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an international review of peace initiatives
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PEACE AND SECURITY FOR PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES IN AFRICAN BORDERLANDS

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Cover photo: A young Fulani herder returning home with cattle from daily grazing during the dry season in Jigawa State, Nigeria, near the border with Niger, 27 February 2022. © Adam Higazi

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Acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
FOLT	Friends of Lake Turkana
IDP	internally displaced person
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
ISWAP	Islamic State in West Africa Province
JASDJ	Jama'at ahl al-Sunna li'l Da'wa wa'l Jihad
KDF	Karamoja Development Forum
LDU	local defence unit
LGA	local government area
MBOSCUDA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NDVI	Normalised Difference Vegetation Index
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
UPDF	Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces
VGN	Vigilante Group of Nigeria
XCEPT	Cross-border Conflict, Evidence, Policy, and Trends

PART 1:
Key findings and priorities for peace and security

The 2020 African Union Strategy for Better Integrated Border Governance summarises peace and security challenges relating to African borders as follows:

> **In Africa, state borders are often not identical to peoples' borders and hence have been known to foster three kinds of tensions: between neighbouring states, between states and their people and between states and violent actors, including international criminal cartels and terrorist groups.**

Much of Africa's 83,000 kilometres of borders run through sparsely inhabited territories where state services are scant and state authority is stretched. For many communities in these borderland areas, the essentials of life are secured not through trustworthy institutions, but through community-to-community arrangements and agreements – or coercively through guns and violence.

Pastoralists have been traversing these territories since long before formal borders came into existence, but their way of life and modes of self-governance have become inextricably entwined with contemporary border phenomena. Transhumance and pastoral mobility cut across political boundaries, jurisdictions and authorities, and though they usually do so with a high degree of cooperative engagement between local communities, they can also encounter and become enmeshed in different manifestations of borderland violence – from criminality to human rights violations, armed insurgency and inter-community fighting.

In XCEPT research in West and East Africa covering Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Uganda and Kenya in 2022–23, Conciliation Resources and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) worked with communities and local research partners to learn about how violence works in some of the key borderlands.

We found that significant borderland insecurity can be traced to national and international failure to control cross-border transnational insurgency and violent crime – contrary to predominant analyses that emphasise badly managed pastoralism for violent conflict. National, regional and international neglect of the crucial inter-state boundaries has allowed violence to persist and spiral and has damaged the lives of millions of people. Policies, attitudes and actions have obstructed, undermined, neglected or supplanted inter-community networks, allowing insecurity systems to prevail – from weak or bad governance, to inappropriate law and order or security deployments, and dysfunctional systems of accountability. More accurate, locally based understanding of the roots and manifestations violence, and of the foundations of stability is essential for developing effective borderland peace and security policies that have community engagement and support.

Analysis, key findings and priorities for improving peace and security for pastoralist communities' peace and security in borderlands are outlined in this introduction. These are drawn from deep-dive, regional case studies based on XCEPT field and satellite research in East and West Africa, which are presented subsequently in the report. The regional case studies are referenced and footnoted. References from the regional case studies are not repeated in the introductory cross-contextual analysis.

BOX 1: ABOUT THE STUDY – OVERVIEW OF THE RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

This study is part of the Cross-Border Conflict, Evidence, Policy, and Trends (XCEPT) research programme – a multi-year activity funded by UK International Development from the UK Government. Conciliation Resources and IDS worked with local research partners and communities to explore peace and security priorities for pastoralist communities in African borderlands – how conflicts and insecurity connect across borders, and the drivers of violent and peaceful behaviour. It focuses on two borderland areas East and West Africa, covering Uganda and Kenya, and Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Field research was carried out primarily in 2022–23.

East Africa – Research took place among communities in Karamoja in Uganda and Turkana in Kenya, involving women, men and youth. It was led by IDS alongside local community research teams facilitated by community organisations Friends of Lake Turkana (FOLT) and Karamoja Development Forum (KDF). The East Africa study used a community action research methodology that places people affected by an issue are at the centre of research. The method is ethnographic and emphasises diversity, uses storytelling, and offers a bridge between people and policy. Data collection and analysis was supported by validation and dissemination of messages among communities, community leaders and in the policy arena.

West Africa – Research was carried out through fieldwork in pastoral and farming communities in the borderlands of northern Nigeria, particularly along sections of the Nigeria–Niger and Nigeria–Cameroon borders. Research locations were selected along transhumance corridors, in areas that pastoralists migrate to or from. Fieldwork was supplemented by analysis of satellite data, to observe changes in land use over time. The study was carried out by a team of researchers with longstanding experience in the region, including researchers from pastoral communities. Where possible, ethnographic methods were used, whereby researchers stayed in the areas among communities being studied, and men and women were interviewed. Community and academic activities garnered feedback on research findings.

Research methodologies for the two regional case studies are presented in more detail in the relevant sections below.

Key findings

Pastoralists get caught up in insecurity systems that thrive in borderlands and across borders.

Borders and borderlands far from population centres are fertile ground for violent transnational economies. States, security forces, criminals and insurgents all make use of the affordances of borders in ways that preserve, protract and escalate instability. Pastoralists can be both victims and perpetrators of violence.

KARAMOJA AND TURKANA BORDERLANDS

The Karamoja and Turkana borderland regions of Uganda and Kenya support a self-reinforcing system of instability and misgovernment. Five sources of insecurity feed one another in a vicious circle, which is aggravated by the international border: large-scale cattle raids carried out by criminal gangs and traders operating across the border; armed robbery of homesteads; violence against women and girls; human rights abuses by security forces and vigilantes; and community-to-community revenge attacks.

The security strategies of both the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have prioritised disarming pastoralists and other communities through primarily military interventions. Complicated by the scale of the task and difficulties of cross-border coordination, recurrent disarmament campaigns over many years have had little success in tackling armed criminality, while the campaigns have led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of livestock along with many human lives. Ugandan initiatives to encourage pastoralists onto farms and to eradicate 'nomadism' have been unsuccessful.

Violence in these borderlands is often attributed to intercommunal conflict, but its root cause is misgovernance: the failure of authorities to work with communities on basic rule of law, and national governments' reliance on a military solution that has consistently shown itself to be ineffective and detrimental.

In the absence of effective protections, homesteads and routes to market have become more prone to armed robbery. Violence against women has increased. Rogue members of the security forces and administrations tap

into cattle-raiding networks. Herders on both sides of the border argue that they need to carry arms to protect themselves: they do not condone breaking laws, but they seek security. Both governments have militarised borderland policing, including arming reservists who become part of the insecurity complex. With little power to challenge the misgovernance, some people take revenge on neighbouring communities suspected of sheltering informers or criminals.

A new disarmament campaign agreed by Ugandan and Kenyan security officials in November 2022 asserted that thousands of Turkana pastoralists from Kenya who were carrying guns inside Karamoja in Uganda should leave or be arrested. Neither government sought community support in determining or implementing this policy. In February 2023, in a cattle camp in Karamoja overseen by the armed forces, 32 herders were charged in a military court with carrying illegal arms and terrorism, and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. In May 2023, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda issued Executive Order #3 of 2023 stipulating that any Turkana herdsman entering Uganda with arms 'must be arrested and charged with terrorism by a Court Martial'. Thousands of Turkana pastoralists moved back to Kenya, even though there was no grazing and a lack of food.

Security is a national rather than sub-national prerogative in both countries. Decisions about how and to what degree to intervene are made by the national military forces in consultation with the respective presidents. The formation and implementation of mutual development pacts are affected by the cooling and warming of relations between the two countries. For instance, negotiations over a draft cross-border natural resource sharing agreement for Turkana and Karamoja, aiming to rationalise cross-border movement and improve security and access to basic services, have been very slow – as described in more detail below. Sub-national arrangements involving Turkana County government and the political/administrative leaders in Karamoja have run up against higher-level politics.

NORTHERN NIGERIA BORDERLANDS

Violent criminality, including armed banditry, cattle raiding and kidnapping for ransom, is a serious problem for many communities in northern Nigeria's borderland areas, where it has grown into a lucrative criminal economy in which illicit wealth derives from ransoms paid for the release of kidnapping victims. Attacks are carried out by gangs and networks between rural and urban areas, and armed gangs work with local informants to target victims. Banditry ranges from small- to large-scale, and gangs up to 50-strong can attack villages and camps in motorbike convoys armed with automatic weapons. Pastoralist communities are prone to being targeted due to the comparatively high value and liquidity of their livestock wealth – cattle can be sold quickly to pay ransoms compared with agricultural outputs. State responses have had very mixed results, and communities in some areas have looked to alternative security providers, such as vigilantes.

In the borderlands of north-east Nigeria and across the wider Chad Basin, the Boko Haram insurgency continues to cause major casualties and displacement of herders and other communities through attacks on villages and camps, raids on livestock and theft of large numbers of cattle and sheep. Criminal and insurgent violence overlaps, as insurgents use the proceeds of raids to fund their armed campaign. The insurgency has survived numerous state interventions over many years. Many thousands of herders have fled insurgent-controlled areas into Cameroon and beyond. Some have chosen to stay in or move to areas controlled by the ISWAP faction (Islamic State in West Africa Province) of Boko Haram, seeing these as comparatively more viable than other regions, including areas controlled by the JASDJ faction (Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad) of Boko Haram, areas controlled by the government, and areas with a higher presence of bandit groups. Pastoralists in XCEPT research in Borno State said that they usually do not report experiences of insurgent violence against them because of the lack of response by state authorities.

Relations among herders, farmers and other communities in borderlands, such as over access to land or water, are mediated through institutions or by individuals and are often peaceful – as discussed below. But they can become strained and deteriorate into violent conflict under certain conditions – such as if stock routes are blocked or grazing reserves diminished, which forces herders to push their animals across farms, destroying crops; or if herders allow their animals to feed on crops. Competition for access to land and water is linked to state neglect, poor policy, population growth, agricultural expansion and climate and ecological fluctuation. Competition is undermining rural communities' resilience, and aggravating tensions between farmers and herders in Nigeria. Different social and political factors can also escalate inter-community conflict, including weak or partial institutions, prejudiced narratives and dysfunctional justice systems. These combined factors have created perceptions of an increasingly hostile environment for pastoralism – both as a *livelihood* and as an *identity*.

A dry watercourse, Turkana.
Karamoja-Turkana Research Team © 2024

State- and donor-led policies and strategies to improve peace and security in borderlands need to engage meaningfully with borderland community networks.

Arrangements and agreements among pastoralists and communities are the cornerstone of peaceful and productive political economies and settlements in borderlands. But these are being strained by militarised policing, anti-insurgency operations and ineffective land management. Donor-led programmes to support inter-communal agreements are prone to breaking down in the face of unresolved crime or human rights violations by security forces.

KARAMOJA AND TURKANA BORDERLANDS

In the Karamoja and Turkana borderlands, pastoralism and inter-community cooperation are key to peaceful and productive political economies and settlements. Karamoja and Turkana culture and society are closely entwined, and people move both ways across the international border – for grazing, water and markets on the Uganda side, and to access services and markets on the Kenya side. Karamoja is at higher elevation than Turkana County, where conditions are drier. Pastoralists from Turkana move every year into Karamoja for grazing, and have done so for as long as people can remember.

In both Turkana and Karamoja, rainfall levels are low and highly variable from year to year and place to place, and are becoming more unpredictable with the climate crisis. Water scarcity and variability are why pastoralism is the dominant mode of production, and why agreements to share access to grazing and water are so important. The extensive grazing system involves mobility across often large distances, for which herders themselves largely maintain their own security arrangements. Cooperation relies on sophisticated cultural, technical and legal (customary law) norms and practices that have evolved historically. These arrangements are highly respected among borderland communities and provide the foundations of a peaceful political settlement that effectively traverses the international border and underpins a functioning borderland economy.

The contrasting national political orders of Kenya and Uganda rub against each other as they attempt to deal with the implications of this cross-border movement. Differences between Kenya and Uganda's political and administrative structures inhibit meaningful interaction on borderland peace and security policy. Neither state has a strong record of good relations between government and citizens, and this governance disjuncture is often starker in remote borderland areas. Both Kenya and Uganda revert to a militarised approach to armed violence in the Turkana and Karamoja borderlands focused on disarming herders, even though this has done little to address the system of violent crime, abuse, suspicion and revenge to which herders are persistently exposed, while removing an important means for herders to protect themselves. State engagement with local systems of justice and policing is complicated by the different cultural foundations on which they are based. These institutions have been rejected by the state and outwardly appear defensive and atavistic; in reality, they are evolving with new influences from younger generations.

NORTHERN NIGERIA BORDERLANDS

Nomadic herders in the borderlands of northern Nigeria and its environs network with other pastoralists and communities to facilitate peaceful coexistence and movement of livestock. Pastoral movements are generally very carefully planned, with scouts sent ahead to assess the conditions along the way and at the intended destination. Pastoralists are widely dispersed and migratory, and maintaining complementary networks is crucial for gathering information and for cooperation. In-person meetings in markets and visits to camps and settlements are complemented by mobile phone contact over longer distances, helping to enable dialogue with pastoral and community leaders, and anticipate and mitigate insecurity or conflict where necessary – for example to find out about grazing conditions and the security situation in destinations and along routes herders are considering migrating to, and to negotiate safe passage.

Farmers and herders in the borderlands of northern Nigeria are not innately in conflict, despite borderland insecurity often being associated with violent fighting between them. Interactions among different pastoralist groups and with sedentary communities are largely peaceful, and migratory herders often move symbiotically among farming communities. Crop agriculture and livestock are interconnected and predominantly complementary – cattle can provide valuable manure, herds often move on from farms before the planting season, and pastoralists inject capital into local rural economies. As discussed elsewhere, tensions arise under particular conditions, circumstances and pressure that destabilise customary borderland political settlements.

Pastoralists experience multiple prejudices that perpetuate, exacerbate and escalate borderland insecurity systems.

Partisan attitudes and narratives inequitably associate pastoralists with insecurity; pastoralists feel disproportionately vulnerable to violence as a result of negligent or partial policies; and women pastoralists suffer discriminatory forms of gendered violence. Prejudices may be structural, or politically motivated and fuelled.

KARAMOJA AND TURKANA BORDERLANDS

In the borderlands of Karamoja and Turkana, pastoralists feel discriminated against and unfairly blamed for insecurity. They have disproportionately experienced violent crime and impoverishment, including as a result of neglectful and exclusionary governance.

Pastoralists are also targeted in policy interventions such as disarmament campaigns implemented by state militaries, which assume pastoralists' responsibility for insecurity. These policies are presented as designed to safeguard communities, but in reality they have failed to provide meaningful security or have undermined it, leaving isolated homesteads unprotected from raiders and communities vulnerable to physical danger.

Women experience discriminatory forms of gendered violence, and women's security is portrayed and understood differently to men's. A female pastoralist in XCEPT research described being raped and robbed on her way back from market, but her predicament was not taken seriously by the authorities. Thus violence is gendered both in its effect and in the official failure to respond. The pastoralist woman in the XCEPT research referred to violent robberies at homesteads, a phenomenon that grew significantly after the disarmament campaigns of the early 2000s.

Women's personhood and symbolic role in community reproduction is at risk as a result of rape. Gendered violence and negligence combine to prevent healing, and family members may react with revenge. Karamoja and Turkana traditional institutions both have a gendered approach to rape – if a woman accuses, her statement alone is considered adequate evidence. Gender equity is more a problem in terms of infantilisation of women being seen as in need of protection. Women are broadly supportive of men in the household carrying arms in defence of their homes and herds, and many also accept that it makes sense to promote revenge and call for counter attacks.

NORTHERN NIGERIA BORDERLANDS

Perceptions that pastoralists are exceptionally involved in or predisposed to violence are prevalent in the borderlands of northern Nigeria. Ethnic Fulani herders, especially young men, are commonly linked to kidnapping and banditry in public and political discourse, which further feeds broader stigmatisation of pastoralists as violent. Many perpetrators of kidnapping and banditry are of Fulani pastoralist descent, but membership of criminal gangs varies widely and is not restricted to pastoralist communities. Moreover, these violent actors represent a small fraction of people from pastoralist backgrounds, and pastoralists are also among the main victims of the violence. Wholesale association of pastoralists with insecurity is inaccurate and divisive, and encourages inflammatory policies, for example regarding land management or security.

Some narratives blame 'foreign' pastoralists for 'importing' insecurity into Nigeria across its borders. XCEPT research found little evidence either of disproportionate links between pastoralism and violence, or of net inward migration of pastoralists into northern Nigeria. Rather, borderland insecurity inside Nigeria is largely generated internally within Nigeria's borders, while there is more movement of pastoralists out of rather than into the country, with pastoralists migrating

from Nigeria to Cameroon and even to the Central African Republic, often in response to insecurity, as they seek more stable and predictable livelihoods elsewhere.

The perception of 'violent foreign herders' is prone to being cultivated and instrumentalised by state or traditional political leaders and authorities, whose interests are served by portraying 'foreign' herders as usurping the rights of local communities as a way to detract from governance failings or to discredit political opponents. Calling into question the citizenship of pastoralists is also a way of questioning their local civic rights, or rights of access to land and water. Such portrayals fuel stigmatisation and alienation of pastoralists, feed into rationalisation of policies aimed at excluding pastoralists politically and at blocking pastoral movement and migration as logical and effective ways to tackle borderland insecurity, and deny internal causes and drivers of insecurity.

Pastoralists' vulnerability to and involvement in insecurity is linked to their political and social exclusion, which further acts as a barrier to finding effective and sustainable policy solutions and accountability to justice.

Authorities in borderlands are seen by many pastoralists as causing or exacerbating rather than mitigating or resolving insecurity and injustice, which enables conflict and hampers peacebuilding and reconciliation.

KARAMOJA AND TURKANA BORDERLANDS

In the borderlands of Karamoja and Turkana, many pastoralists and other communities see the lack of reliable state policing, justice and governance as fundamental to problems of insecurity. XCEPT research provides multiple examples where victims of violence or theft have received little or no assistance from authorities, causing some to arm themselves as a means of protection or to take justice into their own hands.

Many people have been injured and killed in security operations by the Uganda People's Defence Forces, and UPDF 'cordon and search' actions authorise soldiers to kill people suspected of carrying guns illegally. While both Ugandan and Kenyan governments have at times attempted to re-arm dispossessed pastoralists and integrate them into their respective security forces, raiding has continued largely unabated.

The Karamoja–Turkana borderlands have a long history of military interventions going back to colonial times but which continued through independence and the Museveni regime, with large-scale campaigns in the 1960s and 2000s. In recent years, forcible disarmament campaigns have periodically inflicted violence on herders and other communities.

NORTHERN NIGERIA BORDERLANDS

Instability in the borderlands of northern Nigeria is associated with weak or absent institutions – state and customary governance, security and accountability mechanisms. Political marginalisation of communities is pervasive in peripheral rural border regions, and presents particular types of challenge for pastoralists. Pastoralists are spread across large areas and are usually a minority relative to the rest of the population, and their mobility, limited geographical concentration and minority status limits their political participation and representation – most pastoralists living in rural areas still do not have voter cards, for example. Pastoralist community governance and decision-making systems are poorly understood, and attempts to engage pastoralist communities, when they do happen, often go through urban-based, elite pastoralist 'representatives' who lack genuine legitimacy or authority to speak for communities.

Pastoralists are disempowered in decision-making on key issues relating to their security and wellbeing, such as access to land. Grazing reserves in northern Nigeria only support a small percentage of the country's cattle. Grazing land has not been protected by authorities, many stock routes are blocked and water points have not been maintained, creating significant problems for herders and increasing encroachment of livestock onto crops and damaging farms, which contributes to worsening tensions between herders and farmers.

The conflict resolution function of customary governance is also being diminished. Recurrent damage to crops by different herds can go unaccounted for over time, which can lead to a sense of 'cumulative' grievance for farmers who feel they need to be compensated proportionately. But pastoralists complain of excessive fines, and are less and less inclined to engage with customary arbitration processes in which they feel poorly represented. This lack of recourse to seemingly unjust accountability mechanisms allows grudges to develop, which, when left unresolved, can become a precursor to violent conflicts.

Pastoralists and other rural borderland communities have limited access to education, veterinary services and health facilities. Negligent policy, and negligible implementation or investment on these issues reduces communities' life chances and undermines livelihood diversification, with particular consequences for young people. For young pastoralists, these 'opportunity barriers' intersect with other threats to traditional pastoralist livelihoods within an increasingly hostile social, political and climatic environment that is limiting their capacity to move and graze livestock safely. Rural development projects that do exist rarely include pastoralist youth, who are hard to access and are not well-represented within pastoralist communities and networks. Lack of opportunity can be a factor in increased youth vulnerability to resort to violence as a means of livelihood.

A female elder calls for unity at Kalosarich, Karamoja.
Karamoja-Turkana Research Team © 2024

Ineffective state security in many borderland areas means that some communities have looked to vigilante groups to provide protection. Vigilante groups have been active in identifying and confronting kidnappers, and have mounted effective responses in some areas. But their performance is highly variable, and vigilantes can also inflict serious harm and exacerbate divisions. A notorious vigilante group in Taraba State in north-east Nigeria is accused of stealing cattle and killing innocent people on the basis of their ethnic or clan identity. Heavy-handed and discriminatory vigilante behaviour can encourage communities to arm themselves for self-defence, and reprisal violence by other vigilante groups.

Pastoralists' community networks and mobility have proved adaptable in response to challenges of climate change and environmental pressure which are negatively affecting their security, wellbeing and livelihoods.

This capacity to adapt highlights the value of mobility and community networking as a basis for peaceful and sustainable borderland political economies.

TURKANA AND KARAMOJA BORDERLANDS

Water in the Turkana and Karamoja borderlands is scarce, and mutual and safe access to grazing and water operates through a cooperative system of agreements and internally organised security. Communities in these borderlands today identify shifting challenges related to climate change, describing how wet and dry seasons have changed, and that rainfall is becoming ever more patchy.

In northern Uganda, Matheniko and Jie communities have shown generosity towards Turkana bringing herds out of the much dryer land of Turkana West into wetter Karamoja. This contemporary manifestation of an ancient practice shows how cooperation has a basis in climate, and how strategies for adapting to climate change can draw on these networks and relations.

Pastoralist mobility and capability for making natural resource sharing agreements is an adaptive response to low, variable and changing rainfall patterns. Climate-responsive mobility can include moving to more distant pastures to protected dry-season grazing reserves, negotiating with neighbouring pastoralists for access to their reserves, and distributing small stock among extended family.

Other techniques include exchanging grain for stock with farmers, drying milk, and collecting bush foods, increasing the number of times that a herd moves, splitting the herd into more smaller sections and scattering them to different locations, or keeping a smaller herd and relying on other sources of livelihood, including cropping or food aid, or selling animals to buy imported food in markets.

NORTHERN NIGERIA BORDERLANDS

Changes in climate and ecology are impacting pastoralism and agriculture in northern Nigeria's borderlands. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, increasing the intensity of heat, and affecting the availability of water in the late dry season especially (February–March). Rainfall has become more erratic, with a later start to the rainy season and breaks for weeks at a time after the onset of the first rains. Some areas have seen a prolongation of the rainy season and greater variation in the distribution and volume of rainfall. Climatic changes impact agricultural yields, the varieties of crops that farmers plant and the timing of the agricultural cycle, and influence transhumance movements such as through water stress and lack of pasture in the late dry season.

Pastoralists' mobility allows them to respond to unpredictable and patchy rainfall and to move their herds to where there is available pasture and water. Mobility is a key adaptation of herders to variability and seasonality in climate and vegetation. By moving their livestock, herders can take advantage of grazing areas that would not sustain them on a permanent basis but which are suitable as seasonal pastures in the wet or dry season. Changes in patterns of mobility need to be managed and negotiated with affected communities so that scarcity in one area does not translate into encroachment onto cropland or conservation areas in another. Also, pastoral mobility is currently perceived in Nigeria as a problem that needs to be mitigated – as part of a policy push for increased sedentarisation – rather than as a potential solution to climate change vulnerability.

