



KARAMOJA HUMANITARIAN ALLIANCE (POSITON PAPER) ON THE ROLE OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS IN UGANDA

Background to the humanitarian situation in the region

Karamoja region lies in North-Eastern Uganda and comprises the 9 districts of Kaabong, Kotido, Abim, Napak, Moroto, Amudat, Nakapiripirt, Nabilatuk and Karenga. The region is home to about 1.2 million people (UBOS, 2008). It is the economically least developed region in Uganda and about 65% of the population lives below the poverty line. The Districts of Karamoja have the highest Human Poverty Indices (HPI) with Kaabong, Abim and Kotido Districts having 65.3% compared to the national average of 37.5%, Central region of 31.5%, Northern region 46.1%, Western region 39.0% and Eastern region 37.1% (Source: UNDP, 2007). Life in Karamoja is characterized by periodic and extended droughts, chronic food insecurity and famine. The acute levels of poverty are compounded by drought, the rapidly degrading natural resource base, poor infrastructure and delivery of social services. Climate change and population growth is expected to make this situation even worse. Karamoja region has several humanitarian crises as described below:

Environmental challenges in Karamoja

The environment and climate in Karamoja is at great risk with the continuous threats from the people involved in activities such as, cutting down trees for charcoal burning, Manyatta (Homestead) construction, firewood for sale, poor farming methods, changes in the weather patterns, bush burning and an increase in population, this is exacerbated by unfavorable climate, lack of knowledge on disaster mitigation and prevention, compliance on law and regulations on the environment protection and conservation are some of the risks in the communities.

The District natural resource officer Kotido when interviewed said that,

“The population in Karamoja has increased leading to demand for more natural resources and rapid development for growth centers with poor planning has exerted pressure on the environment hence hindering the sustainability measures put in place.”

Prolonged Drought

Most parts of Karamoja region experience dry weather conditions that are characterized by long period of high temperatures and dry wind. This kind of weather negatively affects crop production. In Kotido district for instance, consultation with local communities indicated that in

2018 their crops were destroyed due to prolonged period of drought in which they received rain in July when in other areas planting and harvesting had already been done.

Most stakeholders consulted attributed drought to increased community practices of cutting natural trees for firewood and charcoal burning, bush burning and increased population pressure on land. The long period of drought in Karamoja has contributed to increased food insecurities in most communities that has also forced some community members to migrate to other areas, family separation, drying of water points, deaths of cattle due to inadequate pasture, water and poverty. Although there are few water dams in the region, ability by community to carry out water irrigation during the drought period is still low. This thus, predisposes most of them to be dependents of food handouts.

Food insecurity

Persistent food insecurity is still major challenge in most parts of Karamoja. This is greatly due to the long drought season experienced on annual basis in most parts of the region. The long drought is as result of the unreliable rainfall pattern across the region with places like Abim, and Karenga being well off with rainfall ranging from 600mm to 1200mm annually. This greatly shows the challenge with crop sustainability in the region. Most communities still practice polygamous marriages yet most of them have limited capacity to buy or cultivate food to feed extra people in their homes.

Ability of local communities to use modern technologies such as fertilizers and irrigation farming to produce more food are still low due to illiteracy and poverty. While food production is low in most communities, attempts to put in place better food storage facilities such as granaries are still absent. Consultations further revealed that in famine situation, some people cope in such situations by eating wild rats, wild fruits, eating local brew residue, wild vegetables, and receiving relief from NGOs. Others cope through providing labor for food, (work for food) selling charcoal, planting and selling vegetable using small-scale irrigation, hunting, making and selling local brew and engaging in trade in local markets. For those with animals they tend to sell some to enable them survive. Food insecurity coupled with income poverty has thus, limited amount of food available for consumption per person per day in most households. Most people in the region eat one meal a day and many people are not sure for a single meal in a day. Food insecurity in the region has led malnutrition, food theft, famine, lawlessness and low household incomes and other forms of vulnerability.

Floods

While most parts of Kotido experience dry weather however, some parts of the district experience some occasion flash flooding during the short rainy season especially villages leaving next to the meandering seasonal rivers. Some of these areas include: Rengen and Kacheri in Kotido district where food gardens were reported destroyed in 2018 and 2019 by flash floods. Floods resulting from heavy rains are in most areas experienced from late June to September. Whenever they occur, they cause displacement of people, destruction of bridges and roads, crops from the garden, soil erosion and it also bring about death of some community members, animals, destruction of property such as houses and granaries.

