labor, cattle keeping (men, in Soroti and Tororo), restaurant and hotel work, working as hawkers, and some domestic labor (women). In that sense, our findings echo our observations of the types of work available in Karamoja.

Karamojong migrants are also involved in petty trade of firewood, charcoal, and food items. Scavenging (*akidep*) was a notable survival strategy (see also Stites and Akabwai, 2012). Several migrants are involved in scavenging vegetables, charcoal, grains, and other goods that are either thrown out or fall during the loading/offloading process in the market. These goods are then resold by Karamojong migrants or taken home for personal use.

Wages acquired from unskilled labor continue to be dismal but, in the words of migrants, there was more scope for unskilled labor in the cities than back home. Nearly 70% of the migrants we interviewed mentioned that the greatest benefit of migration was their income, or their ability to send money home and provide for their families (see Figure

4.13). Almost 90% of migrants reported sending money home either through Mobile Money or through people travelling to Karamoja. The impact of remittance on their households is unknown. However, it can be assumed that it does contribute to some level of food security for family members in Karamoja. A few migrants also mentioned investing in livestock as one of the main uses of their wages.

Among semi-skilled workers, we spoke with migrants who work as gardeners, compound cleaners, and security guards. As would be expected, they reported higher wages, benefits (accommodation, food), and other better working conditions than casual workers. Job complaints, similarly, were mainly linked to hardship of getting used to a new location and, often, the disparity between wages and hours of work. Critically, all but one of those employed as security guards have some level of education, whether primary or secondary. Often, as mentioned, it was the lack of money to continue education that forced them to take this job.

Our rapid study of the migrant labor situation raises two important points. First, those who are poorly educated or not educated cannot break into more stable labor opportunities due to both the discrimination they face and the fierce competition for wage labor in all of Uganda. Second, those in semi-skilled labor, such as security guards, consider their work their last option for providing for their families. In fact, a few migrants mentioned that they would be more satisfied working in Karamoja. Other reasons for “satisfaction” were income, ability to send money home, and “no other option.” In short, the plight of migrant labor does not differ radically from our analysis of the wage labor situation in Karamoja. However, the costs

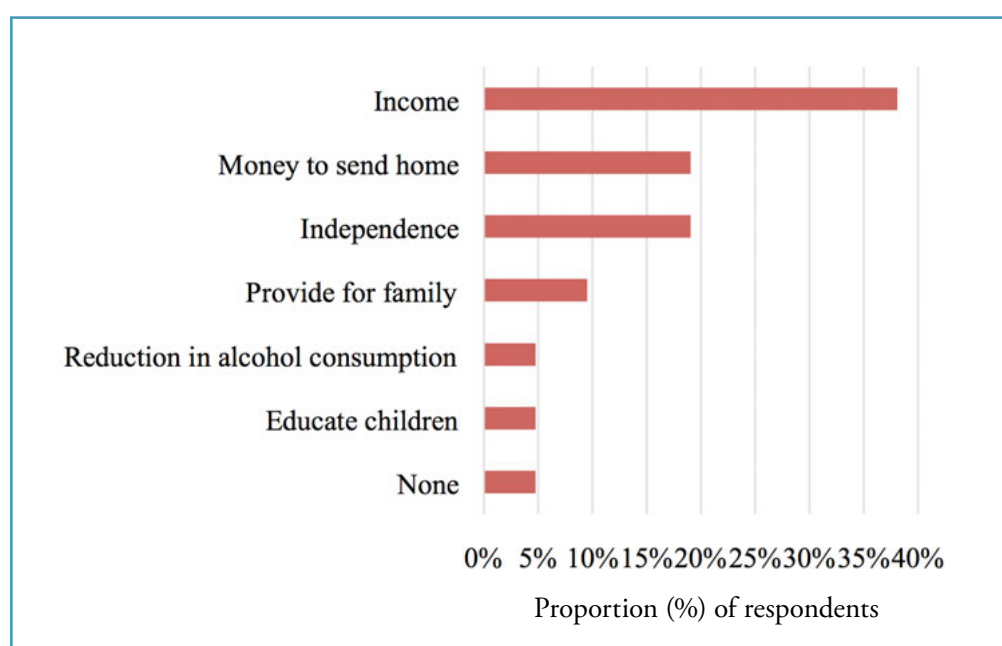
of renting, food, and other expenses are a source of dissatisfaction.