Priorities for peace and security

This section summarises priority areas to improve peace and security for pastoralists in borderlands, working in partnership with other communities and with local and international partners. XCEPT evidence shows how lack of meaningful agency in politics and governance is an overarching root cause of insecurity for pastoralists, and that increasing their political agency is key to better security.

Pastoralists have important 'horizontal' political networks and capabilities among other communities across borders and in borderlands. Pastoralist spokespeople and community institutions have an inherent interest, capacity and experience in working 'horizontally' across borders, and a long history of resilient and adaptive cooperation on which to build.

Pastoralist communities need to achieve greater 'vertical' political agency to participate meaningfully in policy discussions and decisions that affect their security and wellbeing. Pastoralists' experience and capacity to exert influence upwards through administrative and political systems that are often highly uncoordinated and may cross jurisdictional boundaries is very limited, and they face structural barriers such as political exclusion, social prejudice and adverse policies. Pastoralist communities can bolster their political influence through working in concert.

Relations between pastoralists and their own elites in government and politics are crucial interactions for attention and support – at sub-national level, and with their political representatives operating in the national capitals. Pastoralists' horizontal and vertical political agency needs to function in concert, to enable peaceful and functional borderland political settlements and economies. Engagement with local and international partners, donors and others can help achieve the critical mass of community voice and inclusion that is needed for sustained peace.

Sub-national governments and national security bodies should prioritise enhancing formal collaboration with community institutions to co-design and co-implement security, justice, and development policies and interventions. International donors and civil society should fund long-term programmes that support communities to represent themselves at scale, at multiple levels of government from local to bilateral to regional. With the support of the people and their informal institutions, states could minimise the need for militarised borderlands.

How pastoralists and other communities in borderlands are represented in policy and programme documents, executive orders, and media coverage needs to be more balanced and evidence-based. The citizenship, resourcefulness, productivity, and institutional capacity of pastoralists and borderland populations needs to be safeguarded. Messages and policies need to be aimed at promoting social cohesion, and ensure that they 'do no harm' in inciting politicised division.

Sustainable solutions to insecurity challenges depend on pastoralists and other communities and their institutions being able to work formally at technical and political levels. This is key to institutions being responsive to communities' needs and priorities, and able to develop appropriate policies that can address real problems in ways that support viable and peaceful political settlements and economies in borderlands. Community knowledge and action could help deliver better and safer cross-border mobility, for example replacing failed military solutions with civilian policing, justice, and development.

Civil society and international actors are well-positioned to help pastoralists and other communities expand their analysis, organisation and representation. Support is needed locally as well as at national and regional levels. They could back communities in upholding rights in the face of powerful forces aimed at extracting wealth or exercising political interests in borderland areas.

BOX 2: THE CROSS-BORDER RESOURCE SHARING AGREEMENT, KARAMOJA AND TURKANA BORDERLANDS – POTENTIAL AND LIMITS FOR STRENGTHENING PASTORALIST COMMUNITY AGENCY

Analysis here presents a synopsis of a case study from XCEPT East Africa research which is featured in Part 2. It shows how communities were able to participate in negotiations over a Cross-Border Resource Sharing Agreement during the research fieldwork, in part as a result of their involvement in the XCEPT research process. The case study illustrates how borderland peace and security policies are negotiated, and how more concerted community action and engagement can provide a pathway towards greater community agency. But it also exposes the limits of community access to the formal policy arena and the need for more concerted engagement.

Borderlands politics and policy are key to peace and security for herder and other communities. Politics and policy are devised and decided through formal and informal engagements and institutions of law, order, rights, investment and accountability. These are negotiated between different interests, countries, and levels of administration.

Pastoralists do not have easy access to or influence over political and policy deliberations. Collective lobbying by community members and leaders can help to increase communities' agency in policymaking about local peace and security, but the limits of what this can achieve become apparent.

Herder communities engaged in various dialogues with Kenyan and Ugandan state and military authorities at different levels between February 2022 and February 2023. These built on XCEPT participatory, action research methodology, led by IDS and its local research partners. Discussions focused on borderland peace security policies aimed at disarming herders. From herders' perspective, discussions had decidedly mixed results, but they represented important experience in defining their own security priorities, working collaboratively and engaging with state authorities.

In February 2023, attention shifted to negotiating a Cross-Border Resource Sharing Agreement in order to outline routes, maps and modalities of natural resource-sharing between Karamoja, Turkana and Pokot pastoralists moving across the Kenya-Uganda border. Participation in the initial meeting to set up the process did not include direct community representation, but pastoralists were encouraged and felt that a well-articulated and -managed agreement could do much to improve conditions on both sides of the border.

A civil society group was invited to provide technical information for the agreement. The group was led by a local NGO involved in the XCEPT research. It was given very little time to consult properly with communities, and few of its contributions made their way into the agreement itself. But it succeeded in persuading the drafters that the agreement should be discussed by communities before it was signed.

Negotiations

Communities were unhappy that their involvement in negotiations was limited to three separate community consultations, one for each major group – Karamojong, Turkana and Pokot. They argued that community members and leaders (women, elders and youth) should engage directly and concurrently with deliberations by the military, security and political elite.

Kenyan and Ugandan state security priorities dominated the negotiations, rather than focusing on enabling sharing resources between cross-border pastoral communities: for Uganda, to maintain progress in disarmament; and for Kenya, to control incursions on its borders and promote the mobility of Kenyan pastoralists into Karamoja. Discussions also looked at enabling exploitation of the mineral resource wealth of Karamoja and building up agriculture (Uganda), and exploiting energy wealth in Turkana (Kenya).

Pastoralist leaders understood the limitations of the process and looked for opportunities for influence. Some senior government participants seemed to understand and acknowledge pastoralists' priorities, and the importance and modalities of mobility. But pastoralists were sceptical that their priorities would prevail more broadly, for example against the interests of President Museveni, an executive order from whom explicitly sought to see an end to pastoralism in the area. They were also wary of NGO advocacy for their cause, which risks displacing them from influencing negotiations directly.

continued...

Agreement

The absence of organised community representation in the negotiations was reflected in the lack of communities' priorities in their outcomes. Issues of peace, security and mobility in a communique and the draft of an agreement that emerged from the negotiations were of relevance to communities. But community voices and institutions needed to be much more involved.

Many provisions of the draft agreement that emerged from negotiations have nothing to do with, or may undermine, sharing resources between pastoralist communities. Several draft provisions are based on a flawed understanding of transhumance, and some risk contravening international human rights norms and even national laws and policies.

The draft agreement ascribes cross-border mobility to an 'involuntary' consequence of climate change. Evidence from community research and satellite analysis shows an increase in the frequency and extent of mobility in response to changing rainfall patterns. But water has always been scarce and rainfall variable in this cross-border area, and so seasonal mobility has always been an aspect of pastoralism there. Climate change is not *causing* pastoralist mobility, but it is causing it to *change*.

The draft agreement allows state parties to provide for 'urgent' and 'transitional' arrangements for free, safe and orderly movement for 15 years. This presumes that after 15 years pastoralism will have transformed into commercial agriculture and there will no longer be any need for mobility. Pastoralists support transformation in their livelihoods and economy but want an approach that is grounded in rights and respect for their culture, indigenous knowledge and institutions – including mobility. Kenya's policy differs from Uganda's, and recognises pastoralism as a legitimate production and livelihood system.

The draft agreement refers to collective punishment for communities of perpetrators of cattle rustling. This draws on customary law, but only applies if communities are in control of the justice process. It is contrary to international human rights resolutions, and national constitutional and penal laws, and its practical application is doubtful.

The draft agreement provides for transhumance corridors to be overseen by joint civil administration and security forces. But transhumance corridors are ecosystems, not roads or paths, and hence not amenable to being overseen in this way.

The draft agreement provides for establishing and enforcing a movement plan for 'maximum' periods of departure and return of migrating pastoralists. But migration periods and patterns are dependent on weather patterns that are increasingly unpredictable due to climate change, and so pastoralist resource sharing agreements are necessarily open-ended.

The draft agreement refers to supporting commercial agriculture. Pastoralists are concerned that the interests of commercial agriculture are likely to cause them to lose livelihoods.

Pastoralist community agency

A year after they were scheduled, two of the three community consultations had yet to take place. The process may have been superseded by disarmament priorities and events, and the draft agreement is likely to take a long time to navigate relevant ministries at national and sub-national level of both Kenya and Uganda.

Pastoralist community leaders embraced participatory action research as a springboard for political organisation and engagement – for example in meetings with political, administrative and military leaders on both sides of the border. Community leaders were able to confidently present strong evidence and arguments about causes and effects of insecurity, including as a result of their exclusion from decision-making. In return, in some meetings state officials were able to talk frankly about problems of military overreach, administrative corruption, and failures of justice and policing, in creating fertile conditions for violence. But multiple barriers to more meaningful influence over the process were clear.

PART 2:
East Africa case study

KARAMOJA–TURKANA COMMUNITY RESEARCH:
'Peace is not the absence of crime, but how crime is dealt with'

Asiyo Jeremiah, Ayepio Elim, Ayoo Florence, Alastair Scott-Villiers, Charity Amei, Edukio Namoe Margaret, Ekaale Epakan, Ewoton Lominamoe, Ichor Imana, Ikal Ang'elei, Ilukol Manasseh, Irine Iria Erupe, Lodukui Francis, Lomol Rhainer Koryang Ajie, Loru Echor, Losike Emanman, Michael Odhiambo, Patta Scott-Villiers, Sagal Tioko, Simon Akol Wajao, Simon Lobur, Simon Longoli, Thomas Ekidor Kiyong'a, Vicky Abura.
See end of article for biographical details of contributors.

Communities of Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda and Turkana in north-western Kenya live with continuous insecurity, including large-scale and frequent cattle raiding, armed robbery, rape, and human rights abuses. Efforts by communities, governments, and civil society organisations over decades have repeatedly failed to bring protection and justice to the people of these borderlands.

This case study presents the analysis of researchers from the communities, engaging with their own people as well as with officials and civil society actors, and with support from research methodologists and civil society leaders. It helps explain the origins of the system of insecurity, how it works, whom it hurts, whom it benefits, and how it is sustained. It argues for a new approach to solving the problem.

The researchers explain the action research methodology they used and argue that it has enabled people from within the borderland communities not only to see the issues more systematically, but to convey them more powerfully and with greater determination to be heard. Although insecurity in Karamoja, Turkana and neighbouring territories has been extensively researched, this is the first comprehensive study done by community for community, pursuing questions about dangers that they have lived with for a long time. They make their analysis and draw their conclusions from discussions with hundreds of men and women in the rangelands and settlements of Eastern Karamoja and Western Turkana. The researchers are Turkana, Jie and Karamojong. They consider themselves to be members of an *Ateker* (people of one language, living adjacent to one another, with ancestors and laws in common), which includes Jie, Karamojong (Bokora, Pian and Matheniko), Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom and Teso peoples, whose territories span the borderland of north-eastern Uganda, north-western Kenya, south-eastern South Sudan, and south-western Ethiopia (Webster, 1973).

The research was commissioned by Conciliation Resources as part of the Cross-border Conflict, Evidence, Policy, and Trends (XCEPT) research programme, a multi-year activity funded by UK International Development from the UK Government. The XCEPT programme seeks to shed light on insecure borderlands, how conflicts and insecurity connect across borders, and the drivers of violent and peaceful behaviour.

This study is part of a series commissioned by XCEPT to understand changes to cross-border pastoral movements in Africa and the implications these have for peace and security. Community organisations Friends of Lake Turkana (FOLT) and Karamoja Development Forum (KDF) facilitated the study and the Institute of Development Studies provided methodological guidance. IDS and KDF had worked together using the same methodology to support 23 young people in Karamoja to research and find solutions to youth issues in 2013.

The context is a dryland territory inhabited by a majority population of mobile pastoralist cattle keepers. With the shifting availability of pasture and water that characterises a semi-arid environment with ever-more variable rainfall,[1] the pastoralists herd their cattle over hundreds of kilometres of unfenced rangelands. Turkana County lies in a long valley whose topography creates peculiarly dry conditions. Its border with Uganda runs along a spine of hills that marks the boundary of the higher elevation Karamoja. A satellite image of the borderland, taken in the height of the dry season of 2022, shows how much drier Turkana to the east is than Karamoja to the west (Figure 1). This climatic difference explains why pastoralists from Turkana move every year into Karamoja for grazing and have done so for as long as people can remember. Turkana culture and society is closely entwined with that of the people of Karamoja. People move both ways across the international border for grazing, water, and markets on the Uganda side, and to access services and markets on the Kenya side. The two states and their contrasting political orders rub together as they attempt to deal with the implications of this movement.

The challenge for pastoralists and governments alike is how to provide security to people and their livestock, which are highly mobile high-value assets.[2] To arrive at workable solutions, the concerned parties need new insights into the system of violence, and they need

FIGURE 1: RESEARCH AREA
Modified Copernicus Sentinel data 2023 – Sentinel Hub.
Data sourced by Satellite Catapult.

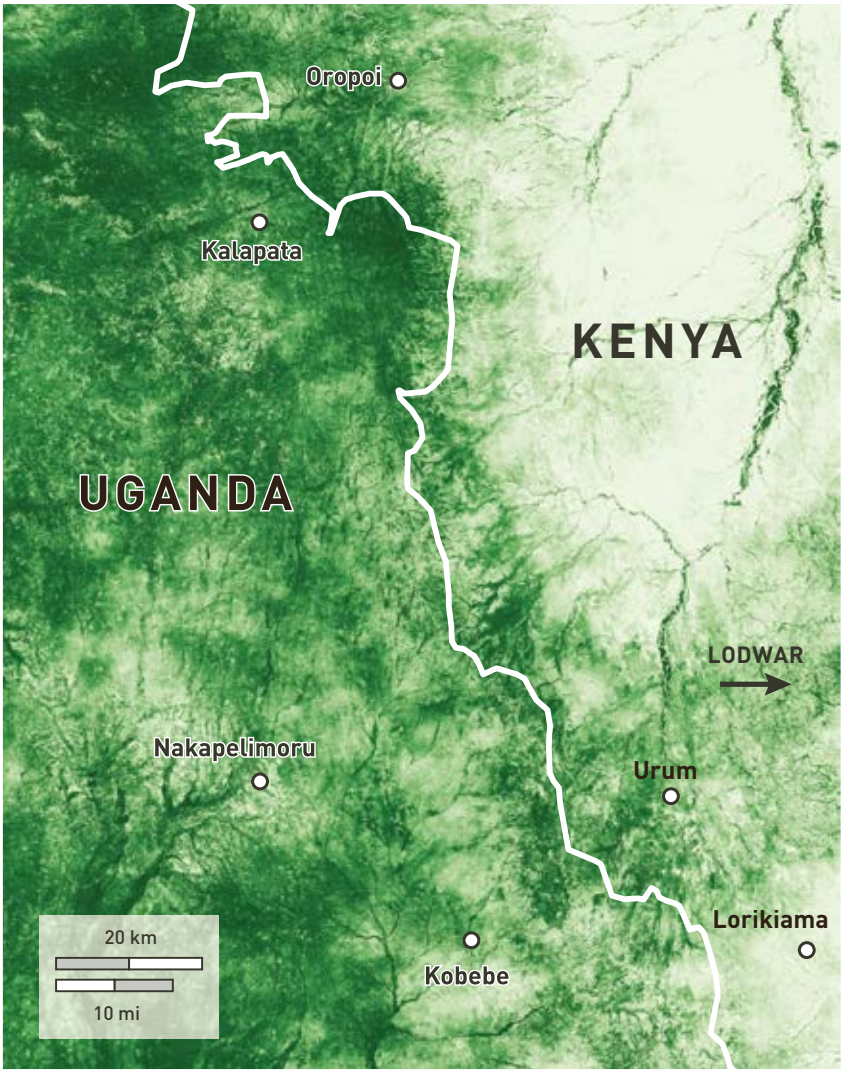


Figure 1 visualises vegetation health through use of the normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI). Green indicates the presence of healthier vegetation whereas white corresponds to barren areas of rock or sand.

these understandings to be widely agreed. However, despite decades of effort at solving the problem and considerable amounts of research, there are significant differences of opinion as to the primary causes of the insecurity and therefore how it should be addressed.

Researchers have highlighted arms flows, inter-community raiding, pastoralist mobility, commercial raiding, youth impoverishment, competition for natural resources, boundary disputes and problems of justice. Many of these studies have shed useful light on different and profound aspects of the problem, and this case study draws upon these sources to complement and triangulate the community analysis.

The Ugandan government emphasises the dangers posed by mobile nomadic populations carrying guns and having a tradition of livestock raiding. Its solution is disarmament and the introduction of settled livelihoods. Kenyan officials also focus on the presence of guns and the link to banditry. Peacebuilding NGOs tend to emphasise conflict between communities as a major driver of insecurity and promote conflict resolution, convening community meetings and agreements.

In this research, Karamoja and Turkana pastoralists argue that none of the actors, whether governments, civil society, the pastoralists themselves or the international community, has fully understood the interlocking workings of the problem. They describe how weak governance has allowed criminality to grow. Their criticism is levelled above all at the disarmament campaigns carried out by both the Ugandan and Kenyan armed forces. Violent in themselves, they also leave people and herds vulnerable while fuelling fear and division and giving a disproportionate degree of power to armed actors.

As one young female community researcher put it, 'it seems as if the government does not want us to be at peace. It looks like our peace will be interfering with their peace.'

Definitions

One of the important aspects of action research is that it is those people who have a problem to solve who define the research questions that will elicit understanding and action. With support from the Institute of Development Studies in how to carry out rigorous action research, the community researchers began by observing and discussing with members of their own communities the meaning of peace and security among different people in the society to establish the scope of opinion as to what needed to be remedied.

Karamojong and Turkana people embody in their actions and words the kind of peace and security they most value and wish could be better appreciated by those who govern them. They enact what Roger McGinty (2021) calls 'everyday peace', a mode by which they preserve such order and mutuality as they can, despite the provocations of violent circumstances largely beyond their control.[3] Everyday peace may suggest something small-scale, but it is not. It is the aggregation of everything that the people care about and work for – their families, friends, places of production and meeting, ways of life, and the agreements and institutions they make and respect to secure and manage these vital things (MacGinty and Richmond, 2013). These everyday concerns influence people's contributions to and appreciation of how they are governed.

People explain what they want to keep safe (people, animals, homes, and belongings), the environment they wish to protect (such as grasslands, water sources, forests, sacred sites, roads, markets, schools, and health facilities) and the social arrangements that they strive to maintain (including mutual aid, hospitality, shared resources, policing, justice, and leadership). They explain the different priorities of women, young people and older men. Herders say that they feel most secure when the animals of different pastoralist groups are grazing close to one another and when their kraals (enclosures for herds at night) are close. Each protects the other. Before moving to the home territory of another group, most herder leaders negotiate access by sending envoys and making agreements. To graze and water their herds safely, they need sound agreements for sharing natural resources among one another within and across borders and they need trustworthy means of protecting their families and herds from depredation. They hope for a homestead where women, children and older people are safe, and where their belongings (which are few and often precious) are respected. They wish to move along a road freely and without fear of injury, rape, or theft. They want to sell to or buy from traders in ways that are fair, so they want to know that what and how they buy and sell is regulated and safe. They want to be able to give hospitality without fear that their visitors will harm, rob, or betray them. All this means they need to have trust in the systems of policing and justice that prevail. And, at the root, they want the security that comes with being valued and respected and having and enjoying rights as citizens of Kenya, Uganda, and the East African Community.

The next section explains the method of community action research and argues for its unique and useful contribution. The case study then moves on to exploring the historic and contemporary manifestations of insecurity. Pastoralists explain how different insecurities have consolidated and intersected over time and across borders to lock in a violent system. The problem analysis then takes us into the policy space, exploring how citizens and the two states come into engagement, contention and inertia in addressing insecurity. In conclusion, the community researchers propose a new overall analysis based on understanding the problem as a breakdown of trust between all the key actors in the system of governance.

Research method

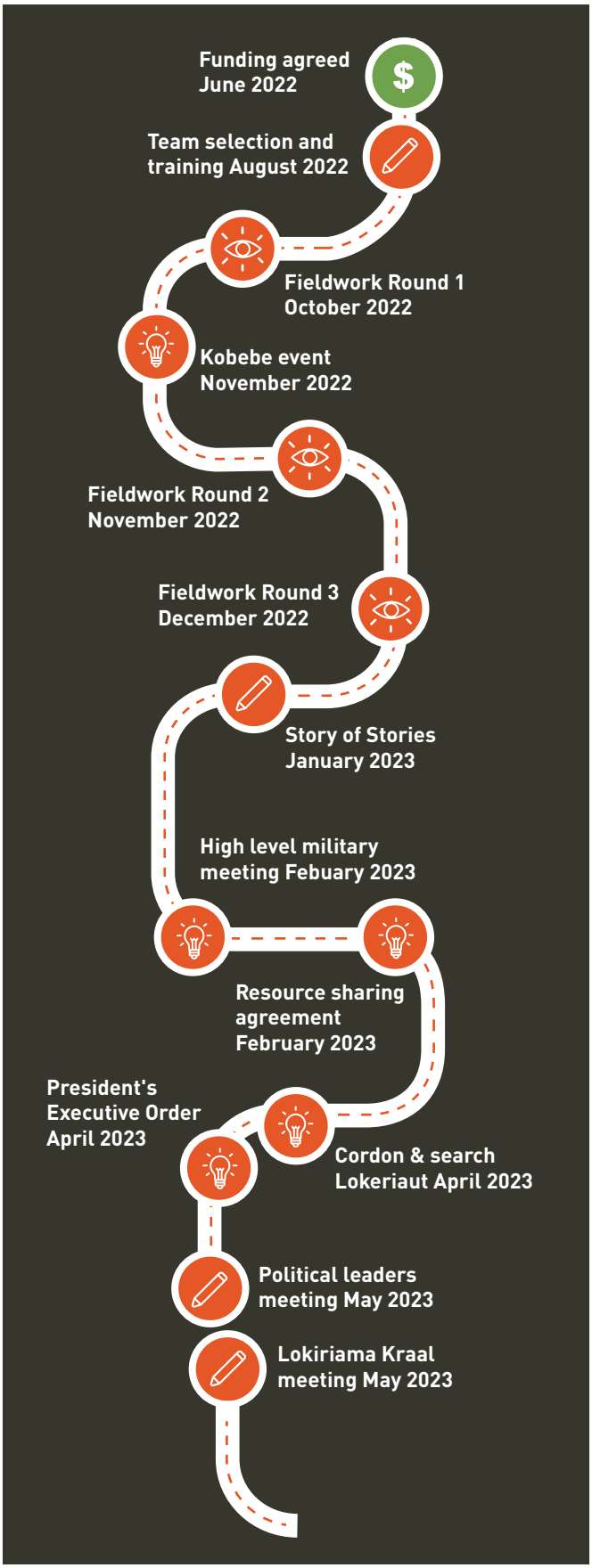
Community action research works because those who are affected by an issue are at the centre of decisions about how it is researched (Bryden Miller et al., 2003). When done well, it generates trustworthy, useful and relevant findings which often are contribute to improving relationships in a society, political system or organisation (Bradbury and Reason, 2001). The rationale is that the questions and findings generate workable solutions because those who are embroiled in an issue take a step back and apply informed logic to its analysis (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). This is especially the case where the issues that need to be investigated involve the volatile mix of suffering and power that characterises violent insecurity.

> **We are men and women, youth, and elders, from town and kraal, formally and traditionally educated. On the Turkana side we are from Loima and Turkana West Sub-counties. On the Karamoja side we are from Kotido, Nakapiripirit, Napak and Moroto. Local organisations Karamoja Development Forum and Friends of Lake Turkana supported by Institute of Development Studies invited us to form community research teams to help find solutions to insecurity. Over eight months we have been researching the insecurity faced by our communities. This research is different from other research, as we are community members. (Young male researcher).**

The knowledge generated from community action research is 'vital to the well-being of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of larger-scale democratic social change' (Bryden-Miller et al., 2003). It is in this light that the researchers worked with their own communities to generate an analytical overview of the issues they face. The intended audiences for this work are the communities themselves, those who govern them and those that seek to support them. The community teams hope that non-pastoralist audiences hearing the messages will gain new insight into a system of disorder that has been much studied, yet seldom fully understood. As members of government, civil and bilateral agencies, we are all part of the governance system that the pastoralists are criticising. Even as primary responsibility for a failure of governance must be laid at the door of government, secondary responsibility lies with those of us in civil society if we get in the way of accountable relations between citizens and their governments.

