

KARAMOJA SUBREGION IN NORTH EASTERN UGANDA



The largest manyatta concentration in Watakau Village, Nakapelimoru Sub-county, Kotido District, with sections accommodating livestock.

©OCHA-UGANDA 2009/ HARRIET ATIM & RICHARD SENNOGA

Located in northeastern Uganda along the borders with Sudan and Kenya, Karamoja is a semi-arid region comprising the five districts of Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto and Nakapirpirit. With an estimated population of just over 1.1 million people, the majority of Karimojong subsist through agro-pastoral or purely pastoral livelihoods.

A chronically food-insecure region, Karamoja has been affected by three consecutive years of successive shocks, including a severe drought in 2006, a combination of extended dry spell, late rains and flooding in 2007 and currently another extended dry spell with late arriving rains only in parts of the region.

Unlike the rest of Uganda, the region has only one annual harvest and relies on timely rainfall to enable planting. This year, planting has been significantly delayed and, in many areas, drastically reduced. The rains are also necessary to replenish the water supply and grazing lands for cattle in the region. The extended dryness is placing pressure on water availability in parts of the region, with reported average distance to water for livestock at four (4) kilometres.

Moreover, since 2007, the region's livestock – an integral element to food security in a pastoralist region – has been decimated by diseases such as the *peste de petits ruminants* (PPR), or goat plague, and *contagious bovine pleuropneumonia* (CBPP), while staple crops such as sorghum have been hard hit by crop fungus.

In addition to these climatic shocks, the region's fast-growing population (Uganda's is the third-fastest growing population in the world, nationally averaged at 3.2 per cent compared to the sub-Saharan average of 2.4 per cent) suffers due to severe environmental degradation, poor infrastructure and widespread insecurity due to the prevalence of small arms and cattle raiding.

Taken together, the situation has eroded people's coping capacity, leaving them locked in a vicious downward spiral of vulnerability, where shock → negative coping

→ increased vulnerability to future shocks (i.e. reduced access to basic commodities such as food, health care and investments in livelihoods) → new shock.

At present, Karamoja is approaching a period of humanitarian crisis that will be characterized by elevated levels of household food insecurity, heightened rates of gross acute and severe acute malnutrition and rising morbidity and loss of livestock and other livelihood capital. Without increased donor support, the urgent action required to address these increasing needs will not be achieved. Certainly, negative coping mechanisms such as out-migration, asset stripping and early marriage, among others, will be reinforced.

As priority humanitarian responses to the building needs in the region, the United Nations agencies working in Karamoja have highlighted the following areas:

- Scaling up emergency nutrition interventions to treat at least 7,500 children with severe acute malnutrition and increasing supplementary feeding to target 35,000 children suffering from moderate malnutrition;
 - Reducing morbidity by immunizing 90,000 children under 5 years, reducing the critical gap in mosquito net coverage by providing 150,00 households two long-lasting insecticide treated nets (LLITNs) and strengthening family care practices;
 - Extending by three months the General Food Distribution (GFD) for more than 700,000 Karimojong;
 - Accelerating the vaccination of 2.4 million goats and sheep and 1.1 million cattle against PPR and CBPP respectively.
-