

Drylands Transform Project in the IGAD Region

Drylands Transform (DT) is a research project led by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in partnership with a multidisciplinary team from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Linnaeus University, Makerere University, Umeå University, University of Gothenburg, University of Nairobi, and World Agroforestry (ICRAF). The project is funded by the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas).

This second project summary focuses on the [Drylands Transform Research Project](#) objectives 3 and 4. The first summary no. [ICPALD 32-CLE-1-2023](#) focused on objectives 1 and 2.

Objective 3: Under the Drylands Transform project this objective endeavors to understand the impact of climate variability on livelihood strategies and resilience in the Karamoja border region of north eastern Uganda and north western Kenya. The interdisciplinary research team addresses this by conducting both quantitative surveys and qualitative studies to better understand the area.

Household surveys

The aim of the quantitative surveys was to understand the distribution of, and association between, several aspects including livelihood strategies/livelihood systems, food security, dietary diversity, undernutrition (child and maternal), infant/child mortality, migration patterns, shocks and crises at the four Drylands Transform study sites. In addition, the surveys aimed to explore the relationships between human well-being, land and ecosystem health and to understand the role of seasonality for household's wellbeing.

A baseline quantitative survey was carried out in June 2022, and interviews were conducted with 944 households (424 households in Kenya, and 520 households in Uganda) (Images 1-5). The questions covered one male and one female respondent from each household. The same households were interviewed in a follow up survey, done about 6 months later, in February 2023. These surveys covered the four Drylands Transform study sites, of which two are in Uganda and two in Kenya, with each country having a pastoralist and an agro-pastoral site for interviews (Fig. 1). For Kenya, the agro-pastoral site chosen was Chepareria in West Pokot County, while the pastoral site was Lokiriama in Turkana County. For Uganda, the agro-pastoral site chosen was in Napak District, while the pastoral site was in Moroto District.

Baseline data survey data are currently analyzed. Preliminary results indicate that households are large, often with more than six persons. This has implications on the number of people in the household that need to be fed. Food shortage is a huge problem, especially in the above-mentioned Turkana site, and the prevalence of child malnutrition is especially high in the Moroto site and in the Turkana site. Female malnutrition is also common in these areas. Land ownership dynamics are mostly in form of informal tenure deeds. Combinations of livestock keeping and farming are common, in three of the surveyed sites. However, livestock ownership seems to have reduced, especially in the Uganda sites – despite less reported problems with drought.

Concerning livelihood shocks, the two most common type of shocks are “death of livestock” and “illness of livestock”. Thus, cattle diseases seem to be a major problem, especially in West Pokot, Kenya. However, climate change could be an underlying reason for that, since diseases could be exacerbated by weakness in the animal because of drought. This is one example on how climate change is very much a reality in the study

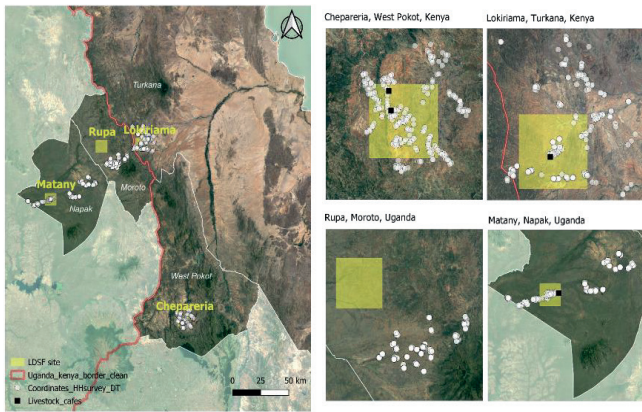


Figure 1. Map of the study sites. The green squares (10 km x 10km) are areas where data on soil and land health have been collected (see ICPALD 32-CLE-1-2023). The households interviewed in the household surveys in June 2022 and February 2023 are indicated as white dots.

regions – the overwhelming majority of the respondents have also experienced changing weather patterns. Furthermore, more than 25 % of the respondents have experienced livestock raids during the past 6 months. Livestock raiding is a significant challenge in the Uganda sites – especially in the Moroto site. Conflicts between communities, and within the household, are also very common. Seeking assistance/loans and relying on savings are very common coping measures across all types of crises. This suggests that policies for improving financial inclusion are important.