The method is ethnographic and emphasises diversity. It uses storytelling by diverse people as a means of exploring key events, understanding interactions, and elucidating their salience. Storytelling is a mode of communication and learning that is fitting to the culture in the region, and at the same time has important ethnographic pedigree (Falconi and Graber, 2019).

FIGURE 2:
KARAMOJA-TURKANA COMMUNITY RESEARCH TIMELINE



It is often the case with action research that outsider research professionals assist insiders who want to lead change, and that has been the approach here (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). Being both locally and internationally trustworthy, the research approach offers a bridge between people and policy: showing the vital understanding of people on the ground about the workings of the problem they face, while also including the insights of people across the governance system and offering points of debate and convergence.

In June 2022, FOLT and KDF sent out messages to communities in Karamoja and Turkana, inviting women, men, and youth to join the research. Candidates needed to be part of communities in the study area and interested to take part in the research, not as research assistants, but as research leaders. IDS gave 40 candidates a week of action research training at FOLT's airy meeting house in Lodwar, Turkana, and FOLT and KDF selected 16 for the research. The selected researchers were a mix of formally and traditionally schooled community members, some urban, some rural, some elders, some youths, a mix of women and men, coming from different parts of the study area and having different livelihoods, predominantly pastoralist. This diversity of membership is essential to success, since each team member brings a capability and a perspective on the issues under discussion, and connections with diverse actors in the spectrum of people and institutions with understanding of the issues. Once the community members had started researching, the IDS team returned frequently to support multiple rounds of analysis and continue the training based on questions arising from each iteration of question, encounter, and interpretation.

The teams designed what to do in the first round. They began by identifying their research question. After much debate they settled on a question that would open explanation of insecurity and conflict in a way that is fitting with their own culture of knowledge exchange. They chose: *how is the peace here*? They then set out on what was to be four iterative rounds of research, each building on the last. They were uncertain at first, since all they had seen of research was that it was externally designed and left little room for local construction. It wasn't until they were out in the rangelands and settlements, with their question, that they began to realise the potential that the research held for them and their communities. The community researchers secured permission from men and women community leaders to hold discussions and develop analysis before moving on to speaking to others. They made commitments to return to validate the analysis and discuss the implications of the findings with all the people they met. They addressed researcher and participant security as a continuous process: agreeing the ethical and risk mitigating approach, securing commitments from IDS, KDF and FOLT in relation to dissemination, publication, travel and resources and discussing with community leaders each time they visited. Their research plans were also subject to an institutional ethics process by IDS.

The difference between a storytelling approach with an open question and a semi-structured focus group or interview approach became clear. Storytelling needs only one relevant question to get it going. It widens the scope, thus risking diluting the focus, but it rejects nothing.

> **In the research we found many people who value the lives of the people and the animals. We will tell you the things that we heard. We will also show the value of this kind of research. I have admired how we have managed to research what people have told us about the challenges they face and about how pastoralists can work on them from our strengths. We have been speaking about these things, we are now aware of our own community story, and of the stories of all the communities. We can find solutions. (Older male researcher)**

Behind the question 'how is the peace?' lay questions that interlocutors answered in their stories without being asked directly, such as: what do we mean by peace? What good things does it afford? How is it kept here? Why is it not being kept? What are the effects of climate, politics, society, or the actions of customary institutions, security forces the administration and NGOs? 'Peace and security,' they realised, meant *safe lives, lands, and livelihoods*, but it also meant *good relations within and between communities and with authorities*.

> **Although many people are upset, angry or tired of the insecurity, they spoke to us willingly. We are researching things that we know. The people trust us to raise their voice. It is our role as community researchers to be impartial and take the stories as we heard them, and not to take sides. There are stories of suffering, pain, and weakness. There are also stories of strength, struggling, managing, and sharing resources. Some of the challenges are defeated when we recognise our strengths. (Younger female researcher)**

Each tour of fieldwork on both sides of the border was followed by an analysis meeting, involving retelling pastoralists' stories, comparing, and enriching a combined analysis with all the different perspectives gained. To develop an analytical overview, the teams created a 'Story of Stories' which they built on at each meeting, wherein they tried to encompass the different viewpoints and pull out the key messages. After each analysis session, they went back to the communities to 'fatten' it with more detail, in a way that fitted with the culture of storytelling in Turkana and Karamoja. They checked and re-articulated the key messages.

The last round of data collection and analysis involved validation and dissemination of the messages. The researchers took the findings to communities and, with community leaders, into the policy arena, seeking to inform and influence, while at the same time continuing their investigation about how politics and policy was contributing to insecurity. They presented the authorities in Uganda and Kenya with evidence and arguments for improving security and cross-border relations. In this phase they encountered and built relations with military officers, members of the administrations and civil society at levels all the way up to the regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IDS led on writing up the findings, producing briefing notes and an illustrated report (Karamoja Turkana Research Team, 2023) designed for use by the communities in their engagement with one another and government.[4] A weekly online meeting of the team leaders with the three international analysts/research methodologists was another part of the analysis and a forum for discussing and agreeing methodological adaptation.

The next section presents evidence on and analysis of insecurity on the ground. It begins with a brief history of insecurity and disarmament interventions drawing on the literature, before turning to the communities' descriptions of the impacts of the violence and their understandings of how it works. While most of the evidence and all the analysis presented is from the communities and the community teams, we also refer to other research, media coverage, satellite data analysis and policy material where it adds historical depth, geographical scope, or gives us insight into policy arenas to which the community has less access. This is followed by a section that analyses interaction of community members, community researchers and authorities over a period of several months in the light of this new comprehensive view of the problem. This was the 'action' part of the action research, wherein community members (including researchers) opened new pathways for solving the problems of violence and insecurity through dialogue and challenge. In so doing they found their understanding and analysis deepening and becoming ever more concrete and focused.

Pages from *One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back*, a report produced by the Karamoja Turkana Research Team with an innovative visual layout designed for community members who read and who do not read, to share among themselves and to use when discussing the issues of their security to government and others.

Interlocking insecurities

> **Until the government understands why people need to have guns, they will continue focusing on conflict, which is the wrong side to solve this insecurity. Even after the disarmament, theft did not stop. Arrows and eventually the gun re-emerged. Let us focus more on the criminal. (Karamoja Official)**

A brief history of insecurity and disarmament in Karamoja and Turkana

The current pattern of insecurity has its roots in the late nineteenth century when Swahili, Arab, Persian, and European traders came to Karamoja and Turkana to purchase ivory from pastoralists who hunted elephant for food (Barber, 1962). As demand grew and supply dwindled, traders offered livestock in payment and threw in guns to sweeten the deals. In the first years of the twentieth century, British colonial powers, encountering these armed populations, began a process of violent 'pacification' (Sana and Oloo, 2019). Rather than controlling trade and traders, the new authorities saw their task as controlling local populations.

Pastoralist oral history and archival material refer to large-scale state military intervention at several points throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, beginning with a northern patrol of the King's African Rifles, which 'pacified the tribes' westwards from the Nile in 1911, followed in 1918 by campaigns across Turkana, one of which saw thousands of Turkana killed and over 250,000 animals seized (Lamphear, 1976). This mode of militarised security is still resonant today in both Karamoja and Turkana. The military interventions did dampen cattle raids and intercommunal wars in the years following each intervention but failed to establish a system of law and order that communities deemed legitimate. None of the pastoralist communities gave up arms or ceased to engage in violence (Knighton, 2003).

In 1961, as part of preparations for Ugandan independence, the Bataringaya Committee report on Karamoja security recommended military methods to resolve persistent violent raiding, continuing a well-established pattern. After independence, the 1964 Administration of Justice (Karamoja) Act created special rules for courts in Karamoja, reducing normally strict rules for admissibility of evidence and juries. Commenting on these developments 30 years later in 1992, Mahmoud Mamdani defined 'a general tendency to treat Karamoja as a warzone and reject the use of democratic methods' (Oloka-Onyango et al., 1993).

In 2001, President Museveni deployed the Uganda People's Defence Forces under the national military command structure to disarm Karamoja, using a voluntary surrender approach. By 2002 the campaign had netted some 8,000 guns, which was deemed inadequate, and a forcible campaign was instituted. In 2005 the Uganda government designed the Karamoja Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP). Under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office, it pursued a coercive approach to the surrender of arms, while offering some level of army protection for disarmed civilians, and development interventions that would lift them out of the poverty (Government of Uganda, 2007).

The stories told by pastoralists about how this disarmament was done in practice are almost the same as those being told today (Knighton, 2003):

> **The Jie armies are immobilised, because of the Disarmament Programme. If suspected of having a gun, then one has to produce it and receive a certificate, but that leads to further harassment and the certificate being taken. Failure to produce a gun on demand means a beating with batons, sticks, or whips. Information is sought of others. Jie have been killed like that. If someone runs with a gun, he is shot.**
>
> **The government has harassed us. The authorities claimed that someone in the settlement had a gun, or a uniform, and they fired their guns and took his animals to the barracks. He was supposed to bring that gun and get back the cows. When he complained he didn't have a gun, they put him in a container with bees which sting him. The army doesn't follow stolen cows far, they find any cows, and take them instead.**

At the time, many of the surrendered guns were redistributed to local defence units (LDUs), formed of disarmed young men who would provide local policing under Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) command. Development activities did not start until at least 2008 and were not only several steps behind the military operation but also largely inadequate. They were designed to settle the mobile pastoralist in alternative livelihoods, an approach that worked as a stopgap for dispossessed herders, but only until they could restock (Stites and Abakwai, 2010).

As had been the pattern for a century, disarmament-related livestock losses were extremely high. Protection of those who had given up arms was also inadequate. Data from the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) shows that during 2006, while disarmament was under way, livestock raiding inside Karamoja increased by some 40 per cent, not due to increased cross-border raiding from Kenyan raiders who had avoided disarmament, but due to increased crime within Karamoja itself. Relations between the pastoralists and the Ugandan army hit a new low (Karamoja Action Research Team and Scott-Villiers, 2013).

The Government of Kenya also initiated a round of disarmament in Turkana in the early 2000s but, like its counterpart in Karamoja, the voluntary surrender approach was unsuccessful (Sana and Oloo, 2019). It was followed by a short coercive effort in 2006. At the time, the UPDF disarmament operation had not yet begun, and many Turkana warriors crossed with their herds (some 60,000 head of cattle) into Karamoja to avoid having to hand over guns. Then, when the UPDF operation began in Karamoja, the Turkana returned to Kenya (ibid). Over the period, the Government of Kenya equipped local Turkana pastoralists with arms and organised them under the Kenya Police Reserve system, which mirrored the Ugandan LDUs (Bevan, 2008).

In 2006 the UPDF introduced a 'protected kraal' system whereby cattle were brought to enclosures inside the perimeter of army bases to be protected overnight from raiders. Though officially abandoned in 2009, the system continues to this day and is used by those pastoralists who have no other form of protection. Persisting for so long, the protected kraal system changed the lives of Karamoja and Turkana pastoralists inside Karamoja, reducing their mobility and shifting the power to protect livestock into the hands of the UPDF and away from young men and women. It also left homesteads, and in particular women and the elderly, unprotected and vulnerable (Stites and Abakwai, 2010).

By 2010 most of the Karamoja and Turkana pastoralists were disarmed and had lost the greater part of their livestock. Between 2010 and 2019 an uneasy peace prevailed. Many young people at the time had to take up artisanal mining and road construction to restock (Karamoja Action Research Team and Scott-Villiers, 2013). At first there were few major raids because there were few livestock left to take. Instead, there were reports of rising thefts and assaults on unprotected homesteads in both Turkana and Karamoja (Stites and Marshak, 2016). Increasing numbers of *lonetia*, 'armed young men who steal', took the opportunity to raid disarmed pastoralist households, while others acted as middlemen moving stolen cattle to local markets (Eaton, 2010). Many of these young men had themselves lost livestock during the disarmament programme; others felt it was an easy way to gain assets (Stites and Marshak, 2016). According to the herders, the only option to protect the herds and homesteads was to re-arm.

By 2023, armed raiding and assaults were once again widespread, civilians had re-armed, and the UPDF was ordered to resume disarmament operations (Stites, 2022). Violent 'cordon and search' operations (first given that name in 2002) were authorised once again and soldiers had permission to kill persons suspected of carrying guns illegally (Bevan, 2008). New accusations of human rights abuses became commonplace, but none were ever brought before a civilian court of law (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In the closing months of 2023, the Kenya Government began 'Operation Maliza Uhalifu', an anti-banditry campaign.

Violent crime, abusive military response, immiseration, and growing mistrust between people and state is a pattern set in place more than a century ago. It has changed surprising little in its essentials, and it helps explain how the quasi-war footing that determines justice and security in rural Karamoja and Turkana has become normal.

The geography of insecurity

We now turn to how insecurity works across space and between different people. We set out the community description of how one form of violence leads to another, and how a violent economy locks the insecurity system into place.

Over the course of the research, the team collected stories and analyses from hundreds of the actors who play a part in the violent drama that makes up daily life in the borderland. The key players are grouped by their affiliations: the armed forces of the two nations, the Karamoja sub-regional administration and its counterpart the government of Turkana County, and the members of named pastoralist communities – notably the Turkana, whose sub-groups' *ng'ireria* (places to which they return in the rainy season) lie in the Turkana rangelands of north western Kenya (Rodgers, 2011), and the Jie, Matheniko, Dodoth, Tepeth and several other sub-groups of the Karamojong, whose *ng'ireria* create a mosaic across the Karamoja rangelands of north-eastern Uganda. The differently positioned actors described their perspective on the regularity of violent incidents including theft, raids, rape and murder. People explained who was involved and how kraal leaders, women, herders, young people, community elders, administrators, politicians and security forces responded to these crimes. Community members showed how one crime leads to another and no crime is effectively addressed. We give brief extracts from the many stories heard by the researchers, selected to show how violence, impunity, revenge, crime, vulnerability, corruption, suspicion, and institutional failures work together to cement a familiar system of insecurity.

The researchers collected hundreds of testimonies from herders about cattle raiding. The majority concerned the large-scale raids that have come to dominate. In this example, the herder describes how cattle raiding works today:

> **A group gathered in the bush and raided a kraal at night. They took hundreds of animals and made rendezvous with trucks. The animals left Karamoja, passing government roadblocks on the way. The animals are sold, and the raiders get mobile money. The criminals have been calling on their phones and getting weapons. If I, as a kraal leader, get weapons, what would I use them for? I have cows here and I would use the gun to protect the cows. (Male pastoralist leader)**

In these commercialised raids, armed criminals from different communities steal large numbers of animals in ways that are well organised. They have networks that supply them with guns and assist them to trade the cattle to markets many hundreds of kilometres away. The herder in this example is pointing to a criminal economy and a supply chain involving people from within different parts of society, including pastoralists, administrators, armed forces, and the private sector.

It differs from the kind of cattle raiding that used to dominate, in which young men from one community would raid those of another, revenge raids would follow and eventually elders of both communities would intervene to make peace, restore stolen animals, punish perpetrators and compensate victims. The new commercialised crime is not subject to communal responsibility and does not fit with the old institutions of compensation and restoration. Elements of the traditional inter-communal raiding culture are still present, with elders calling for shows of strength or backing youths to exact revenge on communities suspected of benefiting from thefts or colluding with authorities (Eaton, 2010).

Both the Ugandan and the Kenyan governments understand pastoralists to be communally responsible for the frequent violent raids, though it has been a long time since raiding was a way of 'alleviating communal hardship' (Olaka Ongango et al., 1993; Eaton, 2010). A practice which was once a form of competition between young male pastoralists armed with bows and spears in raids regulated and resolved by customary leaders, cattle raiding is now a lucrative enterprise carried out by armed criminals seldom aligned with a single community (Greiner, 2013). The raiders sell the stolen stock to herders-turned-traders, who sell on to larger traders, who move the animals to urban markets (Eaton, 2010). According to pastoralists on the ground, sales of stolen livestock and sometimes the raids themselves are facilitated by the administration and security forces. The only way to respond to the new crime in the absence of state policing and protection, say the herders, is for herders to arm themselves and to use unreliable state infrastructure as little as possible.

The research teams also spent some time in local markets to learn traders' perspectives on security. The trader in this example describes abuse perpetrated by a person in authority in the market system and an absence of recourse to due process.

> **At a market near Moroto, a young man brought a cow. The authorities accused him of stealing the animal and confiscated it. They told him to bring 1 million Uganda shillings [approximately US$267] the following week on market day. He paid, but they did not return the animal. They kept on pushing him for more money, so he left it. (Male trader)**

In several similar descriptions, sellers and buyers describe how taking animals to market is hazardous. Getting there on the unsafe roads is also a problem, affecting men and women in different ways:

> **A woman on her way back from market was raped and robbed. The authorities don't take this violence against women seriously. The pain is bigger for a woman than a man. During a raid most of the women's possessions are burned by raiders, including traditional items that are irreplaceable. There is rape and there is loss of husbands and children. This issue of raids will eventually finish us. (Female herder)**

The female pastoralist telling this story is describing how violence is gendered not only in its effect, but also in the official failure to respond. She refers to violent robberies at homesteads, a phenomenon that grew significantly after the disarmament campaigns of the early 2000s. The disarming of herders left isolated homesteads unprotected from raiders, who had either avoided disarmament or acquired new ones. She also describes vividly not only the physical danger, but also way in which women's personhood and her symbolic role in community reproduction is attacked. Beyond the horror of the injury itself, rape without justice generates discord and despair within households and communities. The violence and negligence combine to prevent healing. Family members may seek revenge.

Several women, including those on the research teams, went on to explain how they responded to these attacks. With no institutional response from the respective governments, and little effective response from traditional institutions, women are broadly in support of the males in the household carrying arms in defence of their homes and herds. Many also accept that it makes sense to promote revenge and call for counter attacks. The team also heard and described several instances of women rallying other women to lobby administrations, kraal leaders and elders to take the situation in hand.

An uncounted number of individuals have been injured and killed in the security operations (Sana and Oloo, 2019). The disarmament and policing approach has developed into repertoires of attack, abuse, and counterattack which help to perpetuate warfare between citizens and state forces on both sides of the border, as these three examples show:

> **Three young Turkana robbed a Jie trader who was doing business with them. The trader went to the UPDF barracks and complained, and, at 5am the next day, soldiers came to the kraal where the Turkana men were sleeping. Hearing the commotion, and thinking it was Jie community come to raid them, the Turkana opened fire. The soldiers returned fire and at least one of the three Turkana was killed. They had laid a trap. You cannot say that it was the Jie community who killed the Turkana. It was government mishandling. They came fighting, they did not come and investigate.**

> **The soldiers have started to just shoot people. Soldiers said some people have their uniforms. So, they break people's houses and confiscate their stock. Every time cows are confiscated not all of them are got back. After following cows taken on a raid, they will slaughter to reward themselves.**

> **Soldiers came and took all the cows to the barracks, the cows suffered there, the bitterness grew among all the shepherds. Young men exchanged fire with the UPDF.**

The failure of the Ugandan and Kenyan armed forces to count and account publicly for the deaths and injuries and to prevent the large-scale appropriation of livestock leaves pastoralist men and women incensed. People express distress, anger and profound pessimism in equal measure. Confiscated stock is also not accounted for, and the animals disappear from Karamoja and Turkana through the supply chains of the raiding economy. From the people's perspective, soldiers are untrustworthy and dangerous, as the incentives for them to make money from unchecked extortion, coercion and confiscation are too strong.

Meanwhile young herders, unable to call on insurance or justice, become increasingly drawn to become raiders or market intermediaries themselves. In some cases, they are tempted by the ease of making a living and the glamour of warriorhood. Other youths act as informants for raiders or the security forces, either for money for under coercion:

> **Everywhere there is suspicion and fear. Our settlements have been infiltrated by spies and criminals. Our own young men are part of networks of raiders taking a cut of the profits. Traders don't come only to buy and sell but to also see where the herds are grazing. (Female herder)**

> **Young men have become informers. They come with the army and point out which households have hidden a gun, or an army uniform. (Female elder)**

In this example, a double betrayal takes place:

> **Young men decided to raid a kraal. Within the kraal was an informant. The soldiers caught the informant and instructed him to communicate with the raiders. The moment the raiders came the soldiers started firing. The raiders were all killed except one who was taken alive. Later, the locals followed a man who was selling bullets to the raiders, and he led them straight to the barracks. Some soldiers work hand in hand with raiders. (Male herder)**

In their distress they can supporting taking revenge on neighbouring communities, creating and sustaining conflict:

> **Sometimes women are prevented from joining meetings about dealing with raids because they have suffered so much the loss of sons and husbands, that their emotion is too strong. Somehow women contribute to spreading the conflict, promoting revenge. (Female elder)**

Suspicion within and between communities has risen with increasing levels of loss and a sense of powerlessness. Revenge attacks contribute to an assumption among authorities that the people themselves are lawless and the only solution is a militarised one. But the fundamental problem, say the pastoralists, is the state's failure to provide reliable policing, justice, and governance. They point out the clash between traditional modes of policing and punishment and those of the government:

> **When you punish your son for raiding, he runs to government. They come and arrest you and the thief is left unpunished. If you say as an elder that this one should be arrested, the young man threatens to kill you, so we live in fear of death and we are silent about the criminals.**

> **Police arrest thieves and after three days the person is back, free. The person pays part of what he has stolen to the police. The owner is left with nothing. It has continued happening over and over.**

> **Young people in the society say they have lost confidence in the traditional system of policing and punishment, helping to create divisions within the society.**

To conclude, one of the research team members, himself a herder, winds these different interlocking aspects into a single statement (Box 3). He put it together during our third analysis meeting in January 2023, when we were refining the 'story of stories', a summary of what had been learned about the pastoralist experience of insecurity up to that point.

BOX 3: RESEARCHER STATEMENT

RESEARCHER	TEAM COMMENTARY
I appreciate the time to speak. This is our combined analysis. Many pastoralists have entered government, but do not solve the problems. Politicians have guns in their homes and never mention it. The army says we are all criminals. They come and beat everyone until they reveal. The authorities say the criminal is never seen in our community until the soldiers come. Soldiers are punished if they make a mistake, but local government is like a father who says, my children have not made mistakes. The locals will hide their raider children and never mention. We asked elders everywhere, you used to make peace that lasted. What has made it fail? They replied: 'two things: government policies and laws on the one side and police and army on the other.' The army does its work in a very strong and harsh way. Police, all their activities are associated with money. The law is against people. Elders cannot implement their traditional law. Police catch some thieves. They arrest them, but after three days the person is back, free, and justified. The thief pays part of what he has stolen to the police. The victim is left with nothing. It has continued happening over and over. The authorities say that community members always give excuses, but never give information. They say that they are tired of excuses, and they now will do what they need to do. The army responded, return our guns. But the elders asked, is it the gun that prevents peace? Many people are dying because of your activities, more than when we made peace without you. The government is not working with us. The Turkana need water, but the only water in the dry season is in Kobebe in Uganda. As the Turkana are not safe at Kobebe, they bring guns. The armies of Uganda and Kenya say that they must not.	Pastoralists joining government or elite levels of business must navigate a different culture. Pastoralists expect security forces to operate with violence, so they attempt to protect their children from it. Local government is torn between acting like a 'father' and protecting the citizens from abuse or acting in accordance with national policy. State law and traditional law are contradictory in important respects. Community law and order cannot solve major problems of crime that include perpetrators who are not of the community. Given the weakness of traditional law in relation to this kind of crime, young people and women have lost some respect for it. This has helped fragment traditional institutions.
The pastoralists believe that some of the soldiers work with the criminals to raid. When 1,000 or 3,000 animals are stolen, and you go to the army, and they don't help you – what else can you think? The different communities would like to stay together in Kobebe, with the army providing real protection. But some in the government work together with criminals. There was a time when pastoralists from Kotido raided and then went to a nearby place. Some of the cows were recovered, but the rest were lost. The cows had been transported by vehicles. There are government checkpoints on the way out of Karamoja, how did they not stop them? It's how the herders feel sure that raiders work with some officials. Once there was a planned raid on a community, and someone was caught guiding the raiders by phone. The soldiers laid a trap. The moment the raiders came, the soldiers started firing. Most of the raiders were killed. When they picked up the bullet casings afterwards, they found that the raiders' bullets came from the army.	Communities point out that actors within the armed forces and administrations are directly involved with and benefiting from raiding.
The soldiers are not bad all the time, but they have not established a working relationship with the community. In a kraal where soldiers are not far, there are chances to rescue the cows. There was a raid in my home. I was in another village. I went into the barracks. The soldiers went in the wrong direction and the cows disappeared. I could excuse the soldiers. They tried. There was a raid at Rengen. I told them, you people you do not know the paths of cows when they are raided. A plane was brought, I was in the plane to track the cows. We zigzagged until we got the cows. The soldiers on the ground got them back. I have stayed for many years with soldiers. They prefer people to speak the truth. We became part of their patrols. In 2007-08 I was asked to get 10 warriors. They joined 10 soldiers on patrol. Those operations were successful.	The problem is not only the militarised policy, but also lack of accountability.

continued...