Some positive information also came to light during the study. In Soroti, for example, Karamojong shepherds have formed a network through which they have developed grievance-settling mechanisms between themselves and their employers. As recounted to us by the District Community Development Officer, this group of shepherds has handled cases of non-payment by employers through these mechanisms. Other government officers, such as the District Population Officer, Gender Officer, District Probation Officer, and District Community Development Officer have also carried out assessments of living conditions in suburbs of Soroti such as Kambiswahili, Otuchopi, and other Karamojong-dominant areas. Due to underfunding of these departments, their work in areas of gender and probation issues remains unfinished.

As reported by Stites and Akabwai (2012), not all aspects of urban migration are negative. Despite poor living conditions and lack of access to facilities, urban centers do facilitate access to some food, whether through minimal earning or scavenging. This answers many migrants’ central motivation for migration—food insecurity. General insecurity is no longer a key cause of migration from Karamoja, although people will migrate—especially women—due to violence within the household.

Moreover, in Lira, casual women workers (not necessarily Karamojong) have formed social groups for savings and credit. Money earned through casual labor is contributed to a common pool as a way of securing capital during times of need. This is especially helpful for women who are responsible for children and for fulfilling other household

**Figure 4.13. Outside Karamoja migrants: Main benefits of migration (N = 19)**



needs. In addition, casual male laborers have set up designated areas where prospective employers can find them—instead of them going around looking for work. This has helped them in collectively bargaining for casual work opportunities in the municipality and districts. These positive aspects of the casual wage labor market can be used as a teaching tool for Karamojong migrants who, overwhelmingly, go around looking for work.

Lastly, we were unable to find Karamojong workers in factories, either in Tororo or Lira. At one factory, the site manager told us that while many locals come looking for casual labor in the morning, they have almost never had a Karamojong migrant come. Similarly, in Lira, much of the factory work is done by migrants from Mbale, Soroti, and Gulu areas. This finding indicates that Karamojong migrants have not moved up from casual work to more stable work in factories. A possible reason for this is the language barrier. Moreover, as recounted to us by a factory site manager, there are enough unemployed local youths in Mbale and Tororo who are looking for these jobs, and they outcompete Karamojong migrants. Nonetheless, the limited employment of Karamojong migrants in factories warrants further inquiry.

### *d. Challenges*

In looking for work and in their daily life, many Karamojong migrants are subjected to horrid abuse from local communities. Often, they are yelled at to “go away,” and sometimes they are victims of physical violence. Locals do not hold Karamojong people in high estimation and generally speak of them in derogatory ways. According to some non-Karamojong informants, this is the result of excessive alcohol use, as we noted in Karamoja. We observed inebriated individuals in the morning and rampant alcohol use within Karamojong-dominant slums. This, allegedly, creates a bad reputation for them in their “new” cities. Another reported source of stigma is people’s hygiene and reluctance to use public sanitation facilities. Finally, an increasing birth rate coupled with a rise in HIV incidence among migrants is supposedly creating an additional burden on the local communities who share the village or slum with them. In Soroti, Karamojong migrants who worked as cattle keepers for others were regularly subject to abuse, delayed payment, and allegations of being “cattle rustlers.”

Among the other barriers that migrants face are the costs associated with rent, language problems with host communities, lack of access to services such as education and health, and, for domestic workers, sexual abuse. For women, these issues are particularly heightened. Leaving their social networks leaves women with no childcare options, which in turn impedes them from working in sectors such as domestic work. However, some migrant women also mentioned not being interesting in working as

domestic workers due to the threat of sexual abuse from male employers.

In general, living conditions for a majority of migrants in urban slums in Mbale, Jinja, Tororo, and Kampala are appalling. Lack of proper accommodation, hygienic facilities, and generally poor living conditions appear to have an adverse effect on health and well-being. Unlike in Karamoja, the migrants do not receive food aid. However, there are several NGOs working with Karamojong migrants on child protection, education, and livelihood enhancement. The long-term influence of these programs remains to be seen. During the assessment, migrants stressed the challenges they faced in terms of life and labor. They do not see a way out of their situation.

