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USAID Karamoja Resilience Support Unit: Turning evidence into action



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Livestock in Karamoja: improving markets and veterinary services

Key messages

- Livestock play a key role in Karamojong livelihoods, but factors ranging from policies and price trends to greater competition and can increase food insecurity and livelihood instability.
- Livestock disease is also a significant concern. However, poor infrastructure and government management of the veterinary sector deter veterinary staff from coming to work in the region, and prevents those in the area from obtaining necessary supplies and medicines.
- The Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU) undertook research to explore and note the challenges being faced by those working in the livestock sector, and to highlight the importance of livestock to the economy to government officials.
- KRSU research also focussed on the challenges faced by veterinary professionals, which led to four key recommendations for support and improvement.
- Mercy Corps used KRSU's research in the development of their Resilience Challenge Fund – established to strengthen animal health services – as well as using it in their interventions and activities conducted with livestock and veterinary workers.
- KRSU's research was also used in forming phase 3 of the Karamoja Integrated Development Plan, which aims to devise and rollout measures to ensure continued security within the region's livestock sector and for those whose livelihoods depend on it.

KRSU produced new information that we had no idea about.

– Dr Poncianah Akumu, animal health advisor at RCF

The challenges

As Karamoja is a predominantly a pastoralist region, market trading of livestock is key to the region's economy. However, a number of factors – ranging from policies and seasonality to price trends and market types – prevent livestock value chain actors from maximising their income and achieving livelihood security.

Those working in and around Karamoja's livestock markets face a variety challenges. For example, the introduction of more 'official' markets, created by local government to drive revenue, has served to create greater competition among producers and traders. Furthermore, there has been a sharp rise in the number of traders doing business at more informal markets, such as *kraals* – fuelled by the related fees and police harassment experienced at 'official' market spaces. However, conducting business at *kraals* means producers once again are not able to obtain as high a price for their stock. Not only is there less competition between traders at this market level, which leads to lower prices, but distress sales are also common, which results in financial losses for producers.

In addition, diseases – such as foot and mouth disease and tick infestations – remain rife, leading to livestock losses and lower milk supplies. Estimates suggest that livestock disease costs the regional economy US\$92 million each year, yet veterinary services are lacking. This is, in large part, due to a lack of organisation, access and financial support within the veterinary sector, prompted by the government's decision in the 1970s to privatise services. Factors such as poor infrastructure and armed conflict have also long inhibited qualified veterinary professionals from choosing to work in Karamoja, while those who work in the region are faced with reduced access to high-quality vaccines, poor training coordination and policy constraints.

What did KRSU's research entail?

The Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU) – led by Tufts University and supported by USAID, Irish Aid, and UK Aid – undertook a research study to explore the ways in which livestock market dynamics and trade within Karamoja can be improved. The study results were published in 2017.

The research comprised several elements. Firstly, market data was analysed for nine markets through in-person visits and discussions with district veterinary officers. Interviews were conducted with a number of actors in the livestock market sector, including traders,

route managers, truckers and sub-county veterinary officers. Veterinary officers also provided researchers with movement permits to generate additional data on elements, such as market sales figures and pricing trends. Finally, meetings were conducted with officials from four districts, including monitoring and evaluation officers, district planners, veterinary officers and commercial officers.

These data and reflections provided valuable insights into the behaviours and influence of those in the livestock sector, along with the challenges and risks they face – and how these intersect between different actors and at varying times. Ultimately, the study served to highlight the significance of livestock markets in the Karamoja region. And, although government officials are increasingly recognising the importance of these markets to livelihoods and the local economy, further support needs to be offered to producers (especially during the dry season), and continued market data collection can be used to facilitate this.

Research into Karamoja's veterinary services adopted a more analytical and data-based approach, and reviewed a variety of factors, including how veterinary activities impacted disease rates; service availability and quality; how service providers approach delivery; and interactions between service providers and how these influence veterinary services at a wider scale. The findings highlighted the myriad challenges faced by those in the region's veterinary sector, and led to four key recommendations. These were to develop sufficient training materials for community-based animal healthcare workers (CAHW); develop and enforce guidelines for minimum practice standards; enhance coordination among actors by providing supporting mechanisms; and involve actors from the private veterinary sector to supervise CAHW projects' design and help enhance access to high-quality drugs.