Regarding household income, the majority of women in all study sites contribute actively to household income.



Image 1. Focus group meeting in Rupa preparing for the household survey (Photo: G. Bostedt)



Image 2. Cassava drying in Napak District (Photo: G. Bostedt)



Image 3. Vegetation conditions during the follow-up survey in February 2023 (left) and during the baseline in June 2022 (right) (Photo: J. Kyanjo)



Image 4. Lokiriana, Turkana County, data collection (Photo: A. Mwangi)



Image 5. Lokiriana, Turkana County, data collection (Photo: A. Mwangi)

Qualitative studies, May-July 2023

Following the household surveys, qualitative studies were conducted in the same study sites, between May to July 2023. In total, 36 focus group discussions and 30 key informant interviews were conducted (images 6-10) using participatory approaches (images 11-13). The focus group discussions engaged community members in the study sites and the key informant interviews engaged local leaders, elders, chiefs as well as members of community-based organisations, international and local non-governmental organisations and different government ministries.

The aim of the qualitative studies was to have an in-depth understanding of topics in the household surveys. We also wanted to learn more about complementary areas. Example of areas that were included in the qualitative studies were: Livelihood strategies/livelihood systems, social conflicts, nutritional resilience against climate variability and food security. The qualitative studies also allowed for having a longer time perspective than the household surveys, discussing topics that occurred several decades back and then moving forward until today (image 13).



Image 8. Female focus group discussion in Matany Sub-County in Moroto District, Uganda, July 2023. (Photo: T. Emmanuel).



Image 9. Male focus group discussion, Rupa Sub-county, Uganda, July 2023. (Photo: J. Kyanjo)



Image 10. Female focus group discussion, Rupa Sub-county, Uganda, July 2023. (Photo: J. Kyanjo)



Image 6. Male focus group discussion, Chepareria, Kenya, May 2023. (Photo: C Kawira)



Image 7. Female focus group discussion, at Locheralomala village in Lokiriama location Turkana, Kenya, May 2023. (Photo: A. Isaac)



Image 11. Matrix scoring of community level social conflicts underway in one of the male focus group discussion in Rupa Sub-County in Moroto District, Uganda, 2023. (Photo: K. Derick Ansyijar).



Image 12. Discussion and lecture on traditional foods and preservation as well as forgotten foods, Chepareria, West Pokot County, Kenya. (Photo: C. Kawira).



Image 13. Matrix scores of social conflicts during the 1970-1980s period by the male focus group discussion in Rupa Sub-County in Moroto District, Uganda. (Photo: K. Derick Ansyijar).

Objective 4: This objective aims to increase our understanding of land tenure and resource governance among pastoralist communities across the Karamoja cluster with the aim to identify land governance mechanisms and practices that effectively address pastoralists' dependence on both flexible and secure rights to land.

Methods

During 2022, members of the objective 4 research team carried out over 200 interviews and focus group discussions at the project sites and across the region with communities, local administrators, politicians, civil society, and other interest parties.

Commodification of land in the Karamoja cluster

Similar to other dryland regions in East Africa, the Karamoja cluster has endured a history of economic and political marginalisation from national governments. However, this is changing as land and associate resources are increasingly viewed as valuable by government agencies and investors. Land markets have emerged across the region, driven by the imperative to modernise agriculture, capitalise on mineral wealth, and numerous infrastructure projects. Communal land is being demarcated, bought,

and sold, and tenure is undergoing formalisation. This frequently involves various forms of boundary making and un-making including individual/private plots, administrative areas, and communally owned land. Negotiation over boundaries is causing new forms of contestations (sometimes violent) between individuals and communities over rights to control and access resources.