Regarding resettlement programs, a previous program bringing migrants to Kobulin in Napak District has not met with much success. At one level, as Sundal (2010) reports, the resettlement program was not in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, because it classified Karamojong migrants as economic migrants rather than internally displaced people. There were a host of reported problems at the rehabilitation center (including detainee abuse). At the resettlement camps, migrants were given a choice between going back to their home communities or building new homesteads at the permanent resettlement site. Returning home was easier for those who still had social networks in Karamoja. Although there have been positive reports of resettlement (IRIN, 2007), according to informants several migrants left the resettlement camps soon or shortly after their arrival. This may be explained by reports that the returnees were kept in horrid living conditions, and did not receive the food rations and household items that they were promised (Sundal, 2010).

We also recorded several cases of migrants returning to cities after a short stay in the camps or home villages because they were unable to make use of the land allotted to them due to drought. There are also “migrants” who belong nowhere, neither in the cities due to discrimination by resident communities nor back in Karamoja because of their eroded social networks. The decline in social capital could be because they were born outside of Karamoja to Karamojong parents, or because they left decades ago. Often, migrants lamented that the land they left behind was usurped by someone else, leaving them without a critical survival asset. Migrants voiced the need for government and development stakeholders to provide them with food, land, and other assets to ensure their permanent resettlement. This appeared contradictory to us because migrants also mention not being able to stay in Karamoja due to poor weather conditions. Child migrants, on the other hand, expressed the collective wish to go back to Karamoja, according to the IOM (2014).



### 4.12.3 Migration to Lodwar, Kenya

#### a. Migration patterns

With a population of over 50,000 people (Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment, 2014), Lodwar is Turkana County's largest urban center, with a bustling market linked to Kitale that provides the bulk of food products in the area (Food Economy Group, 2016). As a labor-based market, Lodwar offers several opportunities within the urban center and nearby locations. Much like Moroto, only at a far larger scale, people living in and around Lodwar engage in a range of livelihood activities, from firewood and charcoal sales to private businesses.

Migration to Lodwar by skilled, semi-skilled, and some unskilled workers from Karamoja has gradually increased over the past few years. The assessment also found that trade was increasing between the two areas, e.g., beer is commonly imported into Turkana County from Moroto District because of the difference in prices between Kenya and Uganda. Trucks and lorries carrying alcohol and other products, including construction materials, foodstuffs, and clothing, regularly ply the dirt road from the Nakiloro border post to Lodwar. There is also an active and dynamic trade in livestock between Karamoja and Turkana.<sup>25</sup>

Among the several migrants we met, there were individuals working in the service and sales sectors, as electricians or mechanics; we also heard of traders and business owners. Both men and women have migrated from various parts of Karamoja—including Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Napak, and Kotido—and the timelines of migration we recorded were fairly recent (within the past two years). Several women have also migrated to Lodwar because of marriage to Turkana men. We also heard of others who had migrated a decade or more ago. Due to the limited timeframe of the assessment, we were not able to cover all types and timelines of migration. The findings presented below are a narrative form of extended open-ended interviews with Karamojong migrants to Lodwar.

#### b. Differences from migration within Uganda

Migration to Lodwar is strikingly different in nature from Karamojong migration to Ugandan cities. Most notably, unlike travel to Soroti or Mbale, transportation to Lodwar is not an easy undertaking. Whereas even migrants to Ugandan cities listed transportation as one of their challenges, there is no public transport to Lodwar. The distance of 140 kilometers is very arduous on foot, given the harsh climate of Turkana. Consequently, those who travel to Lodwar for periodic work or for temporary migration must either have their own means of transport

(which is rare), be provided transportation through employers or friends, or get a ride on trucks.

Migration to Ugandan cities does not necessarily depend on a social network at the site of relocation. People might simply board a bus to Mbale to find work. However, social networks are imperative in Lodwar for a successful migration experience. Whereas all migrants, whether internal or cross-border, face new challenges regarding rent and food costs, these are particularly onerous for those moving to Lodwar due to the higher cost of living in Kenya.