Use of evidence by implementing partners: the case of Mercy Corps

To help improve and strengthen animal health services, Mercy Corps, which launched in Uganda in 2006, founded the Resilience Challenge Fund (RCF) in 2020. This three-year initiative is designed to increase food security and nutrition outcomes and is being implemented as part of the five-year-long Mercy Corps Apolou programme.

Backed with US\$5 million in funding from USAID's Centre for Resilience, the project's main aim is to "increase public-private investments into animal services as a way to promote resilience in the communities of Karamoja," explains Dr Maureen Kamusiime, RCF programme manager. The team primarily works in two districts, Kaabong and Amudat, and the anticipated beneficiaries are an extensive group ranging from livestock keepers and traders, to service providers (including CAWHs and

vets), to institutions such as universities, to government officials in the Ministry of Agriculture.

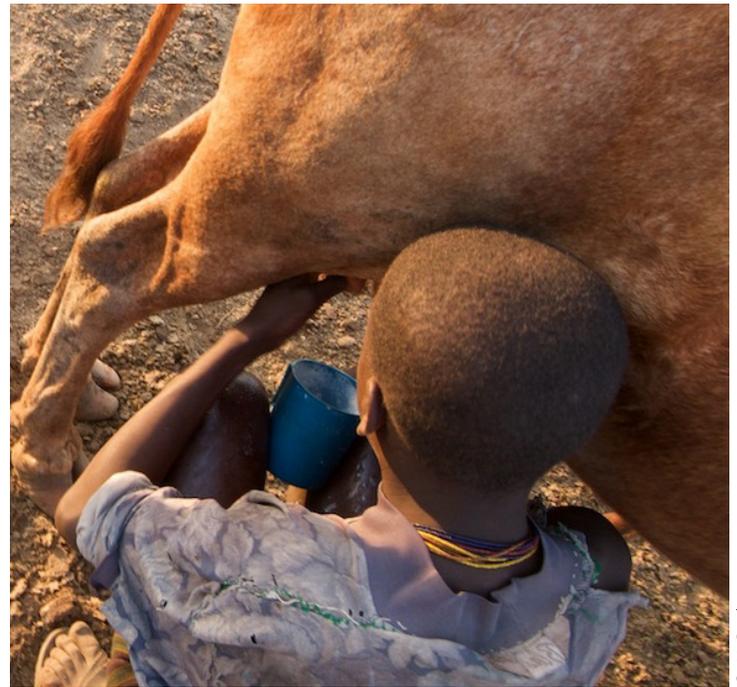
Mercy Corps has used KRSU's research in RCF's development and roll out, as well as to corroborate and quantify existing thinking. For example, KRSU's "research around the economic value of livestock in the region helped us design interventions around markets and livestock markets," states Dr Kamusiime, adding that the same paper "also formed the basis of our research around the economic value of disease."

KRSU's research into CAHW's strengths, weaknesses and potential has also been instrumental in Mercy Corps' direct activities with these workers, with KRSU information being used to form the basis of essential training materials. "One of the challenges being experienced by CAHWs was that they had no curriculum," says Dr Poncianah Akumu, RCF animal health advisor. "So we worked with the line Ministry to create one."

Furthermore, "KRSU have lots of research, so when we are looking for literature to back up some of our theories, we look to their studies," Dr Akumu notes – and KRSU data on livestock ownership in Karamoja acted as a key factor in Mercy Corps' ability to procure vaccines for a vaccination drive.

While results from the RCF are ongoing – especially as the programme is focussed on driving longer-term policy changes – "we are seeing the beginnings of success," shares Dr Kamusiime. For instance, following RCF guidance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) has conducted veterinary service evaluations, so MAAIF can acknowledge and address gaps in capacity. This initiative resulted in the Ministry engaging with industry officials to establish the most essential roles and potential trade-offs, such as between lab technicians and extension workers, reveals Dr Akumu. "We have also seen the Ministry take the lead in assessing disease surveillance and reporting systems," continues Dr Akumu. From this, "they have come up with ideas for what can work for Karamoja specifically, rather than just having a blanket idea" – with the next stage for these to be rolled out through pilot projects in specific locations.