RESEARCHER	TEAM COMMENTARY
The elders accept that part of the problem comes from them. There was a time when we didn't have these large raids. When the elders prayed, God listened to our prayers. Now it doesn't rain, and all our spears are covered in blood. The rainmaking spirits also died. Now go back to your elders and ask them what they did for rain. Whenever anyone goes to speak to them, all they want is alcohol. Those days, when an agreement was made, we were at peace. But now people say, we are at peace with so and so and we are staying with them, but there are others from the same community with whom we are not at peace. How can you say that one part of your body is at peace when the other is not? Jie and Turkana used to be one. When they made peace, it lasted. If they accept local ways to make peace it will work but if not, this thing will never end.	Effective law, order and governance stem from people's trust and collaboration with one another and with those who govern them. Violence leads to crime and conflict. If the conflict between the people and their governments and the disjuncture between the two neighbouring administrations is not resolved, there will be no hope of peace or security.

Realities of policy making and implementation

In this section we turn to the arena of politics and policy, including the multiple actors and powers operating at and between different levels of the state hierarchy. It is an arena of formal and informal engagements and institutions where law, order, rights, investment, and accountability are navigated and argued over between different interests, between the two countries, and between the different levels of the administration. The pastoralists of Karamoja and Turkana do not have easy access to this space, yet community researchers argue that the problem of insecurity plays out here.

As the researchers moved from kraal to kraal and settlement to settlement up and down the border, returning three or more times to the same communities to give feedback, deepen the analysis and talk with community members, they alerted community leaders about upcoming opportunities for engagement with government, security agencies, and NGOs. In so doing they seeded community discussions and helped extend the community leaders' analysis of the politics involved in finding solutions to the problems of crime, law, and order. In this section, we detail a series of events which gave understandings among the team members and community leaders. The community teams followed them in real time as participant observers, communicating findings and researching as they went. They spoke, listened, watched, and made and collected records. Two broad areas of policy are considered: the military disarmament programme and a cross-border agreement that approached security through the lens of natural resource sharing between the pastoralists of the two countries. The analysis illustrates the way in which these borderlands are governed, where and how trust does or does not operate, and how different interests navigate the spaces of power.

The twists and turns of disarmament 2022–23

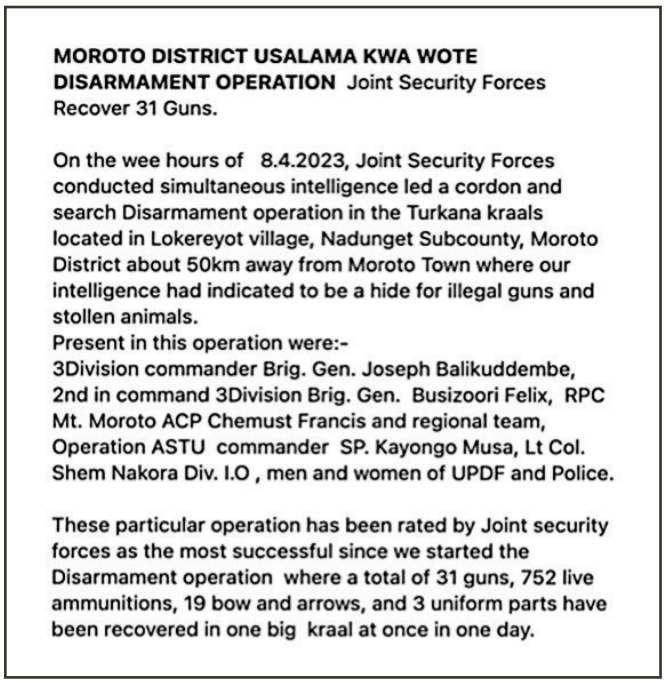
A consultative meeting

On an afternoon in early November 2022, eight Karamojong community researchers went to the office of George Wapuwa, the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Moroto District in Uganda, to meet him and Brigadier General Joseph Balikudembe, Commander of the UPDF Third Infantry Division, which, as one newspaper puts it, 'oversees Karamoja sub-Region' (New Vision, 2020). Sitting in a small circle of chairs under the trees outside the RDC's office, the team listened as the Brigadier General explained that there had been 'a near exchange between armed Turkana [from Kenya] and the UPDF in Moroto'. He advised that the government planned to invite community leaders to a meeting the following week. The meeting would be held at Kobebe in Karamoja, beside a large dam around which Karamoja's Matheniko, Bokora and Jie, and Turkana pastoralist herders had their kraals (mobile cattle camps) and temporary homesteads.

The following day, a letter from the RDC arrived at the offices of the Karamoja Development Forum, the NGO facilitating the community research on the Uganda side. The same letter went to several other NGOs working on peace in the sub-region. It announced the government's intention to hold a consultative meeting to discuss the matter of guns with Turkana herdsmen (Figure 3). It noted that, despite a prohibition agreed with Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2019, 'most of the Turkana herdsmen are armed'. The letter invited the NGO peace partners to attend and requested help with refreshments.

Mzee Imana Echor, a Kenyan member of the community research team, Turkana community elder and ex-Member of Parliament, told the research team that he called the Brigadier General the following day. Balikudembe told

FIGURE 3:
LETTER FROM THE RDC MOROTO TO KDF



MOROTO DISTRICT USALAMA KWA WOTE
DISARMAMENT OPERATION Joint Security Forces Recover 31 Guns.

On the wee hours of 8.4.2023, Joint Security Forces conducted simultaneous intelligence led a cordon and search Disarmament operation in the Turkana kraals located in Lokereyot village, Nadunget Subcounty, Moroto District about 50km away from Moroto Town where our intelligence had indicated to be a hide for illegal guns and stollen animals.
Present in this operation were:-
3Division commander Brig. Gen. Joseph Balikuddembe, 2nd in command 3Division Brig. Gen. Busizoori Felix, RPC Mt. Moroto ACP Chemust Francis and regional team, Operation ASTU commander SP. Kayongo Musa, Lt Col. Shem Nakora Div. I.O , men and women of UPDF and Police.

These particular operation has been rated by Joint security forces as the most successful since we started the Disarmament operation where a total of 31 guns, 752 live ammunitions, 19 bow and arrows, and 3 uniform parts have been recovered in one big kraal at once in one day.

him that he had invited the recently elected Governor of Kenya's Turkana County to meet him at Moroto and they would then go on to meet the communities at Kobebe on 9 November. Imana travelled to Moroto in advance of the Kenya delegation. When the Turkana Governor swept into town on 8 November in his convoy of 15 cars, accompanied by the County Secretary and some 20 others, Imana took him aside at his hotel and advised that although the Government of Uganda want the Turkana to disarm, the Turkana would not be safe without their guns.

The community leaders gathered at Kobebe on the morning of 9 November at the appointed early hour and waited. They had agreed who would provide and slaughter bulls to provide the ritual welcome for the occasion. At last, at 3pm, the cars arrived and the RDC, MPs, Turkana County and Karamoja Sub-Regional staff, the Turkana Governor and the military men and women stepped under the shade of temporary awnings. Soft drinks provided by the NGOs were handed round. The formal introductions and protocols proceeded. Then, as the sun began to set, the Turkana County Commissioner rose to speak (Friends of Lake Turkana, 2022):

> **I want to ask our Turkana: you have been hosted so that at least your animals can survive the drought, but instead you turn to crime while being assisted. The President of Uganda, His Excellency Yoweri Museveni, signed the MOU with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. It allows Kenyans to bring their animals to graze in Uganda, but they should not come with guns. The Uganda Government is clearing the guns and then you come with them. Guns create confusion and tension, with raids and crime. We want to maintain good relations with our neighbours. Leave your guns behind with His Excellency the Turkana County Governor. If you are involved in crime, the law of Uganda will take care of you.**

The Turkana County Governor, Hon. Jeremiah Lomorukai, then spoke. He drew attention to the friendship between the Presidents of Kenya and Uganda, noted that the Kenyan President was committed to 'ending criminality and disarming all citizens with illegal guns' (UPDF, 2022), and emphasised his role within the geopolitical relationship:

> **Together as the leadership of Turkana County, as the leadership of Kenya, as leadership of East Africa and as leadership of Uganda, we are not going to entertain banditry and we are going to sign any document that discards that kind of activity. As the Governor for Turkana, mine is to marshal support for activities that will take us forward through provision of water, medical facilities, drugs for our livestock and other essential needs.**

He went on to promise roads and dams that Kenya would build to assist in helping 'the people of Ateker' (Turkana, Karamojong, Jie and other associated groups), and referred again to the East African Community.

Kraal leader Ikale Akwaan, a respected Turkana herder responsible for the welfare of families and their herds of hundreds of cattle, stood to reply. With elegant diplomacy he thanked all the organisers of the meeting, then asked the Turkana governor to provide animal health services, and then went on to point out that he knew that animals stolen from him were being held by Karamojong in Kotido. It was a message that, in his case at least, it is not – or not only – Turkana who raid cattle. He went on to say:

> **Karamoja pastoralists have not been fully disarmed. There are still illegal guns that terrorise the Turkana people. If I voluntarily give out my gun, all my animals will be taken because I will be defenceless. The government should look for a fair solution. You can see me as the one responsible for the peace we are enjoying in Kobebe.**

Kraal leader Lotee Ekorikol stood to speak for the Karamoja pastoralists. The notes say that he spoke briefly because of time. He highlighted how conflict arises from misunderstandings between business traders from both Turkana and Karamoja communities. And then the meeting closed. The research team noticed the dissatisfaction of the community leaders present; they had not been given a chance to give their side of the story, no opportunity to make formal complaint regarding military abuses, too little time to discuss the matter amicably, and they had been offered no place at the decision-making table. One said that it would have been better if pastoralists were allowed to point out the problems before the delegation came up with their resolutions.

The bulls were not offered for the people to share, as the meeting had not met the criteria for a formal traditional decision-making gathering. Reflecting on it afterwards, Imana asked, 'how can you call that a meeting? We were supposed to hear from Karamojong and Turkana and mediate a decision'. Another elder present described it thus:

> **At the Kobebe event the Turkana had mobilised two cows to eat after the meeting when the government officials came. They introduced themselves: he is the MCA [Member of the Turkana County Assembly], he is the Governor. They showed their power. We didn't hear anything of us. They had already gotten their own food. There was no resolution for the community. So, there was no bull killed for them. Everybody just walked out of the meeting. The meeting was a big mess. (Elder male researcher)**

A few days later, Ikale Akwaan's kraals at Kobebe were raided by armed men. Six herds, about 170 cows, were stolen from under his protection. The animals were taken to Kaabong, a district to the north of Kobebe. The UPDF Divisional Commander mounted a military operation, 'showing his power' as one of the research leaders put it:

> **Peace is not the absence of crime, but how you deal with it. The divisional commander tracked the stolen cattle, found some exhibits, and rounded up a lot of herds. A few of the cows he rounded up may be those lost by Ikale Akwaan, but most were not. Some innocent person suffers, a few stolen cows are recovered, the others which are impounded are innocent cows and the owners usually lose them. (Research leader)**

What did the community researchers observe about the roles, interests, and powers of different actors at the Kobebe event? They pointed to the way in which local pastoralist leadership had been excluded from deliberation and they recorded how, later, the Turkana had been particularly bitter at the lack of concern for their safety and their need for water and grazing. The event was not a negotiation, but a performance in which the visible power of the state was set against the relative weakness of the people's local leaders. The asymmetry was evident, accentuating the problem of mistrust between the state security institutions and the traditional institutions of the pastoralists.

> **There was peace until this meeting at Kobebe, when our government officials and a delegation from Kenya ordered us pastoralists, especially the Turkana, to surrender guns or leave them behind before crossing to Uganda. A few weeks later our peaceful co-existence began to change. I blame the way our security officers are disarming pastoralists, especially our brothers from Kenya. When our soldiers are tipped off about possession of a firearm, they use force and violence and we Karamojong are also affected. When our soldiers cordon a homestead and drive away cows to compel the Turkana to surrender their guns, the Turkana think it is us that have tipped off the soldiers. The Turkana raid us in revenge and conflict escalates. Our government should ask the Turkana council of elders and their representatives to intervene. (Karamoja male trader).**

A high-level military meeting

On 20 February 2023, the Government of Uganda hosted a high-level joint military meeting in Moroto. The line-up was high powered. In attendance were Uganda's Minister for Security, Jim Muhwezi, and General (Rtd) Caleb Akandwanaho (commonly known as General Salim Saleh), presidential adviser on defence and Chief Coordinator of Operation Wealth Creation. The Kenyan delegation was headed by Rebecca Miano, Cabinet Secretary for the East Africa Community, and the most senior military delegate was the Commander of the Kenya Army, Lieutenant General Peter Njiru. On the Ugandan military side was UPDF Commander of Land Forces Lieutenant General Kayanja Muhanga and Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence Colonel Abdul Rugumayo.

A joint communiqué issued at the end of the meeting appealed to the President of Uganda to exercise his Prerogative of Mercy in favour of nine Turkana herdsmen who had been arrested and imprisoned for possessing illegal arms. It went on to list many issues to be addressed to facilitate development, enhance peace, and strengthen security along the border between the two countries. Out of 13 issues listed in the communiqué, four touched on law and order and the administration of criminal justice with regard to cattle raids, six on the implementation of a cross-border MoU signed between the two countries in 2019 (UNDP, 2019), and three on coordination of security arrangements between them. While at first it seemed to align with the everyday peace desired by communities, a closer look showed that the communiqué was heavily tilted towards military concerns. Communities did not feature in the communiqué other than as beneficiaries of state interventions. Neither their institutions nor the social and cultural relations that are an integral part of interactions between the Turkana and Karamojong were mentioned.

A cordon and search operation

In the months that followed, some Turkana moved away from Kobebe, deeper into Karamoja, and held meetings with Matheniko, Jie and Bokora kraal leaders. Many others moved back across the border into Kenya, even though there was almost no grazing and water on the Kenya side at this stage of the dry season. Turkana

Kraal leaders held a series of anxious meetings at sites close to the Uganda border and discussed what to do. The Turkana County Government and the local Members of Parliament began to engage vigorously, encouraging the pastoralists to abandon hope of returning to graze in Uganda and to consider moving to Turkana South and East instead. Kraal leaders, women's leaders and elders considered the idea and sent emissaries to the south and east. They found that it would not work as there was not enough grazing or water.

Meanwhile, the disarmament campaign was also proceeding apace. On 8 April 2023 there was a cordon and search operation at Lokeriaut, 50 kilometres from Moroto, where Turkana were encamped in a protected kraal with Matheniko herders. By many accounts it was a violent event. Five children and a woman were hospitalised with bullet wounds. UPDF social media posted a message reporting the successful operation (Figure 4). Three days later, 32 pastoralists, most of whom were Kenyan citizens, came up before a court-martial convened at Moroto and each was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison under anti-terrorism laws. The harsh sentences generated a buzz of media coverage across Kenya and mobilised Kenyan politicians to call on the Government of Kenya to intervene. It was not long before the issue dropped off the front pages, however. Meanwhile the herders were in despair.

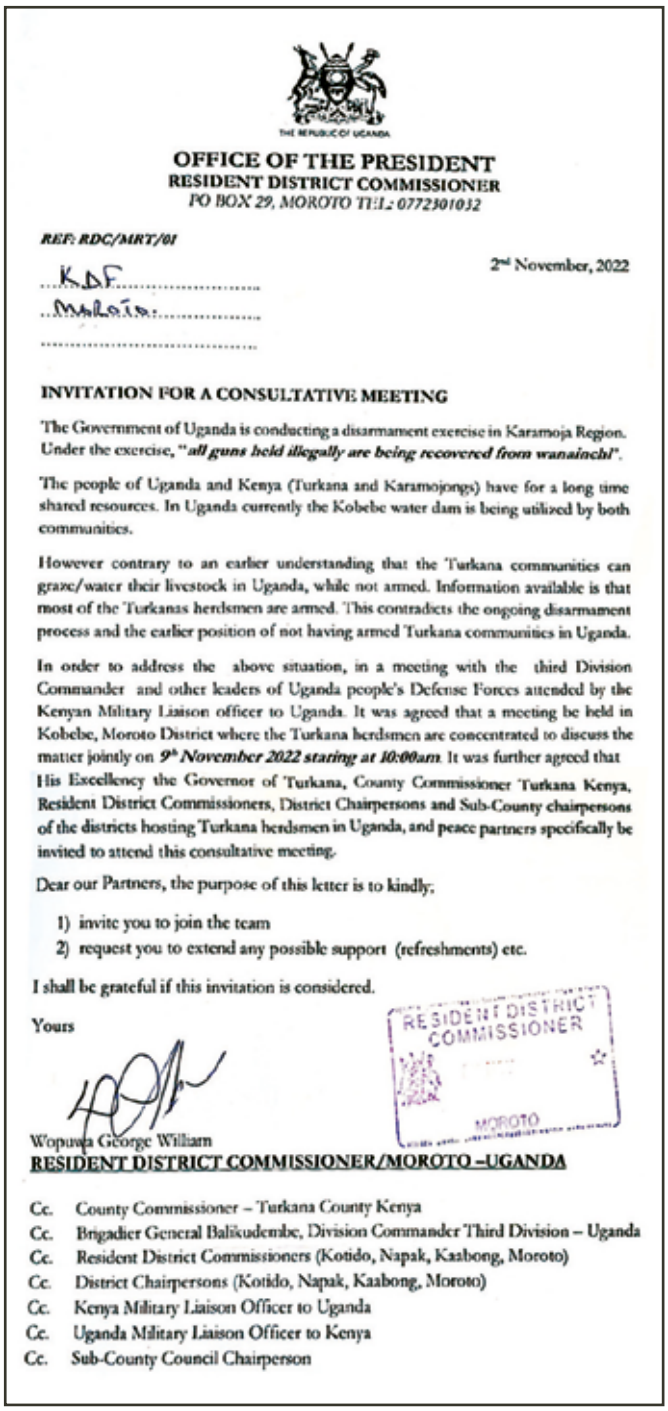
> We had relative peace, sharing grasses and water until the soldiers attacked the kraals, throwing bombs randomly, displacing and killing everyone including livestock near Lokeriaut.
> (Karamoja male herder)

A government official from the home area of many of the convicted Turkana compiled a report based on interviews with people who had been present. He ended with a plea:

> The Turkana and Matheniko have common cultural ties. They have lived together and seem to understand each other better. The countries where pastoralist live have rules and regulations to be followed. Whether people are safe while following restrictions is a question that begs for answers. A long-lasting solution needs to be found for peaceful coexistence as all aspire to promote their traditional livelihoods. It is true to say some decisions may destroy the existing peace dividends achieved. There is still room to live in harmony.
> (Lokorikeju Titus Ekiru, Sub-County Administrator, Loima, Kenya)

The operation at Lokeriaut is not unique but, coming at a time when the community researchers and local community leaders were feeling relatively optimistic about finding new solutions, it provided a harsh reminder of the power of the armed forces to dictate the terms of governance affecting both Karamoja and Turkana.

FIGURE 4: MOROTO DISTRICT DISARMAMENT OPERATION



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
PO BOX 29, MOROTO TEL: 0772301032

REF: RDC/MRT/01

2nd November, 2022

KDF
Matheniko

INVITATION FOR A CONSULTATIVE MEETING

The Government of Uganda is conducting a disarmament exercise in Karamoja Region. Under the exercise, "*all guns held illegally are being recovered from wanainchi*".

The people of Uganda and Kenya (Turkana and Karamojongs) have for a long time shared resources. In Uganda currently the Kobebe water dam is being utilized by both communities.

However contrary to an earlier understanding that the Turkana communities can graze/water their livestock in Uganda, while not armed. Information available is that most of the Turkanas herdsmen are armed. This contradicts the ongoing disarmament process and the earlier position of not having armed Turkana communities in Uganda.

In order to address the above situation, in a meeting with the third Division Commander and other leaders of Uganda people's Defense Forces attended by the Kenyan Military Liaison officer to Uganda. It was agreed that a meeting be held in Kobebe, Moroto District where the Turkana herdsmen are concentrated to discuss the matter jointly on *9th November 2022 staring at 10:00am*. It was further agreed that His Excellency the Governor of Turkana, County Commissioner Turkana Kenya, Resident District Commissioners, District Chairpersons and Sub-County chairpersons of the districts hosting Turkana herdsmen in Uganda, and peace partners specifically be invited to attend this consultative meeting.

Dear our Partners, the purpose of this letter is to kindly;

1) invite you to join the team
2) request you to extend any possible support (refreshments) etc.

I shall be grateful if this invitation is considered.

Yours

RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER MOROTO

Wopuwa George William
RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER/MOROTO –UGANDA

Cc. County Commissioner – Turkana County Kenya
Cc. Brigadier General Balikudembe, Division Commander Third Division – Uganda
Cc. Resident District Commissioners (Kotido, Napak, Kaabong, Moroto)
Cc. District Chairpersons (Kotido, Napak, Kaabong, Moroto)
Cc. Kenya Military Liaison Officer to Uganda
Cc. Uganda Military Liaison Officer to Kenya
Cc. Sub-County Council Chairperson

The Executive Order

A month later, on 19 May, President Museveni of Uganda issued Executive Order no 3 of 2023. Even though the legality of the directive was questioned by legal counsel in Kampala, this was refuted by Uganda's Attorney General, who said, 'The Executive Order was issued to the [political] executives to ensure it [nomadism] does not happen; so there is nothing unconstitutional about it' (Samilu, 2023). In the Order, the President connected the bringing of arms into the country with the charge of terrorism. The Order required resolution of the murder of a team of geologists who were killed near the border apparently by Turkana raiders, through 'blood settlement' (compensation), and gave the Turkana population six months to implement the directives, the failure of which would result in expulsion of 'all the Kenyan Turkanas and their cattle' in perpetuity. There was consternation among the pastoralists on both sides. Although the text of the Order mentioned shortcomings in military, police, and justice institutions, it gave no directives on addressing these problems. Instead, it only gave orders for containing communities, particularly the armed Turkana from Kenya.

> The Executive Order is guided by one-sided information given to the President. In the spirit of the East African Community, we are one people, the Ateker, and the only devil spoiling us is the raiding and killing. For us, even before going to government, we should really be able to do something at our level. It should be the Karamojong saying, no, no, no, do not chase our brothers and sisters! And likewise, for the people of Turkana. Our leaders of Ateker should say, 'Mr President, this is too much.' They should de-escalate the situation. The Executive Order gives powerful mandates to security forces. They have powers to do anything. But they should know that in law you are innocent until proven guilty. (Female herder, Karamoja)

Turkana pastoralists, now back in Turkana County and suffering the drought there, were very worried.