Moreover, because much of the unskilled labor market in Lodwar is already occupied by local Turkana residents or Kenyan migrants, the chances of finding casual labor are limited. Several individuals we interviewed were working in service and sales, which requires literacy and numeracy skills (as mentioned earlier in the report), or in skilled vocational jobs. We met one Karamojong domestic worker who was working for a friend of her previous employer. She told us that there were a few other Karamojong girls working as housemaids, but those in Lodwar were generally brought from Karamoja through networks. In addition, we did hear of a few unskilled laborers working in construction or loading, but we were not able to meet any. That said, informants underlined the fact that for a Karamojong migrant in Lodwar it would be extremely difficult to find a job “randomly.”

Migration to Lodwar also differs from migration to cities in Uganda because there is no specific residential area in Lodwar for Karamojong migrants (in comparison to Kisenyi in Kampala or Bison B in Tororo). When asked, migrants mentioned “accidentally running into” other migrants from Karamoja, but they explained that there was no real conglomeration of migrants. In other words, a migrant's decision to move to Lodwar is predicated on his/her social network for accommodation as well as work, which is exceedingly important for daily survival when moving to a different place.

Perhaps the greatest difference relative to migration within Uganda is the predominance of “pull factors” in Lodwar. Several individuals arrived in Lodwar either with a specific job offer, or the possibility of a job through their social network. Whereas looking for a job in Lodwar due to a scarcity of jobs in Uganda may be interpreted as a “push factor,” the pull factors in Lodwar are particularly notable. The strength of the Kenyan currency, the higher average wages, and the ability to acquire a Kenyan ID card were all listed as reasons for migration. For instance, the monthly minimum wage in Kenya is Ksh 10,955<sup>26</sup> (~ UGX 380,000

<sup>25</sup> See Annex 5 by Raphael Lotira in the livestock market assessment by the Resilience Learning Project (2016).

<sup>26</sup> Kenya Shilling (Ksh) 1 = UGX 103.90 (July 2017).



or USD 107.06), and this was recently raised to Ksh 12,926 (~ UGX 450,000 or USD 126.78) (Manzil, 2017). This is an extremely important pull factor to note, considering the wage rates in Karamoja (see Table 4.7). Within our small sample of migrants in Lodwar, it was rare to hear of a migrant in Lodwar who was “pushed” out of their location in Karamoja due to hunger or livestock loss. The costs associated with arriving in Lodwar and setting up base there are considerable compared to travelling to a Ugandan city or even to urban centers within Karamoja.

Finally, the overall experience of Karamojong migrants in Lodwar was extraordinarily positive compared to migrants within Uganda. Migrants to Ugandan cities listed discrimination as one of the central problems of their life, but Lodwar migrants remarked on the generous welcome they received from the resident Turkana communities. We often heard “we are one” as a response from migrants when asked about their relationship with the Turkana community. Moreover, due to the mutual intelligibility of the Turkana and Karamojong languages, migrants face no linguistic barrier, compared to Karamojong migrants to Ugandan cities. Some informants went as far as to say that local Turkana individuals “appreciated” Karamojong migrants and their work. These testimonies reflect a completely different reality of migration from the ones we encountered in Ugandan cities.

Despite these positive aspects of movement to Lodwar, there are still challenges. Although the Kenyan currency is strong, the cost of living is high. Consequently, individuals spent more money on food and rent (if they were not living with members of their social network or in their place of employment). Similarly, periodic travel back to Karamoja to visit family and friends, or for other purposes, was difficult due to limited transportation. Additionally, for those working in task-based employment, such as electricians or mechanics, finding customers every day may not be feasible. Regardless of these challenges, migrants to Lodwar generally reported their experience in a positive light and reflected an optimism that was uncommon among migrants in Ugandan cities.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment describes the nature of wage labor and employment in Karamoja and examines the links between specific labor sectors and poverty reduction. The assessment points to the growing importance of daily labor as a livelihood activity<sup>27</sup> but also shows how low wages prevent investment in productive assets such as livestock or in education. The focus on wage labor restricted the analysis, for the most part, to peri-urban and urban centers, because very few wage labor options are available in rural areas, other than agricultural labor. In turn, agriculture labor is restricted to certain areas with higher rainfall. Across the range of low-paid labor sectors, which account for most of the wage labor in Karamoja, no particular sectors stand out in terms of enabling a move out of poverty across ages, genders, and education levels. Similarly, many recommendations would not apply directly to Karamoja's substantial rural population.