Results and analysis

West Pokot County, Kenya

Since the 1980s, West Pokot has been experiencing a 'modernization' of land management and use through a combination of rehabilitation and intensification. This development began in areas close to Chepareria town and has spread west towards the Ugandan border (Images 14-15). At the heart of this 'modernization' are land enclosures and privatization. Enclosures constitute a strategy to secure access and control over land resources and their management in the face of land speculation and land grabbing. For wealthy members of society, privatization and enclosures provide an opportunity for intensified land use (primarily livestock production) and investment (buying of land). However, those who are

poor often sell land out of distress and poverty to afford school fees, medical bills, and other emergencies. Privatization and intensification of livestock herding do not replace the need for access to communal land resources. Many interviewees testified to the importance of seasonal as well as permanent access to communal grazing land in Amudat District in Uganda and beyond. This has led to incidences of conflict between Pokot herders and other communities in Karamoja and beyond. Furthermore, to address the loss of communal land in West Pokot, some communities are considering banning physical enclosures to enable seasonal communal access to land resources.

Karamoja sub-region, Uganda

Since 2010 and the relative peace resulting from government programmes of disarmament of pastoralist communities, there has been an influx of development in Karamoja sub-region. The Uganda government wants to modernize the sub-region through a more productive use of resources, in particular the economic exploitation of mineral wealth and fertile land. The result has been a scramble for land among a variety of people including investors, speculators, and pastoralist community members (Images 16-19). Land markets are emerging around mining, agriculture, and infrastructure developments. Similar to West Pokot, buyers take advantage of pastoralists' poverty. Since 2019, drought and conflict have resulted in multiple failed harvests and diminished livestock numbers. Subsequently, many pastoralists have turned to 'distress land sales' as a last resort for survival. Some other - less vulnerable - rural people feel the need to secure land before others take it. A common practice is to sell off sections of their cultivated plots, invest the money in demarcating private land and building a (semi-)permanent house.

An increasing number of pastoralists who rent plots for cultivation are facing eviction due to

their incapacity to afford rapidly rising rents. They, along with 'distress land sellers' are increasingly migrating to communal grazing areas to demarcate a new plot. This phenomena of cultivating communal land is being encouraged by the local and national government as a way to use the rangeland 'more productively'. The trend towards individualised and exclusive land rights, including the demarcation and fencing of individual plots and movements of people to settle in communal grazing areas, is resulting in the loss of customary access rights for livestock grazing and other livelihood activities. Because of the increasingly fragmented commons, pastoralist communities are becoming concerned about the viability of future livestock herding, which relies on flexible access to communal land.

An increasing number of Karamojong communities are attempting to secure their land in the face of increasing fragmentation by acquiring communal land titles. For example, in an attempt to resist the covert nature of large-scale land acquisitions by mining companies, and to avoid local elite capture of mining company benefits, communities in Moroto District are seeking to title their land. Similarly, communities in Napak District have joined forces to title and protect an area of communal grazing land from small-scale cultivators and large-scale land grabs (Images 20-22).

The rise in individual and communal land titling has sparked conflicts over territorial and resource rights within and between communities. There have been heightened claims to ancestral and administrative jurisdiction, claims that are frequently promoted by leaders as part of their desire to control populations and resources. Conflict often results in violence; many interviewees commented on a new trend in violent attacks that aim to displace them from resource-rich areas.

Conclusion: Governance Challenges

Decision makers and communities in the Karamoja Cluster face the challenge of needing to balance the growing appetite for land demarcation alongside the need to safeguard communal resource access for pastoralism. Are communal land titles able to secure communal land access for all? Or will such formalization of land tenure hasten the privatization of land and loss of land access?

We argue that alternative means of securing communal resource tenure need to be considered that safeguard mobility and overlapping resource rights among pastoralists. The regional perspective provided by this research project is well-positioned to contribute to such solutions.



Image 14. Enclosure in West Pokot. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 16. Fencing in Moroto District. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 15. Enclosure in West Pokot. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 17. Tororo cement limestone quarry, Moroto District. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 18. Interview, Moroto District. (Photo: Z. Angella)



Image 19. Harvested plot, Moroto District. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 21. Cultivated land, Napak District. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 20. Recently burnt vegetation in communal grazing area, Napak District. (Photo: J. Drew)



Image 22. Ere (village), Napak District. (Photo: J. Drew)



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