Elsewhere, "as a result of RCF, we have seen a reduction in disease prevalence in the communities who access animal health services," Dr Kamusiime states. "We are



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pushing for policy change around CAHWs, and the thinking [of policy makers] is changing. We have also seen an increase in the amount of budgeting of resources to animal care services."

While KRSU's research has been of significant use to the Mercy Corps team, the Unit's broader work has also supported this non-governmental organisation (NGO). KRSU's ongoing tactics to raise awareness and change attitudes around pastoralism (in large part through their pastoralism and policy training course) paved the way for Mercy Corps to conduct their own activities, particularly among government officials.

Use of evidence by implementing partners: the case of KIDP

In 2005, the Ugandan Government launched the Karamoja Integrated Development and Disarmament Plan to support its disarmament objectives in Karamoja. This plan was "an integrated development programme designed to provide a holistic framework from which to coordinate medium- and long-term development interventions for sustainable peace and security in Karamoja," explains Frank Emmanuel Muhereza, executive director at the Centre for Basic Research, Uganda.

Within six years, the disarmament had been a success; so, in 2011, it was decided the programme would be renamed the Karamoja Integrated Development Plan (KIDP), which includes a prominent focus on livestock and related services. "Livestock cuts across the entire programme," Muhereza states, as it aims to ensure security and safety for livestock and those whose livelihoods depend on the sector. Government policies relating to human capital do not typically take livestock into consideration, he notes, but it is crucial they do so if services and support are to be effectively delivered. Thus, KIDP acts as a foundation from

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– Frank Emmanuel Muhereza, executive director at the Centre for Basic Research, Uganda

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which all stakeholders – including both local and national government officials – can work to ensure consistency across the board and provide assistance to those most in need.

The plan's first and second stages were devised in-house, with no external consultation, and initiated in 2011 and 2015 respectively. Currently, the KIDP team are working on developing phase 3 of the programme, running from 2021/22 to 2025/26, which will reflect and recognise the importance of pastoralist livestock production in Karamoja and the need for productive rangeland access. In addition to building upon lessons learned and achievements from the previous two KIDP initiatives, this time, the team is welcoming guidance and support from external stakeholders such as KRSU.

"KRSU research contributed to the development of the thought processes and design of KIDP3," shares Muhereza. For example, the recommendations from KRSU's studies on livestock production and veterinary service delivery are reflected in the outputs of KIDP3's Strategic Objective 2: 'Karamojong livestock production and productivity enhanced for strengthened livelihoods'. These include supporting access to productive rangelands and feed resources to promote improved nutrition of livestock herds in Karamoja; supporting increased access to veterinary services for improved health of livestock in the region; and supporting the control of Transboundary Animal Diseases in Karamoja.

Another factor, Muhereza notes, is the fact that many stakeholders have different priorities – from building resilience to improving sanitation; while fixed parameters, often set by donors, constrain stakeholders from working together and adapting to situations. As such, "the change



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that you see is not reflective of the amount of resources going in," he explains.

However, "KRSU [research] provided a reality check around some of the initiatives, so that [stakeholders] would rethink some of the approaches, strategies and interventions being implemented," Muhereza says.

As well as providing research, the KRSU team supported the development of KIDP3 by offering insights and guidance, which encouraged increased input from stakeholders such as government officials, NGOs, civil society, and development partners. "I think it was really beneficial to take KIDP to the next level," he states.

KIDP3 has been signed off by the Minister for Karamoja Affairs, but the plan has not yet been launched as the budget has yet to be completed by the various government line ministries – but Muhereza is hopeful this will happen soon. Several key outcomes are desired, including peace and security, an improvement in livelihoods and human resources, and enhanced infrastructure within Karamoja. Ultimately, "success will depend a lot on how it is implemented, how stakeholders come on board, and how progress being made is evaluated on a continuous basis," he reveals. "It will not just be a 100 m race to the finish; it's going to be a very difficult journey.

USAID Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU)

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For more information about the KRSU:

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