Diversified livelihood activities are particularly important for women in Karamoja, but in the assessment findings, there is a strong and important gender dimension that cuts across all aspects of wage labor. Critically, although most jobs in Karamoja and for migrants are very poorly paid, involve long hours and difficult working conditions, and can be difficult to find, the wage labor situation for women is generally far worse than it is for men. The three main types of work available to women are agricultural labor, brewing, and domestic work, yet these are also the three lowest-paid work activities (see Table 4.8). Due to their roles in childcare and food provisioning, many women have less time available for paid work. Agricultural employment is seasonal and restricted to certain geographical areas. Better-paid jobs usually require higher levels of education and/or language skills, but school retention rates are lower for girls compared to boys (Brown et al., 2017). When women do find work, they are far more at risk of sexual abuse particularly in such sectors as domestic work and service jobs.

### 5.1 LIVESTOCK AND LIVELIHOODS

In rural areas of Karamoja, livestock production is the most viable and resilient livelihood activity, and both livestock rearing and marketing appear to be buoyant (e.g., Resilience Learning Project, 2016). While many households, across the wealth spectrum, engage in diversified livelihood activities, these activities are particularly important for those with few or no livestock. For people with few animals, the assessment shows that the

income derived from many labor sectors is insufficient to enable them to buy more livestock. In this situation, a household's livestock assets may grow, but only through herd reproduction. For other households with no livestock, the options for acquiring livestock are even more limited, even if household members engage in wage labor. At the same time, education—especially secondary education—is not easily affordable. Both types of households are caught in poverty traps. It follows that a challenge for livestock development may be to develop strategies that target poorer households, while also recognizing trends such as human population growth and livestock commercialization.

At present, livelihood diversification interventions in Karamoja do not stress the role of pastoralist diversification as a way to sustain livestock-based economies. Instead, there is an emphasis on strengthening people's ability to provide food for themselves through engagement in other sectors, regardless of variable weather conditions. In particular, strengthening the livestock sector might allow people to absorb periodic shocks better than agricultural investments would. Employment and income opportunities related to livestock development also need to be examined in areas such as work in livestock markets, fodder production and sale, animal healthcare or even contract herding.

### 5.2 EDUCATION AND LABOR SUPPLY VS. DEMAND

For the growing urban and peri-urban populations, livelihood problems are of a different nature. Due to low wages, lack of contracts, and various other aspects of the informal economy of Karamoja's urban centers, the options for people to save, invest, or access education are limited, even for those who already have some education. The wage rates generally offered in Karamoja, even for those in semi-skilled work, are at odds with the costs of education. This problem spans the rural-urban divide. Furthermore, for people who manage to complete high school or college, job opportunities are limited. Nationally, stagnant business creation and growth and the resulting low demand for labor are some of the most pressing challenges in Uganda's employment trajectory (Ministry of Finance, 2014). This has a direct impact on Karamoja's economy. Migrating for labor or being educated does not guarantee success in the labor market either, and often the only work available is in jobs with very low pay.

<sup>27</sup> In a study of 119 households in four districts, 82% of respondents reported their main source of income as casual labor (Fernandes, 2013).

### 5.3 EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Nationally in Uganda, a large portion of the indigenous labor force remains semi- or unskilled. The limited number of technically skilled people is recognized as a serious problem (Mathiesen, 2016; Mwesigwa, 2014). As a result, skilled workers are brought in from South Asia, China, or Kenya. Likewise, in Karamoja, high school and college graduates are failing to meet market demands, particularly in technical skills, resulting in an influx of people from other regions. Moreover, for many Karamojong youth, the first work option within Karamoja is the development sector, which can only absorb a limited number of graduates. Jobs in the development sector often require a college education, and secondary school graduates are mainly hired in part-time work (e.g., as data enumerators). Both secondary school and sometimes college graduates, then, have career expectations that do not match the reality of the labor market in Karamoja or Uganda.<sup>28</sup>