Accidents and Fires

Unlike other communities of Uganda where accidents are a common problem, the reverse is true with Karamoja. Fires are a common hazard to all districts of Karamoja. Fire in homes (Manyatas) and bush fires as a common occurrence during the dry seasons. This leads to destruction of houses, granaries containing food, household materials and sometimes killing old people and children as expressed by the Kraal leader in Panyangara.

Locusts and COVID 19

Just like the rest of the world Karamoja has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, Cattle raids, Locust's invasion that destroyed most crops among others.

Amidst all these hazards and other humanitarian issues in the region the major humanitarian actors in the region have been the UN agencies, Faith Based organizations, INGOs who come from out and the local actors were always used as mobilizers in most of the responses done. But As a result of the ELNHA project(changing the Narrative of appreciating the local actors' role in humanitarian response, we now have thirty(30) Local Actors, members of the Karamoja Humanitarian Alliance(KALNHA), Supporting the communities in the different issues as described above.

Contribution of local and national humanitarian actors in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Karamoja region

Having had their capacities built, the local national humanitarian actors (LNHAs) in Karamoja have had their capacities built and have been now able to collect data when a disaster happens, respond to any pandemic in an appropriate, timely, effective and efficient manner, fundraising and proposal writing.

Designing projects in relation to the humanitarian principles and standards

Implementation through consortia

Challenges facing LNHA's in humanitarian response in

- a) Limited funding to implement projects.
- b) Partial partnerships which do not respect the six principles but take local actors as mobilizers and not partners.
- c) Limited human resource due to limited funding
- d) Effects of covid-19 which affected the funding opportunities and made it hard to work with communities.

Recommendations for strengthening local humanitarian actors in responding and mitigating humanitarian crises in the Karamoja region

- a) Support capacity building in all partnerships since our numbers are increasing yet there are a handful of those whose capacities have not been built.
- b) Create more realistic partnership and co-creation of projects together.
- c) Increase funding to the local actors.

Brief about the Karamoja Local and National Humanitarian Alliance

Karamoja Local and National Humanitarian Alliance (KALNHA) is a humanitarian alliance formed by the local indigenous organizations in the districts of Kotido, Kaabong and Karenga. It consists of 30 members. Karamoja Local, National Humanitarian Alliance (KALNHA) is an indigenous alliance that has been formed by the Local and National Humanitarian organizations (Community, District, Faith Based and National) operating in Karamoja to act as a collective voice and a mechanism to strengthen coordination among Humanitarian actors in the region.

The Karamoja Local and National Humanitarian Alliance is comprised of local and national organizations that work or are interested in humanitarian preparedness and response in Karamoja, Media organizations in the humanitarian sector, service delivery organizations, organizations focusing on Urban Refugees and children leaving in the streets, Founding members of the Alliance, policy Advocacy Organizations, Uganda Humanitarian Learning Platform (UHLP), Women's Rights Organization, Humanitarian sector working Groups, and organizations that provide legal aid. These organizations are both National and District based, community based, Faith based, youth organizations or indigenous organizations. The alliance also has the category of ex-officials who include international NGOs, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and Development partners, Ministry of Local Government, United Nations (UN) Agencies and Uganda NGO Bureau. These advice and advance the alliance strategic focus.

With the following Mission and Vision statements

Vision.

Empowered Local and National humanitarian actors in Karamoja.

Mission statement.

To strengthen coordination, act as a collective voice for policy influence, promote partnerships and build capacity to be effective first and post-recovery responders.

Specific Objectives.

- Promote coordination within local and national organizations and enhance engagement with other stakeholders.
- Strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of local and national organizations.

- To act as a collective voice for local and national organizations to influence policy, and practice in the humanitarian agenda at different levels.
- To promote information sharing, learning and knowledge management for better humanitarian preparedness, first and post recovery response
- To promote networking, partnerships and collaborations between the alliance members and other stakeholders.
- To mobilize domestic resources and advocate for unlocking regional and national resources for humanitarian response.

To this far, the alliance has been able to influence policy changes in the districts in relation to Disaster funding and management, support planning for disaster response, build the capacity of its members to be able to respond to disasters, been able to influence other local and national actors to support the localization agenda (Charter for Change and Grand bargain campaigns) in the other southern and south western part of north Karamoja districts).