> Our government is slow in acting towards sensitive things and that is why our problems keep on growing. ... Why is Uganda mistreating us and our government is quiet? The researchers read us the Executive Order from Museveni. The letter tells us we are no longer required in that country. If we are not going to take our animals to Uganda where they have been grazing for years, better you leave us to die. The Government of Kenya, especially the current one, has failed us terribly. We are in deep fear in our hearts, we have sleepless nights because of what has happened to our people in Uganda.

FIGURE 5: EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 3 OF 2023
(excerpts from first and last page)

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 3 OF 2023

19th May, 2023

This Executive Order, issued under the powers given to the President by Article 99 (2) of the 1995 Constitution, will cover the Anti-cattle Rustling efforts in North and North-Eastern Uganda, the damage to the Environment by the charcoal business, the damage caused by the indisciplined nomads known as Balaalo, recasting the Uganda Police Force into a Uganda-wide Police instead of being a Kampala Police and the problem of the Turkana nomads.

i. The Turkana must never come to Uganda with guns. Anybody who does so, must be arrested and charged with terrorism by a Court Martial.

ii. The killers of the Geologists, must be handed to us for trial for murder. The guns were handed back to the Government of Uganda, but not the killers. In the alternative, the killers, with the co-ordination of the Governments of Kenya and Uganda, should *kukaraba* (blood-settlement — *mato-put*), to the families of the deceased. The price of the *kukaraba* cannot be the traditional one, of a few cows. It must be adjusted to the full value of what the deceased would have contributed in his/her life, which life was cut-short by those criminals.

iii. Through the co-ordination of the Governments of Kenya and Uganda, the Turkana must bring back to the victim communities the number of cattle equal to the cattle they stole from them. Here caution should be exercised because our own people could be exaggerating the numbers. In order to ease the task of cattle identification, the Kenya Government and Uganda Government should co-ordinate on cattle — branding to show district and sub-county of the respective cattle populations.

iv. I give the Turkana population, 6 months to implement my directives. If, however, the issue of the guns illegally entering Uganda, the hand- over of the criminals who killed our Geologists or the use of traditional justice and return of the stolen cattle, are not resolved, I will have no alternative but to expel all the Kenyan Turkanas and their cattle and they will never be allowed to re-enter Uganda with their cattle.

Yoweri K. Museveni
PRESIDENT

This latest phase in the disarmament campaign struck the communities a hard blow, particularly the Turkana. But even Karamoja communities were distressed – they reported more incidents of herders being shot, as they might have had a gun, and they felt endangered by the anti-nomadic sentiments of the Executive Order. While kraal leaders on both sides of the border had a clearer understanding of the actions of the two states and the political processes at play, these events helped undermine the confidence generated by the research. On the one hand, the research process was stimulating new levels of engagement, on the other, the Order and the imprisonments were driving a wedge between Turkana and Karamoja. Pastoralists disagreed about how to respond, and their respective political representatives cast blame on communities on the other side of the border. The Turkana County Governor encouraged the Turkana to stay in Turkana despite the lack of grazing.

An administrative solution? The Cross-Border Resource Sharing Agreement

Immediately after the disarmament meeting in Moroto in February 2023, a Turkana County delegation, senior Karamoja administrators and Members of Parliament and high-ranking members of the security forces from Kenya and Uganda met to draft a Cross-Border Resource Sharing Agreement that would outline the routes, maps, and modalities of natural resource sharing between Karamoja, Turkana and Pokot pastoralists moving across the border. General Akandwanaho (Salim Saleh) was in the lead and encouraged the assembled officials to 'shift the overreliance on pastoralism as a source of livelihood and explore the economic potential of the region through cross-border trade and exploitation of minerals' (KNA, 2023). The meeting did not include any direct representation of the communities.[5]

The pastoralists were encouraged, however. A well-articulated and well-managed resource sharing agreement could do much to improve conditions on both sides of the border if it helped improve trust. When the General invited the Director of the Karamoja Development Forum, Simon Long'oli, to lead a civil society group to provide background documentation, Simon accepted with enthusiasm. Simon, who is the Uganda leader of the research team, formed and led a working group to provide technical information to inform the clauses of the agreement. The community researchers saw this as an opportunity to improve the agreement through realistic understandings. But Simon was given very little time – not enough to go to communities in a systematic way. While he was able to incorporate findings from the community research into the text of the background document, few of his written and verbal contributions made their way into the agreement itself.

On his advice, the government drafters proposed that the agreement should be discussed by communities before it was signed. It wasn't clear what right they might have to make amendments, however. Allotted time allowed for only three community events, one for each of the major groups Karamojong, Turkana, and Pokot. When the researchers informed community members of this consultation process, most felt that that it would be a waste of time. They argued that the conversation should have started concurrently from the communities and their governments, and inputs from community members and their leaders (women, elders, and youth) should have informed the deliberations by the military, security and political elite gathered in Moroto. In the event, only one consultative meeting took place: the others were interrupted by the disarmament process.

Even though the agreement was presented as a mechanism for enabling the sharing of resources between the two cross-border pastoral communities, it was also shaped by the security priorities of the two states. For Uganda government, the main concern was to avoid reversals in the gains of disarmament of the past two decades; the Kenya government was keen to control incursions on its borders as well as promoting the mobility of Kenyan pastoralists into Karamoja, given the impacts of the droughts that have ravaged Kenya for going on four years.

The involvement of the Commander of Uganda's Land Forces and the Commander of the Kenyan Defence Forces, the presence of General Akandwanaho, and fact that the Uganda delegation was led by the Minister for Internal Security all point to the security imperative for both governments even in the resource-sharing discussions. The focus on resource sharing also highlights an investment imperative: for Uganda, the quest to create an enabling environment for the exploitation of the mineral resource wealth of Karamoja and a dream of an agricultural breadbasket; and for Kenya, the exploitation of energy wealth in Turkana (Mutaizibwa, 2022). General Akandwanaho's role as Chief Coordinator of Operation Wealth Creation emphasises this agenda (Sserunkuma, 2023; Taylor, 2022). Whether or not the General has personal business interests in the mining sector in Karamoja as some of his detractors claim, the Ugandan government has been keen to issues licences for mining and other industrial land uses on land previously considered by pastoralists to be held in trust for their communities. The national security and economic interests at play mean that community interests and priorities compete with other local, national, regional, and even global interests.

Pastoralist leaders were sanguine, recognising the forces at play and looking for opportunities for influence. The team members who interacted with General Akandwanaho felt that he understood community arguments about the unique needs of pastoralism, the importance of mobility, and the need to secure the practice going forward. They described the way he reacted to the letter addressed to him by President Museveni when he was initiating the

technical process of negotiating the Resource Sharing Agreement. The letter, dated 3 March 2023, asserts that the strategic goal of the National Movement (Uganda's ruling party) in Karamoja is 'to end nomadism and subsistence, traditional cattle keeping and build a settled society based on commercial agriculture of cattle (ranching and dairy), crops, minerals and factories based on value addition to crops and minerals'. The General, while acknowledging the President's guidance, was clear that those were the President's views, and he looked forward to hearing from the participants what they thought was feasible and appropriate. Whether the General will be able to persuade the President about a different trajectory for the future of Karamoja and its borderlands is another question. Experience to date suggests that NGO enthusiasm for putting the point of view of pastoralists seldom translates into influence. The research showed that pastoralists also viewed the NGO role with scepticism. Well intentioned as it may be, it was keeping pastoralists away from the table and displacing their opportunities to present their own analysis and proposals.

Couched in language that suggests that the agreement is for the benefit of the pastoral communities of Karamoja and Turkana, the absence of organised community representation in its negotiation seems a missed opportunity. Who among those involved in the process were representing the two communities? The elected leaders who were present? Pastoralists leaders argued that their MPs had failed to represent their reality, respond to their concerns, or argue for community participation in delivering solutions.

The agreement attributes cross-border mobility to climate change, citing 'the current situation in which climate change and its adverse effects in the region, has *necessitated involuntary migration* of herders and their livestock among the people of Karamoja, Turkana and West Pokot in search of pasture and water' [*authors' italics*]. Rainfall in Turkana and Karamoja has long been low and variable from year to year and place to place. There is no month in either territory when rainfall exceeds evaporation potential. Its scarcity and variability are the reasons why pastoralism is the dominant mode of production, and it is why agreements to share access to grazing and water between different territories and in safety are so important. The extensive grazing system involves mobility across often large distances, a way of production that requires security arrangements to be largely maintained by herders themselves. The evidence from the community research and from satellite data analysis (see Appendix 1) is that while there has been an increase in the frequency and extent of mobility in response to changing rainfall patterns, seasonal mobility has always been an aspect of pastoralism in this cross-border area. Thus, according to the communities, climate change is not *causing* pastoralist mobility, but is causing it to change.

The agreement indicates that the state parties may commit 'to provide for urgent and transitional arrangements for free, safe and orderly movement for a period of 15 years'. The presumption here, judging from the vision articulated by President Museveni in his letter to the General, is that at the end of this period, the pastoralism practised in the region will have transformed into commercial agriculture and there will no longer be any need for mobility. The pastoralists do not agree, and their position is backed by considerable research on rangeland ecology, pastoralism, and pastoralist mobility (Catley et al., 2013; Scoones, 1996; Krätli, 2022; FAO, 2022). While they are keen to see transformation in their livelihoods and economy, and to benefit from modern technologies of production, the many hundreds of people met during this research in communities on both sides of the border yearn for an approach to development that is grounded in their rights as citizens and respect for their culture, indigenous knowledge, and institutions.

Unlike Uganda, Kenya recognises pastoralism as a legitimate production and livelihood system and has integrated imperatives to support it in a wide range of policies and laws, including the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, Kenya Vision 2030, the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, the National Land Policy, and the Community Land Act. Communities on the Kenya side hope that their country will not sign up to an agreement that is founded on a narrative of pastoralism being a backward practice that should be eradicated.

While there is no denying that the issues of security and mobility in the communiqué and the draft agreement are relevant to communities, the community research suggests that the agreement would look different if community voice and institutions were put centre stage. Their explanation of how insecurity works in the cross-border areas should have been key to the construction of the agreement's provisions. Some of the provisions run the risk of contravening international human rights norms and even national laws and policies, others are based on a flawed understanding of transhumance, while many of them have nothing to do with, or may undermine, the sharing of pastoral resources between the two communities (see Table 1).

A year after they were scheduled, two of the three community consultations had yet to take place. It may be that the agreement was 'put on the back burner' as one commentator put it when disarmament events we described above (the Lokeriaut Cordon and Search and the President of Uganda's Executive Order) interceded to create difficulties between the two nations, their respective administrations and the pastoralist communities. It is also likely that the draft is with the relevant ministries at national and sub-national level of both states, where it must patiently navigate the technicalities of policy rather than the easy rhetoric of political announcement.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF PROVISIONS PROBLEMATIC TO PASTORALISTS

PROVISION	PASTORALIST PERSPECTIVE
Art 6: collective punishment for communities of perpetrators of cattle rustling	This draws on customary law but only applies if communities are in control of the justice process. They are aware that it is contrary to international human rights resolutions to which the Preamble commits the agreement, as well as national constitutional and penal laws. It is more of a political provision than a practical one.
Art 7: transhumance corridors to be manned by joint civil administration and security forces	Transhumance corridors are not 'roads' or 'paths', but ecosystems, hence not amenable to being 'manned'.
Art. 13: establishing and enforcing movement plan that indicates 'the maximum periods of departure and return of the migrating pastoralists'	Migration periods and patterns are uncertain, as they are dependent on weather patterns, which are increasingly unpredictable due to climate change. Pastoralist resource sharing agreements are open-ended.
Art. 18–22: social services (education and health)	Save for Art. 22, pastoralists feel that though valuable in themselves, these provisions relate to obligations that the two states owe to the two communities as citizens under national constitutions and law.
Art. 23–27: commercial agriculture	Pastoralists have not asked for resource sharing to incorporate the interests of commercial agriculture, which likely to cause them to lose livelihoods. To the extent that they are realistic and relevant to the needs of the communities, they belong in national development policies for the two regions.

Pastoralist navigation of the policy space

A political leaders' meeting and a kraal leaders' meeting

In May 2023, the Karamoja Development Forum convened a Political Leaders' Meeting in Moroto. The same month, there was a meeting at Lokiriama among Turkana kraal leaders convened with the assistance of FOLT. Each speaks to the communities' growing willingness to engage in concerted negotiation to seek and agree solutions with the state.

The political leaders' meeting in Moroto brought together some 45 political/administrative leaders from Turkana and Karamoja to hear the research evidence and debate new ways forward. Participants included the Ugandan Minister of State for Minerals and Energy, and senior members of the Turkana County executive and MPs from either side. Pastoralist community leaders joined the research team and presented a coherent analysis of the interlocking insecurities. They argued that their exclusion from decision making has been fundamental in the failure of every initiative to improve the situation. The quality of their evidence and the confidence of their analysis sparked a different kind of discussion. The assembled administrators, politicians and soldiers slipped effortlessly into a different way of talking. For once, they did not blame the pastoralists and their provocative mobility for the insecurity. Instead, they frankly admitted problems of military over-reach, administrative corruption, and failures of justice and policing, in creating fertile conditions for insecurity and violence. Minister of State Lokeris said: 'If you read this report the children [the community research team] have written you will find everything is here... they are doing a very good job. Now all over we must all work together.' It is a small advance, easily lost if the pressure is not sustained by the community leaders, but it is nonetheless important and builds some confidence inside the community. It may also build confidence of government and others in the ability of community leaders to offer useful and reasonable contributions.

> **Disarmament has not restored security. Disarmed communities are not able to defend themselves. Politicians from Kenya should have a look at the policies, legal frameworks and justice systems surrounding firearms. We must create peace for our people, and the ones who are stubborn shall be held accountable by the security forces. (Minister of State Lokeris)**

> **It was a surprisingly frank conversation. It was agreed that security, weapons, traders and raiders are killing us, and it is only teamwork that will end it. (Research leader)**

Not long afterwards, 35 Turkana kraal and other pastoralist leaders gathered on the Kenya side of the border at Lokiriama. They heard the findings of this research. They also shared their perspectives on what they should do next and, after lengthy discussion, agreed that despite the Governor's exhortations, it would be madness to migrate to the south of Turkana County. There was no free grazing or water, and insecurity on the southern border of the county was intense. So, they agreed among the different Turkana sections present that they would, as far as they were able, comply with the Executive Order. They would navigate and negotiate. They would collectively find the resources required for compensation to the families of those the Order mentioned.

The people's wish for the kind of peaceful existence that they should enjoy as citizens is not reflected in the content or approach to policy. In the description of these two major policy areas, we see how power is distributed asymmetrically within the policy space. Community leaders did their best to take advantage of the policy opportunities using the research and connections with civil society actors to get heard, but their power was limited. Pastoralists are sometimes consulted, but their perspectives and suggestions are never pivotal. To increase their influence, pastoralists have realised a need to rebuild their fragmented institutions and reformulate their ability to navigate and their power to negotiate. Therefore, the question we turn to in the final section is how a system so interlocked, and so built on foundations of violence that stretch far back in time, can change.

Discussion: building trust

The pastoralists' research journey has taken us from the terrors and bitterness of the violence that hurts everyone in the society, into the spaces where it is inside the system of governance. Half of the community research was in the communities' own places, working out how to articulate the complex interactions of the insecurity and the community's part in failing to solve it. The other half was in the policy space, asking why the problems persist, and what is the way forward.

Local people feel that no one cares for the safety of the people or the animals. They argue that disarmament is a violent approach that gives those in authority a right to kill on sight without accountability to communities and that it does not deal with underlying problems of crime and justice. Pastoralists have argued here that the militarised solution is the reason they must keep on re-arming, as it provokes more violence and crime than it offers solutions. Violent theft is followed by revenge, rape hurts and undermines women's power, and raids are organised in a web of connections that link individuals inside different herding communities to collaborators in the administration, the army, and the business community within and across the international borders. Disarmament renders the people defenceless, generates rumouring and revenge, and can easily be evaded by crossing the border. The two governments may agree on a military solution, but in other respects they fail to coordinate. Each aspect of insecurity consolidates another aspect. Each unresolved crime leads to the next.

Karamoja and Turkana pastoralists produce tens of thousands of livestock every year, and every year lose a high proportion of them. Those who benefit from the criminal economy of livestock raiding have little need for trust in institutions of law and order. But for everyone else it is vital that these institutions work. The thread that runs through it all is the failure of governments to provide protection, justice, and redress. If these systems were working, people explain, then a crime is an event that can be dealt with. When the institutions fail, crime, self-defence and revenge become habitual and everyday peace is lost. When citizens fear those that are appointed to protect them, and when they are patronised or blamed by policymakers, they lose the confidence that anyone can put the system to rights.

Too many people in too many different parts of society have become embroiled for a simple solution to present itself. It would be foolish to underestimate the difficulties inherent in reforming institutions that have been adapting to militarised violence for over a century. As long ago as 2005 there were arguments put forward to government that the real cause of insecurity was not arms proliferation but a 'lack of governance, the absence of law and order, and the failure of the government to develop the region' (an interview with the Ugandan Joint Christian Council in Kampala referred to by Stites and Akabwai, 2010).

Each of the encounters of people and their states depicted here, from Kobebe, to the Executive Order, to the resource-sharing agreement, demonstrate the effects of asymmetrical power relations. Government is divided from the people by a crucial fault line of violence and distrust, and community knowledge and influence are excluded from the policy process. We can also see the heightening of divisions between the Karamoja and Turkana pastoralists because of blame and suffering. These interlocking relationships – between the states, the militaries, the citizens and the communities – need to be improved.

The geopolitics and diplomacy of two neighbouring states is an important factor. Its high politics introduces inertia, but also potential. There is growing realisation among pastoralist leaders of the need for engagement across *all* of these fault lines, supporting the geopolitical

A male elder asks, how will we protect our cattle? Kalosarich, Karamoja. Karamoja-Turkana Research Team © 2024

relations, the engagement between people and their government and the healing of internal community divisions. Uganda and Kenya have complementary concerns about security and economic issues, including interests in mineral and energy production and cross-border trade. It is in their political and administrative structures that the two countries differ most, and this creates delays in their interaction that the less scrupulous powerbrokers use for gaining ground. And while the two states have been actively seeking to harmonise security, neither has taken real action to bridge the gulf between government and citizens that they so lack, and which lies at the heart of their own cross-border political failures. Instead, the two countries have agreed on a militarised approach that tackles only one aspect of the problem inadequately and leaves room for the other parts of the system of crime, abuse, suspicion, and revenge to flourish.

The pastoralist researchers have shown that foundational elements of the governance system (the distribution of power, productive resources, and values) are in dispute. Each major actor group is operating in ways that routinely assume that others are going to behave in untrustworthy ways, especially in relation to power, resources, or values (Luhmann, 1979). And the situation is getting worse: distrust redirects a lot of energy into conflict, defence and suspicion, and leaves people with little room to innovate in unprejudiced ways.

If we consider that the problem is distrust, then the solution will be different from that which has gone before. Community, civil society, government and the armed forces can reform their actions on basis of positive policies and actions that build trust, be they in forging a cross-society collaboration to deal with crime, or in promoting local livelihoods, celebrating cultures, or reforming services. Many of the existing policies have the potential to work, but only if every one of the major actors is on board to reform how they are designed and delivered, building trust along the way. Military solutions can change to community-agreed policing that spans the borders. Resource-sharing solutions can start with the residents who are going to implement the policy on the ground and whose traditional institutions have already worked out a lot of what the policy should involve. Judicial solutions can begin with initiatives that bring the state and customary systems of justice into first small- and then larger-scale agreements.

The responses should be small trust-building steps that build one upon the other. They need to consist of equal negotiations (rather than 'consultations') that can lead to agreements on specific activities within and across a given sector, geography or political unit, with actual budgets and real promises – with sanctions for failing to deliver – which in turn can lead to binding agreements on institutions, laws and sanctions. The reality, as Luhmann suggests, will not be a roadmap, but a commitment to ensuring to bring the actors together into agreement at every stage.

What can pastoralists do?

To conclude this case study, we present some of the pastoralist arguments for what their own community leadership needs to do in the light of all the above. The first comes from a group of women who, fed up with inertia by both pastoralist elders and the two governments, took the initiative to negotiate more vigorously. It shows the powers and capacities of women and their organising.

> **...there were so many deaths, so we asked the men for help to stop the revenge and mistrust between communities, and when they didn't escort us, we women went anyway, out of desperation. We made a list of women who would go from every parish in Nakapelimoru (Karamoja) [to talk to the Turkana about stopping the raiding]. We had a meeting, made noise. Some women were negative. Why did we want this meeting? We said, the men are getting finished in big numbers. We are left by ourselves. The men told us that if we want to get killed, we should be going for raids. In Kotido, we moved to other places to have these conversations. A small number went to Kaabong and Dodoth. We sent a message to Turkana at Loyoro in Kenya, but they refused us. We decided to move to Turkana by ourselves. The Turkana women in Nakitongo stayed for four days, asking what we must do to save our children. The men felt the women were defeating them, so they started to work on solutions too. (Older female researcher)**

The following excerpts come from a conversation between different male and female members of the community teams, discussing how communities with excellent analysis and increased confidence can increase the power of their negotiation through engaging the state, rather than turning away from it:

> **The stories we have heard from women, men, and young people, have affected all of us. We will call for policies that everyone knows and follows. We're thinking of an office run by pastoralists, with people from each community, Bokora, Jie, Turkana, Matheniko, Dodoth etc. When there are issues, the people from that place know how the issues are arising. (Younger male researcher)**

> **We had such an office before [in a traditional way], but the leaders stopped listening to one another. They got diverted by running after the raided animals. They didn't focus on the institution that we need. Pastoralist leaders have become older and weaker. They are not followed. (Older female researcher)**

> **The new office should deal with any issues related to pastoralists, not only raids. The representatives would be like teachers, organising meetings, bringing awareness to people as to what they should be doing. It will give information to the government and NGOs. The kraal leaders will form a network. Kraal leaders negotiate resource sharing with other kraal leaders. If they need further permissions, they go to the broader pastoralist association. When they need to influence something beyond the pastoralists, they then will engage government. Success will come if we all believe that any problem that comes has a solution within us. (Younger researcher)**

Citizens' own institutions have come under intense pressure from the web of intersecting insecurities and the erosion of trust. For all the reasons of power and money, they have been unable to stop abuses and failures of representation. But the pastoralists who were part of this research are united in a belief that rebuilding vital community institutions could well be the only means by which community members, young and old, women and men, will have any chance of changing the way they are governed. Kraal leaders still administer decisions affecting much of the productivity and the safety of much of the rural population. Female and male elders and seers still give the people a sense of moral direction. Women, refusing to accept the horrors of gendered violence, are making alliances and associations that bind communities together. Young people are capable of a wealth of innovation if they have the chance. The younger members of the research team were clear that divisions between youth and the elders are not irreparable. It is not a long stretch to imagine a renaissance of the people's own institutions that could offer them a house from which to engage powerfully with their governments. Civil society organisations could do much to back the communities in this regard. Much, of course, depends on governments, and particularly security forces, to change the conditions so that people are trusted to take part in the policy process as a matter of right.

Afterword

The Turkana Karamoja Research Team members continue to work on the issues that we have reported here. Their communities are making slow but significant progress in their engagements with the two governments. For any questions about this case study contact the researchers at FOLT: info@friendsoflaketurkana.org and at Karamoja Development Forum: karamojadf@gmail.com or contact Patta Scott-Villiers at IDS: p.scott-villiers@ids.ac.uk

The Lion, the Leopard, the Hyena and the Fox, another publication produced by pastoralist researchers, forms a part of their ongoing negotiation for change.

Contributors

Asiyo Jeremiah: Karimojong, born in Moroto 30 years ago, an educationist and action researcher.