Although there have been several programs targeting skills training for youths, the assessment indicates a need to step up these efforts in Karamoja. Investment in business, technical, and vocational education training for youth would be more beneficial than bursaries (scholarships) for traditional education (A-Levels). Not only would this approach expand the skilled labor force in Karamoja, it would also provide an alternate route to a degree in engineering, through enrollment in regional technical institutes. In the same vein, further investment and upkeep of technical institutes in Karamoja is needed. Skills training programs also need to be forward thinking and identify skills that take account of people's circumstances and local business and job opportunities. The limited number of skilled Karamojong workers means that outsiders take many skills-based jobs in the region. This points to a need to target skills training towards jobs such as welders, metal fabricators, electricians, and machine repairers. The benefits of this approach are threefold: providing skilled work for Karamojong people; supporting the creation of new local businesses; and decreasing business owners' costs by reducing the need to use workers from outside the region. Lastly, although these jobs are usually seen as male dominated, women need to be encouraged to join these fields, rather than only focusing on "female-oriented fields" such as tailoring or hairdressing.

At another level, basic education and language skills are important for many jobs, but girls in Karamoja are not benefitting from education to the same extent as boys are. From this perspective, better employment for girls and women is directly related to strengthening education systems and overcoming the barriers faced by girls in terms of accessing quality education and staying in school.

### 5.4 FINANCIAL SERVICES

A lack of financing was commonly mentioned as a major constraint in setting up a business, particularly by people with some education and rural people, especially women. There are funding opportunities for groups of youth to start their own business through the Youth Livelihood Programme, but inadequate funding and short training periods often result in poor outcomes. Nonetheless, easing the credit constraints for youth—through cash grants for groups with business plans—does have the potential to increase earnings in non-agricultural jobs. This also applies to women (Blattman et al., 2013). There has been some success reported in this area in Karamoja, and further support from development agencies is needed along with continued adaptation to fit Karamoja's context.

### 5.5 MINING SECTOR

Mining is an important type of rural wage labor, especially in Moroto and Kaabong Districts. Although the Government of Uganda announced the establishment of a cement and marble factory in Karamoja some time ago (New Vision, 2016), the factory has not yet been constructed. The DAO Marble Company no longer employs locals, and the mining site was reported to have been taken over by another company. Overall, the economic feasibility of new factories, such as cement factories, is uncertain due to the cost of transporting in the other components needed for cement production. Moreover, recent evidence shows that industrial or factory jobs may not retain as many workers as self-employment, due to the associated costs and risks (Blattman and Dercon, 2016). If large-scale industrial or manufacturing firms were to be set up in Karamoja, what their impact on poverty alleviation and the people's general well-being would be remains to be seen. Given the current context, a starting point would be to support informal mining groups and build their bargaining power (for detailed recommendations on this issue, see Houdet et al., 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2014).

### 5.6 MIGRATION

The assessment findings on migration are similar to previous reports, in particular on issues such as pull/push factors, challenges, and barriers. However, the assessment provides new information on migration to Lodwar in Kenya and explains why the experiences of these migrants are often relatively positive compared to migration to towns and cities within Uganda. A continuing concern for migrants within Uganda is the discrimination they face, coupled with limited opportunities to move beyond wage labor that is very poorly paid. Living conditions are also often appalling for these migrants.

<sup>28</sup> This is an international problem, according to ILO.

Our recommendations for migrants are largely the same as for workers in Karamoja and include strengthening bargaining power, skills development, providing capital for small businesses, and implementing programs to deal with alcohol abuse.

## 5.7 FURTHER INQUIRIES

Although there is growing body of information available on livelihoods in Karamoja, there are still important gaps related to wage labor and employment. For example, what is the role of remittances in rural and urban livelihoods, and how do remittances contribute to food security, income generation, and asset growth? Similarly, how do the livelihood activities of different household members interact, and how does this interaction influence the household economy? Also, the assessment does not cover areas of work such as commercial sex work, begging, white-collar jobs, and private and public sector jobs. These areas warrant assessments in their own right.

Recent studies on pastoral marketing in Karamoja are available (Aklilu, 2016; Robinson and Zappacosta, 2014; Resilience Learning Project, 2016), but relatively little is known about the role of animal trade in the household economy and the role of livestock trade groups (Iyer, 2016). More participatory research is needed in this area, to take account of Karamojong people's perspectives, desires, and motivations.

