



Enhancing crop and livestock productivity: Learning and planning with local agro-pastoral communities in Nakapiripirit Karamoja Region of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Objectives of study: This study was motivated by the fact that despite existence of large herds of cattle and goats, reasonably sufficient feed, human capital, and favorable conditions for improving livestock among other resources, poor herd productivity characterizes livestock farming in Nakapiripirit region.

Methodology and results: The area of study, Namalu sub-county in Nakapiripirit district, is dominated by the semi-transhumant agro-pastoralists of Pian ethnic group of the Karimojong tribe. The sub-county was sampled to capture variability in socio-cultural and farming systems settings. The



bulk of data used in the study was obtained semi-formally using key informant and focus group discussion procedures. Survey results showed that the major crops are maize, sorghum, ground nuts, beans and sunflower. The main crop constraints are drought, difficulty in ploughing, weeds, low soil fertility and delay in seed supply. Cattle, goats, sheep, chickens and donkeys are the priority livestock enterprises. Local breeds of cattle and shoats are commonly open grazed (herded or tethered). Chickens and turkeys are mostly reared on free range system. The main constraints to livestock production are insecurity, drought, anaplasmosis, East Coast Fever (ECF) and heart water. Challenges to production include deforestation, ploughing along slopes, termites, mono cropping, overgrazing, declining land sizes, floods, strong winds and dominance of sandy soils. Extreme conditions of water scarcity (drought) and excessive rainwater (floods) coupled with occurrence of strong winds; presence of sandy soils and the practice of ploughing along slopes are clear manifestations of an area prone to adverse effects of climate change. Experiences and lessons learnt from the study indicate that the common belief that the security situation particularly threat to human life and property is far beyond tolerable limits is highly exaggerated. Isolated attacks that occur are not different in type and scale from those reported in other parts of Uganda. Furthermore, Karamoja region and Karimojong are portrayed to be hostile and non-cooperative. Informal interviews notably FGD discussions confirmed that the Karimojongs are interactive, freely participate and contribute valuable ideas that can guide research and development agenda based on informed opinion, real local needs and circumstances. Crop production and livestock grazing areas



can be favorably concentrated in specific areas so that economies of scale are exploited. Besides, common conflicts between cultivators and pastoralists stemming from crop destruction by cattle are avoided. Mobilization and accessing individual households to foster participatory community development are facilitated by the clustered settlements headed by manyatta heads who are elected and accorded respect by all manyatta occupants.

Conclusion and application of findings: Based on data on farm, land and water management constraints, the following strategic interventions are proposed: (i) Promotion of sustainable household and community-wide rainwater harvesting techniques to increase water availability for crop, livestock and domestic uses; (ii) Improved soil fertility and conservation technology and skills improvement to arrest soil degradation; (iii) Improved input supply for the priority crop and livestock disease and management constraints by NAADS, (iv) extension and relevant support systems in the agricultural sector; and (v) Establishing inter-district and cross border networks to curb cattle rustling.

Key words

Nakapiripirit, participatory diagnosis, research and development planning, transhumant communities