Ayepio Elim: In his mid-30s, Ayepio resides in Lotere, where his family are agro-pastoralists. He is interested in telling stories of traditional coping mechanisms of the Turkana.

Ayoo Florence: Born of Nakapalimoru which neighbours Turkana, she and her community experience first-hand relations with that community, Ayoo partially completed formal education.

Alastair Scott-Villiers: An advisor on citizen-state relations in insecure areas of East Africa and the Horn. He has been supporting pastoralists to do participatory research since the 1990s.

Charity Amei: Born of Napak District, and resident of Moroto, Charity graduated with a BA from Makerere University. She has been involved in research since 2018.

Edukio Namoe Margaret: From Turkana East Sub-County, she used to help her grandmother to look after kid goats.

Ekaale Epakan: Kenyan journalist and human rights activist, born and raised in Kolobeyei, Turkana West.

Ewoton Lominamoe: A 57 year old pastoralist and a Loreng resident in Turkana West sub-county, kraal leader.

Ichor Imana: Elder and retired politician, former peace advisor of Turkana County Government.

Ikal Ang'elei: Leader of Friends of Lake Turkana.

Ilukol Manasseh: Born of Namalu in Nakapiripirit District where he grew up as a pastoralist. He later went to school and university.

Irine Iria Erupe: Raised in Turkana North, 28 years old. Before joining school and graduating with a diploma, she was helping her parents in taking care of lambs and kid goats.

Lodukui Francis: Born of Kapisinyang parish in Kotido District, a reformed raider, a Kraal Leader in Losilang.

Lomol Rhainer Koryang Ajie: Research and cultural enthusiast born from Kotido.

Loru Echor: Born in Rupa Sub County, in Moroto District, Echor is a pastoralist, and has been involved in cattle trade in Moroto and neighbouring areas.

Losike Emanman: A Turkana herdsman and a resident of Nakitong'o.

Michael Odhiambo: A policy researcher focusing on pro-poor policy, legal and institutional frameworks.

Patta Scott-Villiers: Participatory research leader at Institute of Development Studies.

Sagal Tioko: A pastoralist mother of 10 and a resident of Urum. She is in her late 70s.

Simon Akol Wajao: 33 years old and a Turkana youth leader.

Simon Lobur: 28 years old and is a social media enthusiast and radio broadcaster.

Simon Longoli: Executive Director of Karamoja Development Forum.

Thomas Ekidor Kiyong'a: Youth leader. Born and raised in Kakuma, Thomas spent his childhood herding livestock before joining formal school.

Vicky Abura: Karimojong from Napak District and a resident of Moroto District, Vicky holds a BA and a certificate in extramural research.

EAST AFRICA APPENDIX: Climate data analysis

Rainfall in Turkana and Karamoja is, and has long been, very low and highly variable from year to year and place to place. There is no month in either territory when rainfall exceeds evaporation potential. Its scarcity and variability are the reasons why pastoralism is the dominant mode of production here and it is why agreements to share access to grazing and water between different territories and in safety are so important. The extensive grazing system involves mobility across often large distances a way of production that requires security arrangements to be largely maintained by herders themselves.

In the border zone, herds and families are sometimes scattered across open rangeland and sometimes gathered close around dry season waterpoints and in pasture reserves. Both the importance of mobility and the difficulty of securing people and herds explain why the rules of cooperation rely on sophisticated and historically evolved cultural, technical, and legal (customary law) norms and practices. The current generosity of Matheniko and Jie towards Turkana bringing herds out of the much dryer land of Turkana West into wetter Karamoja is a contemporary manifestation of a very old practice. It demonstrates how economic and social relations have a basis in climate and suggests that strategies for adapting to climate change will draw on these relations. In this research it was Turkana who talked most about the changing climate as their territory is significantly drier than Karamoja, and they must move across an international border to maintain their livelihood, where their citizenship of another state puts them at a disadvantage.

Men and women elders in Turkana said that the six months of wet season and six of dry that they remember has changed to more patchy rain at any time between the months of April and November:

> **It used to rain, six months in the dry season and six months in the wet season and when it rained, we got wild fruits from this and that tree. When it rained, we could plough. We got cheese and honey. And the cheese would let us survive the dry season.**[6]

Their descriptions of the changing climate are in line with meteorological studies. Extreme drought events in Turkana have increased in recent decades, with only 29 per cent of drought occurrences falling in the two decades between 1950 and 1970 in contrast to 48 per cent of drought years occurring during the last two decades between 1990 and 2012 (Opiyo et al., 2013), yet rainfall is slightly higher than in the past (Opiyo, 2014). Turkana lies in a long valley that runs south-east to north-west and separates the Ethiopian from the Kenya highlands to the north and south respectively.

An investigation by climate scientists into the low-level jet stream that blows through this depression and is associated with the area's aridity suggests that large-scale climate dynamics, including rising surface temperatures, has weakened the jet over the last 30–40 years. A weaker wind is associated with higher rainfall in the valley (King et al., 2021).

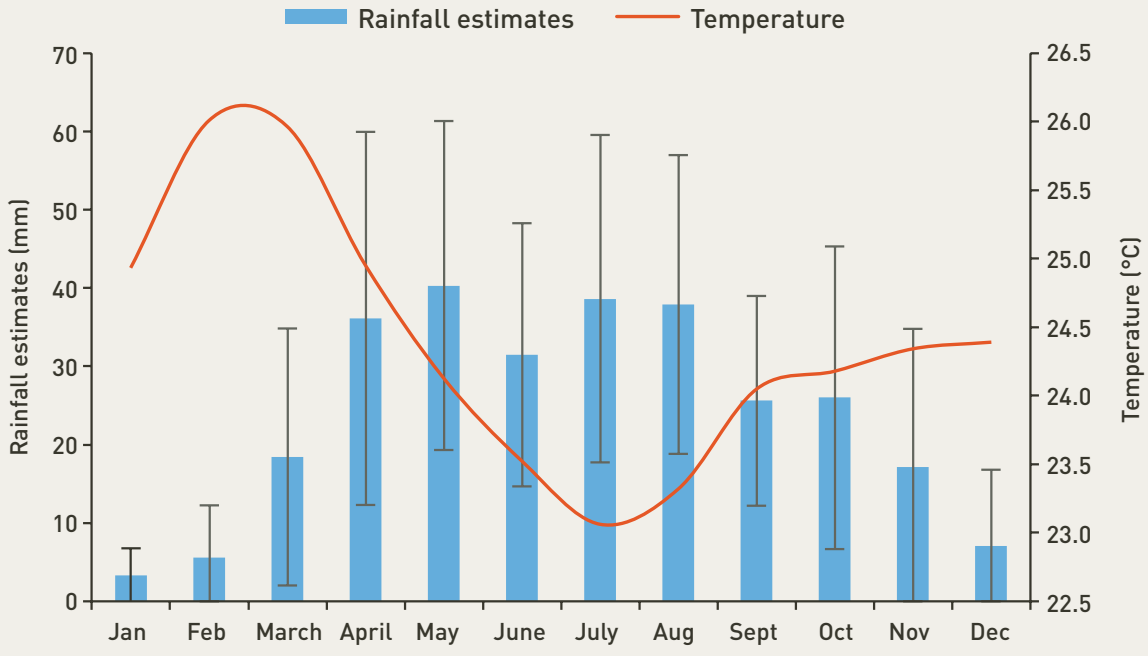
Among pastoralists these changes in temperature and rainfall distribution are understood to have come about because of changes in human and non-human activity including the ways in which rituals are maintained, land is looked after, and society behaves. For instance, one young herder noted that 'when the conflict came, the drought got worse'. In Komio people spoke of a plethora of seers (*ngimurok)* emerging where there had once been few, all offering conflicting advice and instructions. One elder commented that all these competing *ngimurok* 'mess up each other's work' on rain. 'That is why now we have all this... That is why God is distant from us and that is why the sun is burning us. Ehh.' The herder expressed a sense of loss which we heard quite often. It was one way in which climate change was affecting conflict – not by causing it, but by making it seem that old institutions had lost their way. It is these same institutions that declare war and peace and that arbitrate over justice in the traditional realm, so when their power is manifestly failing, their function in peace is undermined.

Karamoja is at a higher elevation than Turkana and has overall higher rainfall. Between 1979 and 2009 there was a progressive rise in temperature, with mean temperature across the sub-region increasing by 1.3°C and maximum temperatures by 1.6°C (Chaplin et al., 2017). Rainfall increased over the same period, but the increase is small and possibility not significant. Year-to-year rainfall variability increased between 1981 and 2015 (ibid). The very high quantitative variability is shown in the graph below for Karamoja. Variability within each month has increased and the overall season of rains has lengthened.

Rainfall, and therefore pasture and standing water variability is the reason why community agreements to share access to grazing and water are particularly important and why the cultural basis for them is so profound. The deep economic and social relations that span the Kenya–Uganda border in this region are rooted in climate and land, as much as in a shared heritage. Extending the findings of our ethnographic research across the geography, a climate analysis using satellite data adds a spatial and temporal grounding to the social and political analysis. In a first round, a team at Satellite Catapult generated maps of vegetation indices and surface soil moisture covering the study area and

FIGURE 6: AVERAGE MONTHLY RAINFALL ESTIMATES FOR KARAMOJA, 1981–2015

Error bars represent standard deviation in average monthly rainfall estimates.



Source: Chaplin et al. (2017)

a period of 14 months. In a second round they extended the analysis back to 2017, showing change over a longer period.

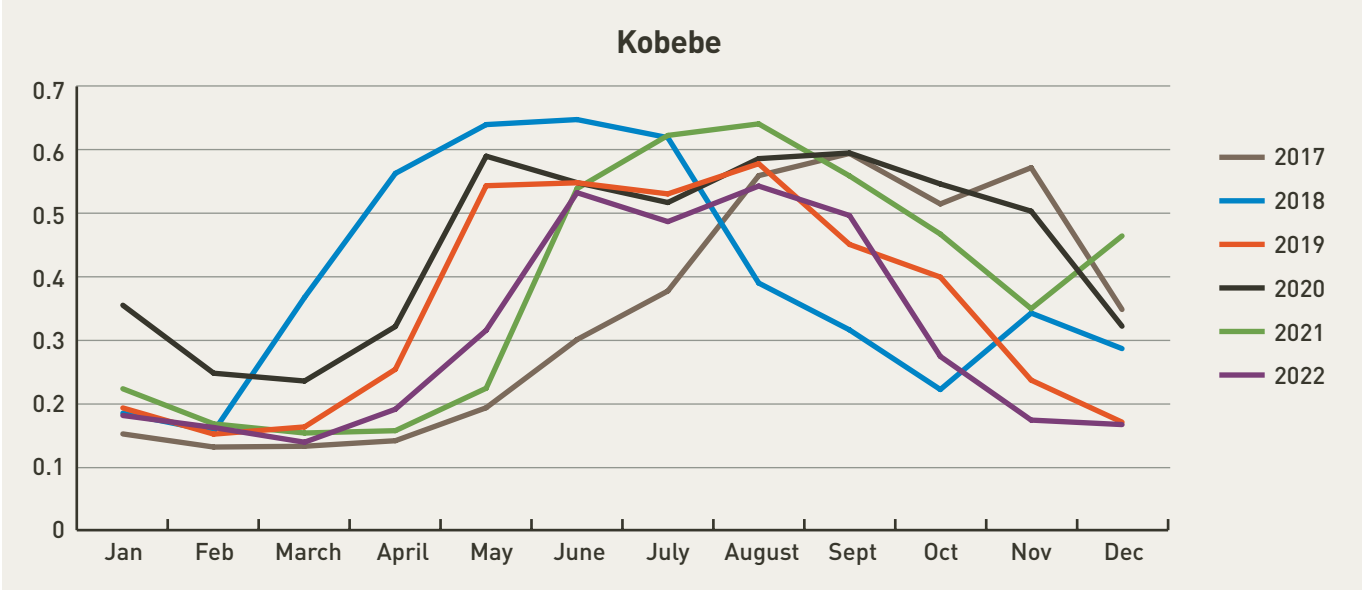
Analysis of satellite data recording vegetation greenness allows a view of changing patterns of pasture over time and space, in a geospatial register. Vegetation cover in the study area shifts from one part of the territory to another, except along some permanent watercourses. Figure 7 shows the vegetation at three sites, Kobebe in the south of the study area, Nakapelimoru, 45 kilometres to the north-east and Kalapata 120 kilometres to the north, using the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI).[7] Each colour shows the 'greenness' of the vegetation for a different year between 2017 and 2022. The individual graphs demonstrate the high degree of variability in the same site from year to year. Comparison of the three graphs demonstrates the variability between the sites in any one year. While there is a clear dry and rainy season (dryer from October to March and wetter from April to September) the graphs demonstrate how pastoralists accessing the pasture must make decisions to move into an area or away from it *at different times each year*.

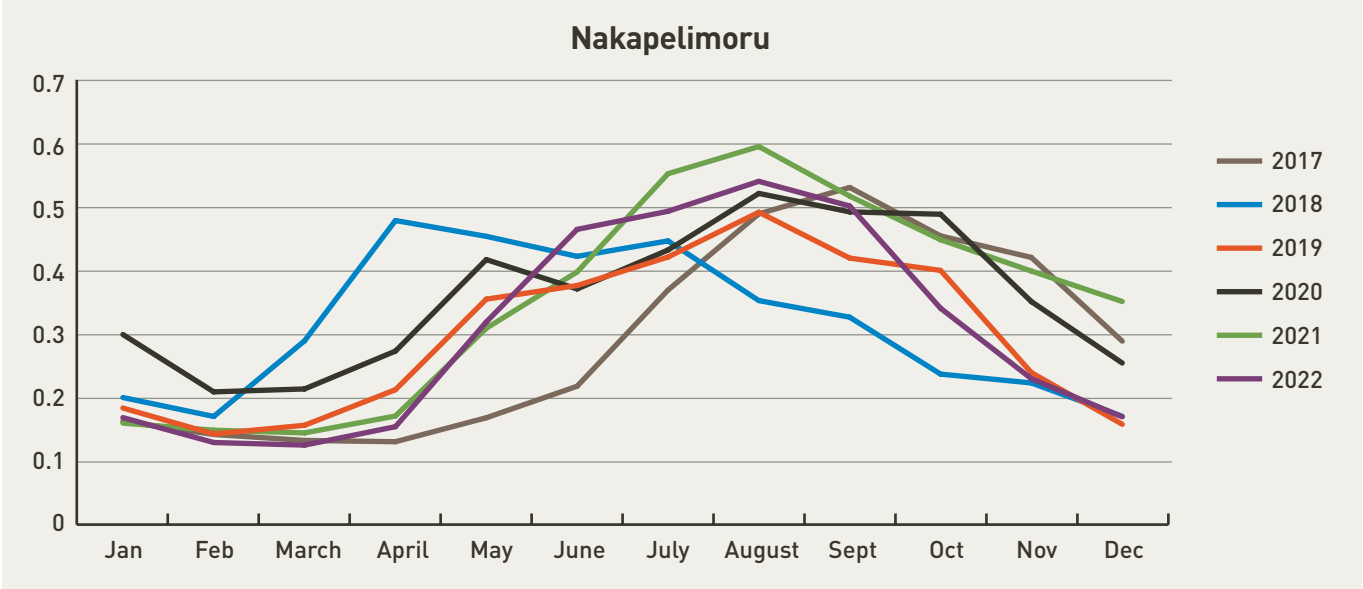
Figure 8 shows how the greenness changed across the whole study area (100km x 200km) month by month between November 2021 and December 2022. It indicates the extremely large variation across the territory and month by month.

In Figure 8, the mosaic can be seen across the whole study area (approximately 20,000 km^2) over a period of 14 months. It demonstrates why the changing mosaic of pastureland is not subdivided to different owners, but shared between large groups who negotiate access. In Figure 9, homing in on a 5km radius of Kobebe dam at the centre, the variation in pasture levels across the years is shown in a comparison of cover between November 2021 and November 2022. It suggests why pastoralists are not transhumant in the sense of having fixed summer and winter grazing areas. The decision as to where to move is based on where there is grass, and where an agreement can be made to graze. The satellite coverage for the years 2017 to 2022 shown in the graph demonstrates the variability over a longer period, indicating further the complexity of movement patterns needed in different years.

The mosaic pattern of pasture helps us see the events at Kobebe described in this paper in their geographical context. Pastoralists had gathered by the dam in large numbers because the drought in other areas was intense, an unusually extreme series of annual dry seasons particularly on the Turkana side. The response of the military authorities to the presence of so many herders in one place, many of whom were carrying guns, was therefore not surprising.

FIGURE 7: NDVI FOR KOBEBE, NAKAPELIMORU AND KALAPATA





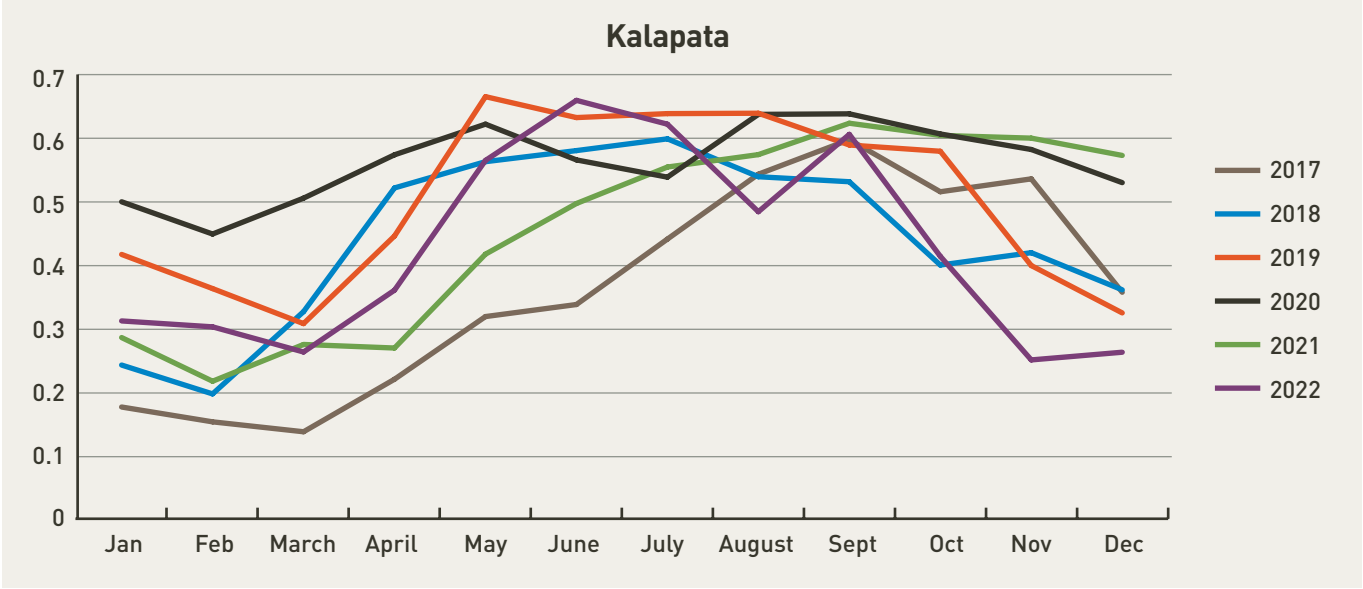
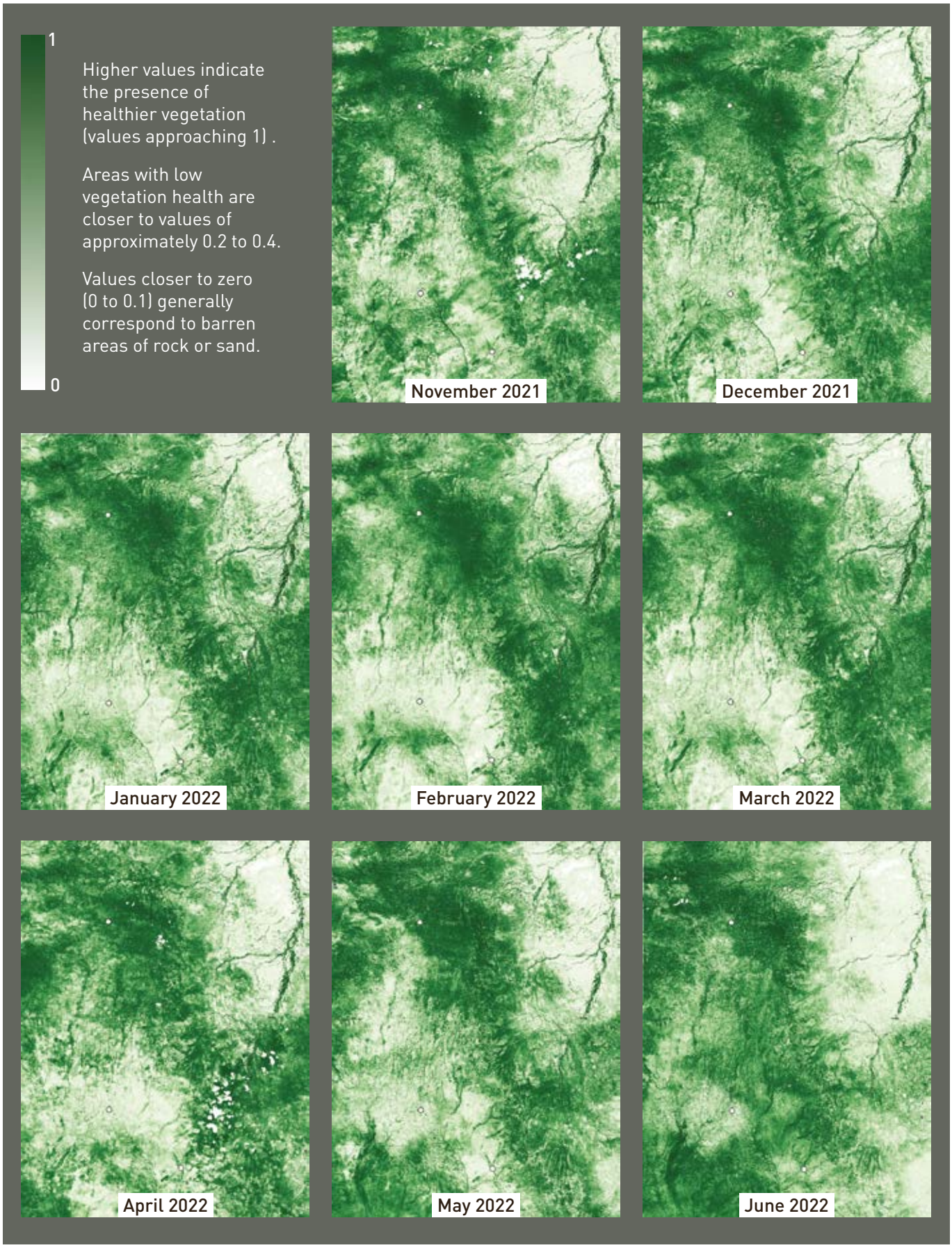


FIGURE 8: NDVI FOR THE STUDY AREA NOVEMBER 2021 TO DECEMBER 2022

Modified Copernicus Sentinel data 2023 Sentinel Hub. Satellite imagery and analysis by Satellite Catapult.