To fully understand the nature of migration in and out of Karamoja (as many individuals are rotating migrants), and to support migrant-specific programs and policies, an in-depth study focusing solely on migration would be very useful.

## 5.8 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Now that you have our recommendations, do not disappear with them!”*

Focus group participant, Napak District

### 5.8.1 Wage labor and employment opportunities

Recommendations for increasing job opportunities in Karamoja include:

- Continue investments in infrastructure development and maintenance, with related labor opportunities;
- Ensure that potential investors have access to local economic data and understand the benefits that the region can offer;
- Support small business development using grants or low-cost loans and make managerial and administrative business skills available;

- Assess the potential for Local Hire Ordinances that commit employers to hiring 90% locally for unskilled labor, and First Source Ordinances that commit employers to first recruiting from within Karamoja for skilled labor.

There is also a need to improve the availability of information on jobs and appropriate working conditions. Therefore, a further recommendation is to create job and information centers in all districts, where people can find information on job opportunities and labor laws, and receive help in application processes. These centers could also manage databases of people seeking work and their CVs, to enable employers to find qualified employees among local people.

### 5.8.2 Skills development

Continued support is needed across all aspects of education and skills training in Karamoja. There is a need to design education and skills training programs that match employment opportunities locally (and nationally). There is a particular opportunity to strengthen vocational training. Specific recommendations are:

- Support programs that aim to align people's levels of education and certified skills with labor and employment opportunities in their respective locations;
- Harmonize existing skills and education programs to ensure increased balance between skills pool and job opportunities available in the various locations, and build awareness among people towards utilization of programs;
- Build awareness among Karamojong people and donors of more conducive options for skills and education in Karamoja, such as vocational training and enrolling in technical institutes;
- Support affordable education and skills development, with awareness that people in low-paid wage labor often cannot afford to access skills development.

### 5.8.3 Work conditions

Poor working conditions are a major problem in Karamoja, especially for casual workers. Recommendations for improving those conditions include:

- Build the capacity of Labor Offices in Karamoja, strengthen awareness on worker's rights, and create awareness for people to approach Labor Offices when disputes and grievances arise, and for arbitration;
- Build awareness around the new Minimum Wage

Policy (2017—if passed) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2006), and assess barriers to compliance in Karamoja;

- Assess the feasibility of improved benefits, especially nutritious meals, in terms of employer perspectives, costs, and other factors;
- Support the wider use of formal agreements between employers and illiterate laborers;
- Encourage worker group formation and organization of groups into labor associations, with a view to strengthening the representation of workers, and their capacity to negotiate recruitment terms and conditions;
- Ensure the provision of safety gear and sickness-prevention gear to accommodate health problems, injuries, and deaths in the workplace;
- Promote strict anti-alcohol policies in the workplace and inform people of the consequences of alcohol intake at recruitment.

### **5.8.4 Behaviors and attitudes**

Within Karamoja, and for migrants to towns and cities in Uganda, there is strong discrimination against Karamojong people. Recommendations are:

- Support forums and studies to assess and discuss how the Karamojong are perceived and portrayed within Uganda. Advocate for Karamojong people in a bid to reduce discrimination using strategies developed with communication specialists and involving the established media (TV, radio) and social media;
- Work with health professionals to support a systematic assessment of alcohol abuse in Karamoja, and support public health and educational programs accordingly.



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## ANNEX I. LIST OF RESEARCH SITES

List of research sites	Fieldwork dates
Moroto	May 30–June 1, June 9
Napak	June 2–3, 9–10
Kaabong	June 5–6
Kotido	June 7–8
Nakapiripirit	June 12–14
Lodwar, Kenya	June 12–13
Amudat	June 14–15
Mbale/Tororo	June 15–16
Jinja	June 17
Soroti	June 17–18
Lira	June 19–20
Kampala	June 19–20
Abim	June 21–22

Focus group discussions	Dates
Central division, Kotido District	June 7
Rupa sub-county, Moroto	June 9
Ngoloriet sub-county, Napak District	June 10
Masese III, Jinja	June 17