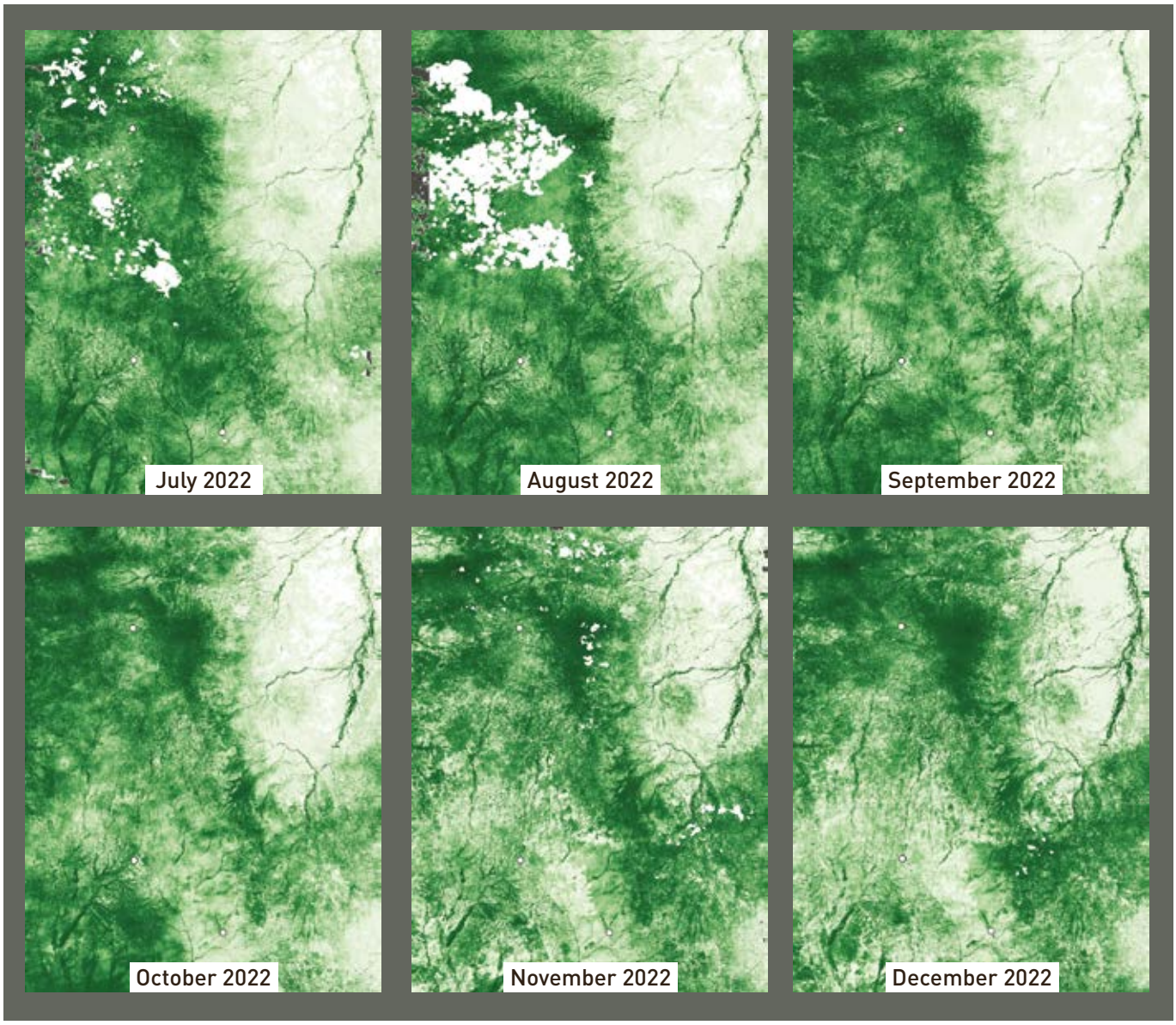
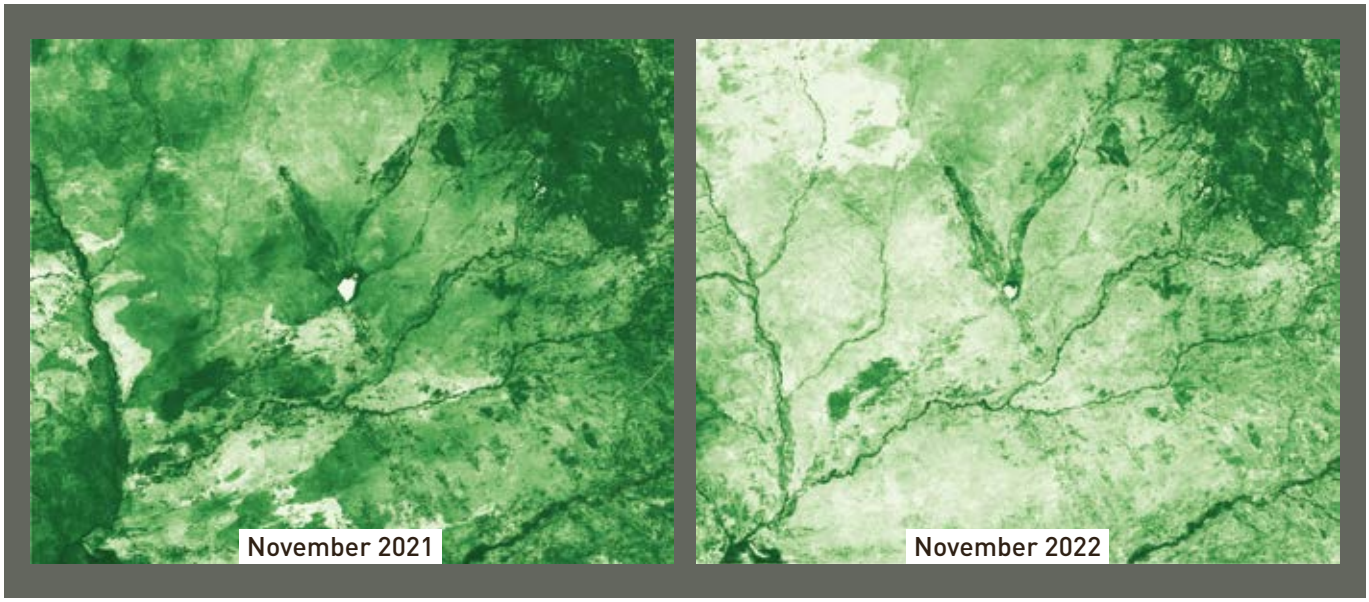


FIGURE 9: NDVI FOR KOBEBE (5KM RADIUS) NOVEMBER 2021 AND NOVEMBER 2022



Pastoralist mobility and capability for making natural resource sharing agreements is an adaptive response to low and variable rainfall patterns. Mobility takes a variety of forms, including moving to more distant pastures, to protected dry season grazing reserves, negotiating with neighbouring pastoralists for access to their reserves, distributing small stock among extended family, while other techniques include exchanging grain for stock with farmers, drying milk, and collecting bush foods. Different ways of dealing with the new rainfall patterns have included increasing the number of times that a herd moves, splitting the herd into more smaller sections and scattering them to different locations or keeping a smaller herd and relying on other sources of livelihood, including cropping and/or food aid. Recent adaptations have also added to the repertoire of dry season management, including selling animals to buy imported food in markets (Derbyshire et al., 2021). People's responses to climate change are entwined with their response to many other changes. Their repertoires have been influenced by new infrastructure, livelihood opportunities, settlements, and markets. Pastoralists move, for instance, to take advantage of price differentials between markets on different sides of the international border.

Herders, women, and elders pointed to the ways in which the ever more uncertain climate had strengthened the need for security and agreement with neighbours. These agreements must be honoured even if a government intervenes to undermine them. One Jie kraal leader reminded us that in 2016 the Uganda government asked Turkana to leave Karamoja. But the Jie moved their herds out of Kotido into neighbouring Abim and Lango and invited Turkana to bring in their herds to graze on the pastures they had left. In 2022–23 the communities made similar agreements. A changing climate only increases the need for a reliable system of sharing, in which security of people, herds and agreements is central, and in which not only laws and practices, but also beliefs, are essential elements.

Endnotes

1. See Appendix 1 for a brief analysis of climate data.
2. In mid-2023, one bull might have been worth US$600 in a Karamoja market prices (Harvest Money, 2023) – and a herd might have been worth anything from US$25,000 to US$100,000 depending on its size, composition, and prevailing market.
3. 'Everyday peace' is 'the capacity of so-called ordinary people to disrupt violent conflict and forge pro-social relationships in conflict-affected societies' (MacGinty, 2021).
4. The report has an innovative visual layout designed for community members who read and who do not read, to share among themselves and to use when discussing the issues of their security to government and others.
5. The list of participants is confusing about the nature of the meeting(s). The list is on headed paper of Operation Wealth Creation, and the meeting title is indicated as 'CC-OWC & SPA-D Joint Security Meeting at Hotel Africana, Moroto District, 20 Feb 23.'
6. Interestingly, an elder recorded by a team of anthropologists in Turkana East said almost the same thing, see Derbyshire et al. (2021).
7. NDVI is an index for quantifying green vegetation. It normalizes green leaf scattering in Near Infra-red wavelengths with chlorophyll absorption in red wavelengths. The value range of the NDVI is -1 to 1. Negative values of NDVI (values approaching -1) correspond to water. Values close to zero (-0.1 to 0.1) generally correspond to barren areas of rock, sand, or snow. Low, positive values represent shrub and grassland (approximately 0.2 to 0.4). It is a good proxy for live green vegetation. Source: Sentinel Hub (2023).

PART 3:
West Africa case study

TRANSHUMANT HERDERS IN THE BORDERLANDS OF NIGERIA AND THE CHAD BASIN:
Patterns of insecurity and priorities for peace

Adam Higazi is a researcher with two decades of experience in West and Central Africa. He is an ethnographer working among pastoralists and farmers in rural areas of central and northern Nigeria and in Niger Republic and Cameroon. His academic background is in geography, anthropology, development studies, and botany, with a doctorate from the University of Oxford in 2011. He held post-doctoral fellowships at Cambridge University and the University of Amsterdam and has published in leading African studies journals and edited volumes. Higazi has also worked for the UN and NGOs on peacebuilding and conflict analysis and on biodiversity conservation. He is a research affiliate at Modibbo Adama University Yola – Adamawa State, Nigeria – and of the Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam.

Nigeria is undergoing rapid and dynamic changes in land use and in security conditions in rural areas. These are impacting the grazing areas and transhumance patterns of herders, and relationships between herders, farmers and wider society. Changes in one location can have impacts in another, as herders move with their livestock to places with available land and water, in some cases across borders – such as between Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. How pastoral systems interconnect regionally and in borderlands of west and central Africa is only partially documented and understood, which makes it difficult to know the extent to which pastoral conflicts have cross-border elements or implications. This is a point of focus in this study, based on fieldwork in borderlands of Nigeria and Cameroon.

Mobility is a key adaptation of livestock herders in Nigeria and across Africa to environmental variability and strong seasonality in climate and vegetation. Differences in rainfall and in the availability of pasture, water and crop residues between locations depending on latitude, topography, land use, soils, and seasons, combined with socio-political factors that determine access, explain why herders continue to be mobile. Peace and security are among the political and social factors that pastoralists consider when making decisions on where to move their livestock. Different kinds of armed conflict and violent crime have proliferated in rural Nigeria – as well as in other parts of west-central Africa. In some cases, pastoralists have redirected their seasonal movements or relocated completely within or outside Nigeria to avoid high-risk areas.

In Nigeria, analysis and discussion of herders tend to be highly politicised and negative. There have been deadly conflicts involving herders and farmers in some parts of the country and there are very serious security challenges around banditry and kidnapping for ransom. People from pastoral backgrounds are implicated in violent conflict and insecurity but pastoralists are also victims of kidnapping and of violent attacks against them. Herders do not form a single socio-political 'bloc', even where they have a common ethnic identity. The majority of herders in Nigeria are ethnic Fulani, who consist of many different clans and families that depend on their cattle and other livestock for their survival, as that is their main wealth. But Fulani herders are not a homogenous 'community' – rather they consist of many kinship groups forming separate though in some cases inter-connected networks. Among herders there are also differences based on generation (youth and elders) and in the social roles of men, women and children.

Herding groups tend to be decentralised and relatively autonomous, and their decision-making is generally not controlled by any association or central authority. Nonetheless they depend on socio-economic interactions with wider society and on local chiefs and state officials to access land and grazing routes peacefully. Pastoral Fulani groups are widely dispersed with different geographical bases and variations in their breeds of cattle and in the ecological adaptations of their animals. Also, the Chad Basin and especially Borno State in north-east Nigeria has a higher ethno-linguistic diversity of pastoralists than other parts of Nigeria and the region. These variations need to be factored into how policy interventions are made, as each group has its own representatives, with socio-cultural, geographic, and linguistic specificities. Pastoral systems, including transhumance movements, vary from one place to another and are determined by rainfall, vegetation, the relationships between communities (farmer-herder and herder-herder) and state policy.

Understanding pastoral systems and pastoral society is essential for understanding the forms of conflict and insecurity that involve and affect herders. Interactions between crop farming and livestock herding are important because there are complementarities that can be reinforced to reduce tensions and improve production in each sector. Where there is violent conflict, it is usually not simply the result of 'competition' between groups. Many variables and processes impact social relations in borderland areas, ranging from land governance, state security policies, and the presence of armed groups and violent criminals. The performance of the state in rural governance and its ability to provide security is a significant concern in many areas.

The presence or absence of existing conflicts in places that herders migrate through and the actions of farmers and herding groups themselves all impact security dynamics. The provision of education, veterinary services and health facilities to herders and farmers in rural areas would be likely to improve the life chances of young people. However, in XCEPT research field sites, herders and farmers alike often pointed out that these social goods and necessities were lacking or were not being maintained. This study probes these inter-linked issues in selected field sites, connecting local, subregional and regional dynamics. Many peace and security challenges experienced by herders, including violent criminality, armed insurgency and inter-community conflict, relate to how borderland areas are governed. In many instances state institutions have not been working with herder and other communities and civil society groups to tackle insecurity and prevent and resolve conflict.

The case study is structured as follows. The sub-section immediately below introduces the rationale and objectives and outlines the research methods. The following section outlines the main sources and forms of insecurity affecting and involving herders, with some thematic context on land issues and on social stigmatisation and political exclusion of pastoralists. Examples drawn from fieldwork, including a brief outline of armed conflict in Numan (Adamawa State), focus on different dimensions of insecurity and conflict, and consider cross-border aspects and implications. The third section of the case study has a more specific focus on borderlands and on the cross-border movement of herders, highlighting the main trends and recording some of the experiences of migrating herders in the borderlands of Nigeria–Cameroon, Niger-Nigeria and the Chad Basin. The final section draws some conclusions from the research.

Research method

Research for this study was carried out through fieldwork in pastoral and farming communities in the borderlands of northern Nigeria – in pastoral camps and in locations along the routes that herders follow during transhumance and migration. Fieldwork was conducted at intervals between 2020 and 2023, beginning with scoping studies and then progressing to longer periods in the field that were spent visiting pastoral camps and villages and doing individual and group interviews. Most of the fieldwork was carried out between September 2021 and the end of 2022, with a period of prolonged fieldwork between August and December 2022. In May 2023, community and academic workshops were held in Yola and Maiduguri – the capitals of Adamawa and Borno States respectively, both borderland states in northern Nigeria – alongside further interviews to present and gain feedback on research findings.

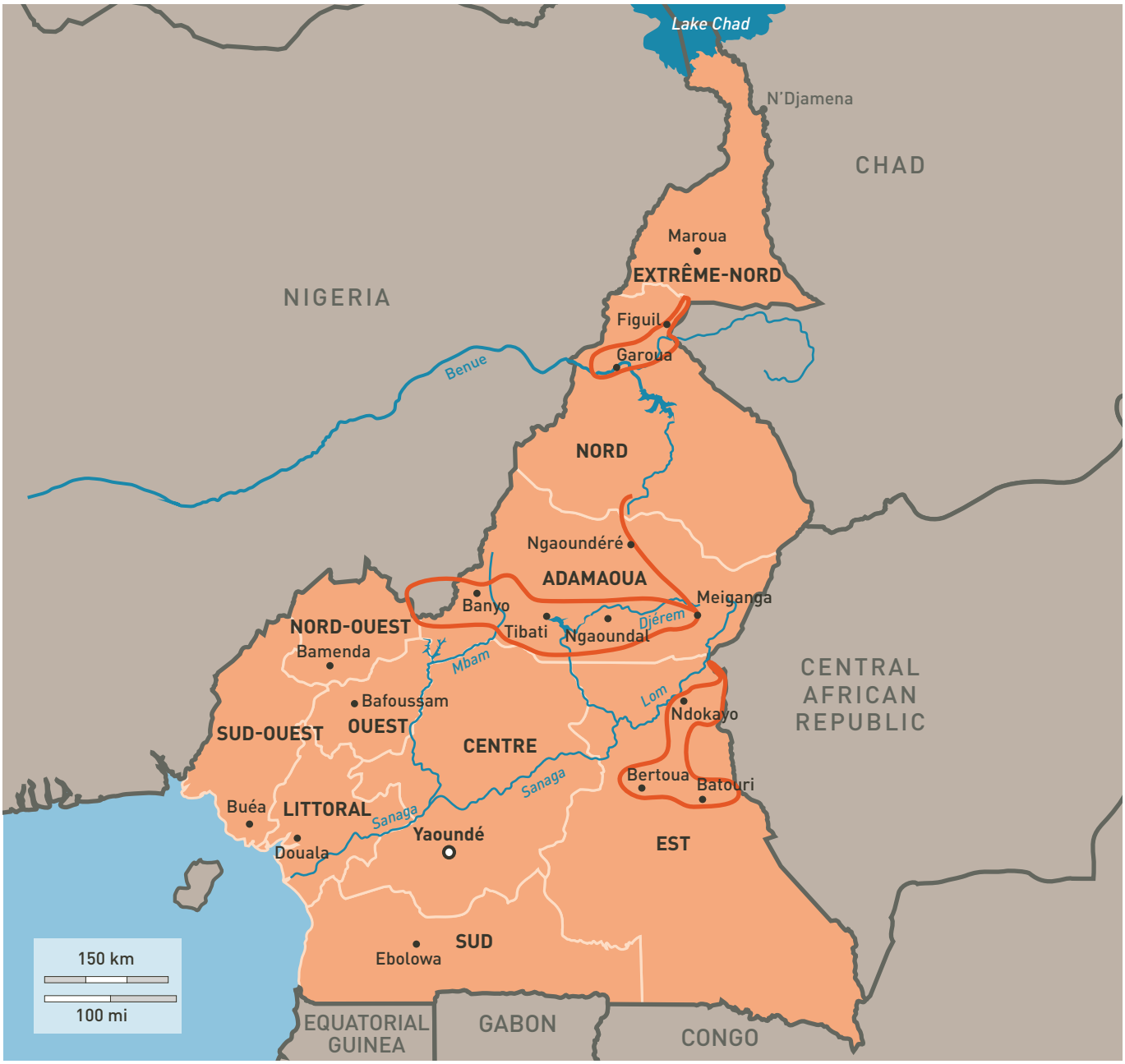
MAP OF NIGERIA WITH RESEARCH SITES MARKED IN ORANGE

The work focused on selected areas of northern Nigeria's borderlands, particularly along sections of the Nigeria–Niger and Nigeria–Cameroon borders. In the case of the Nigeria–Niger border, field research only took place in northern Nigeria. Research took place on both sides of the border between northern Nigeria and Cameroon. Fieldwork was carried out in Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe, and Borno States in north-east Nigeria, Jigawa and Kano States in north-west Nigeria, and the Adamaoua, East, and North regions of Cameroon. Research sites included border areas, but also areas that pastoralists migrate to or pass through having crossed borders. Some of the field sites had experienced violent conflict and violent crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, while other areas were more peaceful. Research locations were selected along transhumance corridors, in areas that pastoralists migrate to or from, and in places where there was a record of conflict between pastoralists and farmers, alongside considerations related to risk and access.

Fieldwork was supplemented by analysis of satellite data, the purpose of which was to observe changes in land use and land cover over time, with a focus on changes to the cultivated land area and to available pastoral land. The satellite imagery showed changes in vegetation cover over periods of years, and was complemented by ground-level observations to check and verify the interpretation of the satellite data and to record the reasons for land-use change, principally by making enquiries among local people. The academic seminars at the University of Maiduguri and at Modibbo Adama University, Yola, were important for gaining feedback on the satellite data and on other aspects of the research.

Some of the satellite data used initially had limitations in the classification of vegetation cover, as much depends on the resolution of the imagery. If different types of vegetation are misclassified, such as 'shrubland' and 'cropland', it changes the results. This points to the

MAP OF CAMEROON WITH RESEARCH SITES MARKED IN ORANGE



importance of field data on land cover to check and refine satellite data. The findings of the analysis of changes in cropping intensity based on the interpretation of satellite imagery over a six-year period for Jigawa State were crosschecked using ground-truth assessments and were found to be broadly consistent with the situation on the ground. Satellite imagery was also analysed for the other field sites in Nigeria and Cameroon for this study, but only the Jigawa images are included in this case study because those were the best resolved.

The study was carried out by a team of researchers with longstanding experience in the region, including researchers from pastoral communities.[1] Where possible, ethnographic methods were used, whereby researchers stayed with families or communities in the areas among communities being studied. Fieldwork included direct observation, conversations, and a combination of key informant interviews and focus group discussions, held in the languages of the respondents. Research participants were primarily nomadic and transhumant pastoralists, local farmers cultivating a range of crops, as well as representatives from government, traditional leaders, and security organisations.

Men and women were interviewed, including pastoral women across the field sites and of different ages. A gender balance in terms of the ratio of male and female respondents was not achieved, although it was more even in some locations than others. Pastoral

youths (Fulfulde: *sukaaBe*) were among respondents and gave important insights as they are the main group who carry out day to day herding. However, they were underrepresented compared to higher age sets who tend to represent their families and camps in discussions and who include community leaders (*Ardo'en*). Future research could usefully focus more specifically on pastoral youth – male and female.

Insecurity affecting and involving herders

This section looks at causes and manifestations of insecurity and violence affecting and involving herder communities in the borderlands and across borders in northern Nigeria.

A hostile environment for herders

The borderlands of northern Nigeria are in certain respects a hostile environment for pastoralism. There is variation between states and communities, and across borders – it is not a uniform picture – but there is a widespread sense of crisis among herder communities. The general situation is one of diminishing access to grazing land, pasture and water, with government policies and security interventions that work against the collective interests and needs of pastoralists.

Herders experience multiple types of insecurity and find it increasingly difficult to predictably pursue safe and productive lifestyles and livelihoods. Banditry and kidnapping, the Boko Haram armed insurgency, and violent conflict between communities have made life precarious in many rural areas of Nigeria and in parts of the wider region of west and central Africa. Herders and farmers are displaced from the hotspots of kidnapping, banditry and violent conflict into areas with lower levels of insecurity within Nigeria and across borders into neighbouring countries. Those who are unable or unwilling to move have to cope with the insecurity around them.

There is a perception among some groups that herders cause the 'hostile environment' in the borderlands of northern Nigeria and often operate above the law.[2] This perception reinforces negative perceptions and discrimination against herders, and contributes to tensions and instability. There have indeed been growing problems with violence and crime within pastoral communities and involving youths with pastoral Fulani backgrounds. This is reflected in the surge in kidnapping for ransom, rustling of cattle and raiding of villages – collectively referred to as banditry – which has become a major security problem across large parts of Nigeria.

However, most violent crimes such as kidnapping and cattle rustling are carried out by criminal gangs that consist of people from pastoral backgrounds as well as ethnically mixed gangs. Armed gangs kidnap people whose families they think can pay, usually supported by local informants who reside within towns and villages. Targets are selected opportunistically, and pastoralists are among the main victims because livestock can be quickly sold to pay ransoms.[3] Ethnicity is not a definitive factor in who is targeted, but if a gang leader and members are predominantly Fulani and the victims are mixed or are non-Fulani, it can increase local tensions.[4]

An additional perception is that herders from *outside* Nigeria are responsible for insecurity *inside* the country, and therefore that stemming the flow of herders moving into Nigeria will help manage insecurity.[5] XCEPT research found little evidence that herders from outside Nigeria are fuelling violence, and patterns of pastoral mobility across borders are often misunderstood. Many drivers of violence in Nigeria come from inside its borders. Fulani pastoralists are present across west and central Africa, and this can be instrumentalised by local political or traditional leaders who portray insecurity as being caused by foreign herders who are usurping the rights of local communities. In some cases, this discourse may be used to detract from their own governance failings or, during the Buhari administration (2015–23), as a populist tactic used by opposition parties at the state level against the ruling party at the federal level. Calling into question the citizenship of pastoralists is also a way of questioning their local civic rights and user rights to land and water. In villages and districts in northern Nigeria, there are local pastoralists who are well known and who have been there for generations, even if they move their cattle on transhumance seasonally. Farmers in Adamawa State, for example, clearly distinguish between different groups of herders – those who are locally based but who move seasonally; and those who arrive from outside the area. However, the protection of grazing land, transhumance corridors and campsites are not guaranteed even when herders have been living in a place or visiting it seasonally for many years. This is one of the causes of conflict.[6]

In the case of farmer-herder conflicts, there are usually local efforts to resolve them, with varying levels of success. Conflict prevention and resolution can occur relatively informally between the parties involved, such as a farmer and a herder and their families, or if that local level mediation does not work the disputes can be taken to the police and courts. Where there is larger-scale violence between communities, representatives including traditional and religious leaders, youth leaders, state officials, the police, and in some cases outside mediators are involved. The Nigerian state and international organisations are hardly addressing the challenges that contribute to the escalation of tensions. Violence could more usefully be prevented through identifying and tackling its root causes, while also supporting traditional institutions and other local actors focused on conflict resolution.

Fulani girls from the Hausa-speaking Sullubawa group in a dry season cattle camp, Kano State, north-west Nigeria, 25 February 2022. © Adam Higazi

There has been displacement of herders and farmers from the hotspots of kidnapping, banditry and violent conflict into areas with lower levels of insecurity within northern Nigeria and across borders into neighbouring countries. Those who are not able or willing to move have to cope with the insecurity around them. People respond to conflict and the presence of armed groups in different ways. In the case of pastoralists, some relocate, some reach an accommodation with armed actors, some join them, while others try to stay neutral, or resist. Banditry and insurgency are not discrete 'incidents' or 'cases' that can be addressed individually, but are often linked to armed movements. Non-state armed groups are enriching themselves through violent crime (notably kidnapping and cattle rustling) or fighting for a religious ideology, even while their existence can be traced to issues around governance and Nigeria's political economy. These armed groups are a reality that farmers and herders must navigate.

Pastoral migration, transhumance, security and insecurity

Pastoral mobility varies in purpose, distance, scale and in terms of who migrates. Transhumance is the seasonal movement of herders and their animals, usually back and forth between pastures and a home base, which may be a camp or village. Some transhumance movements occur across borders such as between Niger and Nigeria or Nigeria and Cameroon. This form of mobility is distinct from longer-term pastoral migration that involves relocation to different parts of a country or to other countries. Mobility is also needed for daily grazing to take livestock out to pasture and water, and within a season herders may move camps to respond to variations in local conditions.

Transhumance movements occur due to seasonal constraints in the availability of water and pasture. In semi-arid and dryland areas, being able to move livestock between spatially and temporally variable grazing areas and water points is an essential part of how livestock are sustained. While many transhumance patterns are long-established, they can change over time in response to environmental and political conditions. Transhumance is also determined by the farming cycle – from the planting of crops through to harvest – which strongly influences pastoralists' access to land. Different crops are harvested at different times, and harvest times vary between individual farmers and locations. This reinforces the importance of good communication between herders and farmers, so that the movement of herders into a farming area occurs at an agreed time, such as after the harvest of certain crops.

In northern Nigeria and more widely in the Sahel, a key factor in pastoral movement is the long dry season, which in the far north occurs – without rain – from October until as late as June. Grasses and vegetation diminish while surface and ground water can dry up or become inaccessible. For herds and flocks to remain in one place during this period they would need animal feed and plentiful water. Mobility is an essential part of pastoral adaptation to dry season aridity and inter-annual variations in rainfall – with more variability expected due to climate change. Pastoralists also move their livestock in the wet season, in search of uncultivated land during the period of rainfed farming.

A politician's farm blocking an international livestock route in Azare LGA, Bauchi State, north-east Nigeria. The route was marked by pillars and baobab trees on each side but was cultivated, preventing the passage of livestock. 2 March 2022. © Adam Higazi

Much pastoral movement is peaceful. But herders can be exposed to risks from armed groups or criminal gangs, and herding groups that engage in crimes such as kidnapping for ransom or that graze their livestock on crops are also a source of insecurity for farmers and for other herders. Loss of grazing land and the blockage of transhumance corridors impact pastoral mobility and increase the risk of livestock encroaching onto cropland. Where transhumance is viewed as a conflict trigger it is often because the stock routes and the pastures that herders are moving between have been cultivated.

Both seasonal transhumance and longer-term migration occur in response to different push and pull factors. There has been steady migration, dating back decades but accelerating in recent years, of herders in northern Nigeria moving eastwards and southwards (Stenning, 1957, 1959; Mohammadou, 1978; Boutrais, 1995; Blench, 1983, 1994; Turner, 2022). Herders from north-west Nigeria, in particular, have moved to the north-east, in some cases on the way towards central Africa, to relocate families and herds on a permanent basis. This is driven by a combination of land pressure in the north-west – as there is limited bush left for grazing – and violent conflict caused by banditry and the spread of armed groups in several north-western states. They have been moving to states such as Adamawa, Taraba, and parts of Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe.

Some herders have also crossed from north-west Nigeria into Niger Republic – or relocated their livestock there, where they were less likely to be raided by bandits. In this case, the movement of livestock and herders north from Nigeria to Niger was a response to insecurity and land pressure rather than seasonal pasture and water scarcity. If the security situation improved in north-west Nigeria, with a reduced risk of kidnapping and cattle rustling, it is conceivable that they would return as by origin these are Fulani herders from Nigeria, even if they have cross-border family ties in Niger Republic.

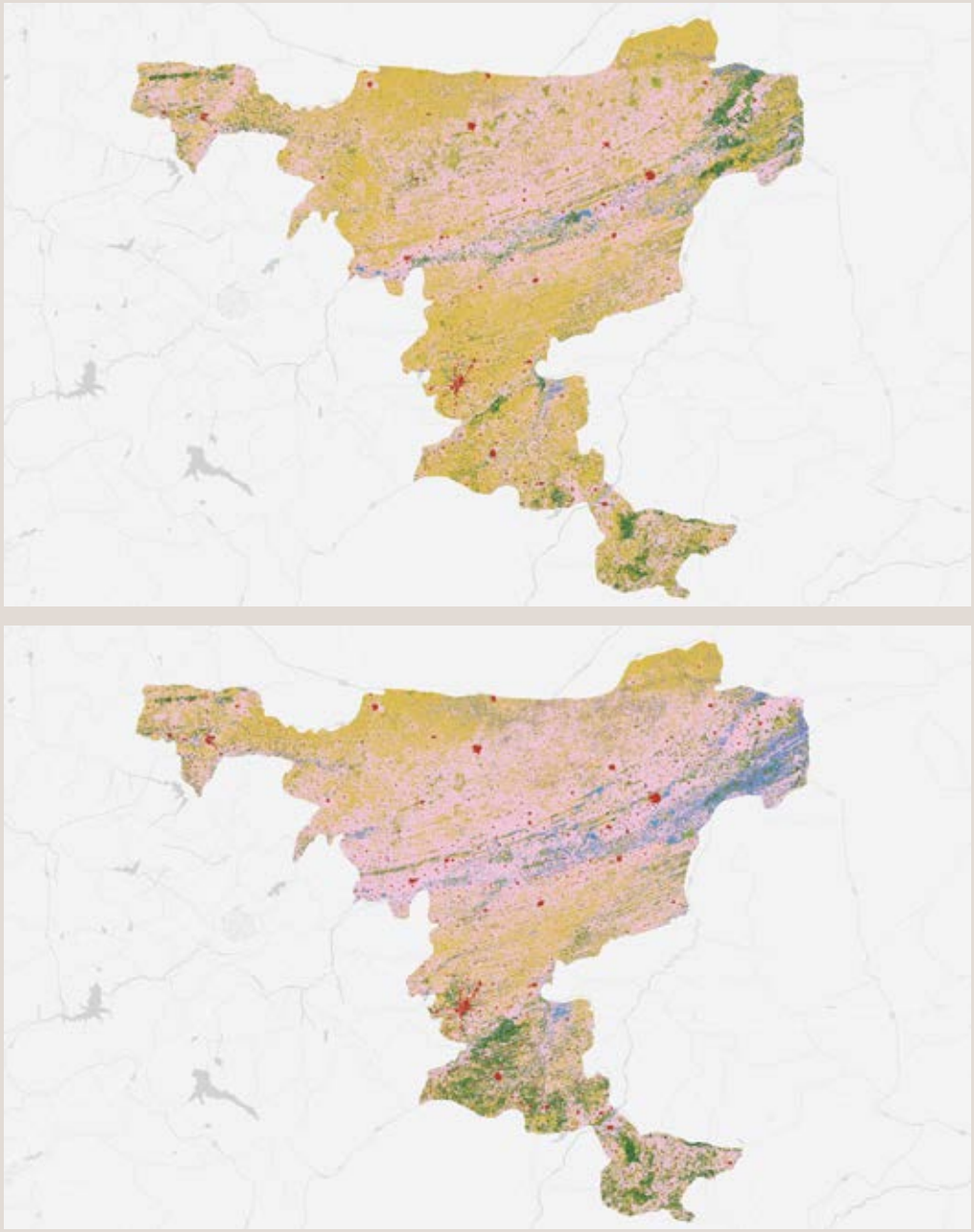
Pressure on land and pastoralist responses

Diminished user rights and reduced access to land for pastoralists can be a major cause of social instability in rural Nigeria and a problem for the pastoral economy. Population growth has contributed to the cultivation of areas that herders previously relied on for grazing, with a well-documented loss of grazing reserves and grazing land across north and central Nigeria[7] (see Box 4 on Jigawa State). Additionally, the blockage of livestock routes by farms and infrastructure has made mobility increasingly difficult for pastoralists.

A sense of injustice is being exacerbated by the acquisition of large tracts of land by political elites, traditional rulers, and businessmen – often taking land from peasant farmers and herders.[8] This leads to displacement and impoverishment and increases pressure on land elsewhere. There has also been a decline in the nutritional quality of grasses found on remaining grazing areas, with a reduction in plant diversity. This is caused by overgrazing and more widely by habitat loss, land degradation, deforestation and the increased use of powerful herbicides in agricultural practice that kill off grasses. In some areas of northern Nigeria there has been a spread of invasive weeds on pastoral grazing lands.[9] Affected rangelands are rendered much less productive or even useless for grazing animals.

BOX 4: INCREASING CULTIVATION AND LAND GRABBING IN JIGAWA STATE

Satellite mapping of cultivated areas in Jigawa State in northern Nigeria analysed for the purposes of this study shows a significant increase in the farmed area in a six-year period when comparing the wet seasons of 2016 and 2022. The areas in pink in the Jigawa State maps below mark the areas under cultivation, for 2016 in the first map and 2022 in the second. The satellite images indicate a 25 per cent increase in crop cover in this period. As pastoralists depend on land that is not cultivated for grazing their cattle and small ruminants, a corresponding reduction in pastoral land during the wet season in Jigawa State can be inferred.



Top: Jigawa State cultivated land area in wet season (July–Oct) 2016; and bottom, in wet season (July–Oct) 2022. Areas in pink mark cultivated land. Satellite imagery and analysis by Satellite Catapult, August 2023.

Levels of violent conflict in Jigawa State are low compared to the other states of north-west Nigeria and the neighbouring north-eastern state of Yobe. However, research findings indicated that state policies on land were causing grievances and considerable hardship in many rural areas, potentially creating conditions for increased tensions.[10] The seizing of farmland and pastoral land from communities and families by politicians in Jigawa and in corporate deals has led to displacement and impoverishment in the affected areas, and forced some pastoralists impacted to migrate elsewhere – out of Nigeria or to other states.

Dry season farming using rivers, ponds and in some areas small bore holes to irrigate crops has expanded in the parts of northern Nigeria where water is available throughout the year. Farming in the dry season through irrigation brings economic benefits to farmers and improves food security, but if cattle and other livestock are blocked from accessing water, it can cause tension and conflict between farmers and herders. This is explored among other factors, including the institutional failure to protect grazing land, in the section below on farmer-herder conflict.

Pastoralists respond to land pressures and rights of access primarily through either relocation or resistance, both of which have social consequences. Land pressures have a central role in shaping transhumance patterns, including across borders. Many pastoral households in northern Nigeria have already reduced their mobility or settled due to severe constraints on movement and reduced access to land. However, those with larger herds continue to move their cattle on transhumance even after the family establishes a permanent camp or settlement. Land pressure also motivates some herders to relocate from one country to another. Loss of grazing land was cited by many herders in the borderlands of north-east Nigeria and in Cameroon as being the principal factor leading them to migrate with their cattle and other livestock to central Africa (see section below), where the availability and quality of grazing land is greater, primarily due to the lower population density.[11]

In general, reduced mobility and sedentarisation of herds results in a reduction in cattle numbers, and, by extension, a reduction in the wealth of those households. If pastoralists completely settle, they tend to shift towards an agro-pastoral system, depending more on crop farming than pastoralism. The dominant trend, however, is for part of the family to settle and establish a permanent camp or house in a village while at the same time retaining cattle, which requires mobility. The herders looking after the cattle continue with transhumance while the rest of the family is settled and typically cultivates grains such as maize or guinea corn for subsistence.[12] In this scenario, the cattle – and often sheep and goats – continue to be the family's main source of wealth and their principal asset, but they are looked after by pastoral youth; the rest of the family only see the cattle for part of the year – for example in the rainy season.

There are also still nomadic pastoral families who continue to be mobile and do not farm – where the family unit migrates periodically, especially in the wet season or after a few years in one area. But larger pastoral herds cannot be kept on a sedentary basis in the current system where rangelands are limited and shrinking, water and natural grasses are scarce, especially in the dry season, and supplementary animal feed is expensive. Mobile pastoralists, rather than sedentary agro-pastoralists, have the most livestock wealth – the highest numbers of cattle and the largest herds. For pastoralists to settle and stop migrating would mean selling their cattle, or at least reducing herds to a subsistence level. That is why they retain their mobility, which is a rational adaptation to environmental and climatic conditions but is only sustainable if pastoral land and grazing routes are protected.

Climate change and ecology

Changes in climate and ecology are impacting both pastoralism and agriculture. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, increasing the intensity of heat and affecting the availability of water in the dry season – especially towards the end of the dry season, with acute water shortages common from February to May.[13] In particular, rainfall has become more erratic, with a later start to the rainy season and breaks for weeks at a time after the onset of the first rains. There is a clear need for better water storage and conservation, through infrastructure and improved management of the landscape and vegetation.

In recent years there has also been a prolongation of the rainy season in some areas and more variation in the distribution and volume of rainfall within it and inter-annually.[14] These climatic changes are impacting agricultural yields, altering the species and varieties of crops that farmers plant and the timing of the agricultural cycle, and making transhumance movements less predictable.[15] Changes in rainfall brought about by climate change that affect the timings of planting, harvesting and transhumance in turn increase the potential for farmers and herders to come into conflict.

The impacts of changing rainfall patterns on herders include water stress and lack of pasture in the late dry season when the rains are delayed, affecting the nutrition of animals and people. However, rainfall is quite variable geographically and temporally in northern Nigeria and in Cameroon and improved data is needed to understand current patterns better. Mobility allows pastoralists to move their herds to where there is available pasture and water when sudden changes occur. But this needs to be managed so that scarcity in one area does not translate into encroachment onto cropland or conservation areas in another.

Exclusion and stigmatisation

Pastoralists tend not to be empowered in decision making on land issues. Despite having a significant population across central and northern Nigeria, pastoralists are spread across a large area and are usually a minority relative to the rest of the nearby population. The participation and representation of pastoralists in politics has been limited due to their mobile lifestyle and as they live in rural constituencies away from state capitals. They often do not have voter cards, for

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example – although this is beginning to change in some states.[16] The loss of wealth and status experienced by many pastoralists in Nigeria as their livelihoods and way of life are undermined has pushed some of the pastoral youth into drug abuse and criminality.[17]

Some herders we spoke with in the field complained of stigmatisation to the extent that they are frequently verbally abused and shamed by members of the public and mistreated while herding their livestock along roads or through towns or villages, which they do because livestock routes have been blocked. They are often the target of bandits and they sustain losses – unreported or underreported by public institutions and the media – in clashes with farmers. Herders are often excessively fined for encroaching onto farms and extorted by judicial authorities, the police, some community leaders and even their own associations, such as the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association.[18]

At the same time, farmers complain that herders often damage crops without being caught or facing accountability, for example during night-time grazing. Farmers have in some cases accumulated grievances so that when a herder is caught and accused of damaging crops, even if the losses are minor, there is an incentive to obtain maximum and often excessive compensation. As herders have capital, they raise money to settle such cases by selling livestock. If the process is perceived to be unjust, grudges develop and may remain unresolved over a long period, becoming a precursor to violent conflicts.[19]

From hostility to insecurity

This section analyses different ways that insecurity manifests in relation to herders in the borderlands of northern Nigeria, looking at violent conflicts between farmers and herders and other communities, violent criminality, and armed insurgency.

Farmer-herder relations and conflict

Farmers and herders are not innately in conflict: crop agriculture and livestock in agro-pastoral areas such as northern Nigeria, southern Niger Republic, and northern Cameroon are interconnected and often complementary (see Box 5).[20] Rather, relations between farmers and herders become strained and deteriorate into violent conflict under certain conditions. As pastoralists' access to grazing land becomes more limited and mobility in some places is curtailed, and as favourable locations experience increasing arrivals of pastoralists, conflicts with farmers have become more common.

Transhumance stock routes enable pastoralists to move their herds and flocks, keeping animals away from crops. Violent conflicts can occur if stock routes are blocked – which forces herders to push their animals across farms, destroying crops – or if herders allow their animals to feed on crops. Stock routes can get blocked during the wet season, when rainfed farms dominate the landscape, if they get cultivated by farmers. Grazing reserves are also important as reserved areas for livestock to feed and herders to live. But the useability of grazing reserves in northern Nigeria has diminished through neglect and encroachment. Most grazing reserves are neglected by the state and many have been parcelled out into farms. Water points that were originally built within them for livestock have tended not to be maintained and have fallen into disrepair, and the diversity of grasses and trees they once sustained has been lost or reduced. Today, grazing reserves in northern Nigeria only support a small percentage of the country's cattle. Despite this, the remaining grazing reserves are still important to protect, and where possible they should be reclaimed and revived.

More land in the region is cultivated in the wet season, when rainfed crop cultivation is at its peak. But access to water is essential in the dry season, such as along rivers. As discussed above, dry season farming can benefit herders as well as farmers, as after crops are harvested the remaining biomass can be fed to cattle. These residues are purchased by the herders. However, in some areas of northern Nigeria, dry season farming along rivers and streams blocks herders from riverside grazing areas and water sources, or herders push their cattle onto irrigated farms. That dynamic was part of the build-up to violent conflict in Numan LGA of Adamawa State, for example (see Box 6).

BOX 5: FARMER AND HERDER INTERDEPENDENCE

Mobile herders can be welcomed onto fallow or post-harvest fields as farmers want the cattle manure, or experience market benefits as pastoralists inject money into local rural economies. In some areas, farmers welcome herders at specific times of year but they do not want herds of cattle or sheep around during the main season of rain-fed farming. Migratory herders are usually expected to move on from such places before the planting season, when the rains begin. Encroachment by livestock onto farms when crops are being planted or just before the harvest can be devastating for farmers.

Where dry season agriculture has become economically important, farmers can grow crops throughout the dry season, and make money from their crops and by selling the residues from each harvest to migrant and local pastoralists. In some places the irrigation of fields also produces grasses that are good for livestock, and better than feed consisting only of crop residues. The necessity of this dry season exchange for herders was noted by a leader of the Sullubanko'en,[21] a pastoral Fulani clan, in Gaya local government area (LGA) of Kano State. He told us that the spread of irrigated farming had benefits even for pastoralists because the post-harvest residues after each crop cycle sustained their cattle throughout the dry season. As a result, this household no longer migrated on dry season transhumance, but they did move their herds north into Niger Republic in the wet season.

Cattle manure is very good for soil fertility and maintenance of soil structure, and it is obtained by farmers for free in this grazing regime, saving money that could have been expended in purchasing chemical fertilisers. In some areas pastoralists are farming as well as herding, benefitting from this mixed economy. Economically, rural markets across the field sites covered in this study had crop and livestock sections and were strengthened by the money brought into each part of the market, with economic exchange between them.

BOX 6: FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT IN NUMAN, ADAMAWA STATE

An upsurge in fighting in the Numan Federation in Adamawa State, north-east Nigeria, in 2017 illustrates how tensions between farmers and herders can mushroom into serious violence through a combination of interlocking drivers and triggers. The conflict was sparked by a dispute between a farmer and a herder (although precise accounts of exactly how violence originated vary), which rapidly escalated, with over 80 people (mainly children), and in some accounts more than 100, recorded killed in the first episode.[23] This was followed by dozens more deaths in revenge attacks two weeks later, and in further cycles of violent conflict that ensued. The violence also led to the displacement of thousands of people from villages and pastoral camps in Numan LGA and surroundings.[24]

The lack of a judicial response and the apparent impunity for perpetrators of violence contributed to revenge attacks and the escalation of conflict.[25] Since 2018, initiatives by NGOs, UN agencies, and the Adamawa State government to restore peace in Numan have had some impact in reducing the recurrence of violence, but the relationships between herders and farmers that existed before will be difficult to recover. While the events of November 2017 were on a scale not seen before, the Numan conflict has a history, with longstanding tensions and violent incidents along ethno-religious lines between the Bachama and Fulani communities, who are the main protagonists in this case.

Numan is located at the confluence of the Benue and Gongola rivers, and the conflict occurred in areas along the Benue River valley which both farmers and herders depend on for their livelihoods. The soil is fertile for cultivation, there are nutritious grasses for cattle, and water is available during the dry season. Tensions flare in the Benue River Basin in the dry season, as transhumant herds are traditionally brought from more arid areas further north and as the area is now heavily cultivated in the dry season for irrigated farming.

Aggravating this is that rights over land and water and access to pasture and farmland are framed in ethnic and religious terms. The Bachama are predominantly Christian while the Fulani are mainly Muslim, and there is a discordant relationship between the traditional leaders of the two groups – the Hama Bachama in Numan and the Lamido of Adamawa in Yola. This also has a history, as since the nineteenth century the Bachama have resisted domination by the Fulani emirates and asserted their autonomy in Adamawa, which is politically dominated by Muslims at the state level and in most local government areas.

But the Numan Federation is an exception as Christians are more numerous and have higher political representation there at the local level. They also experienced earlier exposure to Western education through mission schools. Fulani herders are viewed negatively by some in Numan, partly because of competition for land but also because they are seen through the prism of ethnic and religious politics, and believed to be linked to the Fulani emirate system, which some people in Numan oppose – notwithstanding that links between pastoralists and the emirates in northern Nigeria are anyway debatable.

XCEPT field research suggests that those involved in violence in Numan were mainly from the local area and surrounding states. There are common narratives in Numan about the involvement of pastoralists from outside Nigeria, but we did not find evidence for this.[26] Field research also suggests that the violence triggered increased pastoralist movement out of Nigeria, for seasonal grazing and in some cases permanently. As the good riverine grazing areas around Numan were blocked by the conflict, herders changed their dry season transhumance to Cameroon. Since 2017, many herders have relocated more permanently to other areas of Adamawa State.[27]

With the return of relative peace, some herders have now returned to Numan LGA for grazing but it is mainly young men who bring their family herds, leaving women, children and elders behind in the neighbouring parts of Adamawa State that they were displaced to. Farmers impacted by the violence have been impoverished and are struggling to rebuild their lives having lost their houses and much of their capital. As some of the violence was intimate, between people who knew each other, trust is difficult to restore. There are however signs of improvement, particularly outside the areas worst impacted by the violence, due to local initiatives and dialogue.

Ganye Cattle Market, Adamawa State, near the Nigeria-Cameroon border, 20 August 2022. © Adam Higazi

Even where inter-community tensions are raised in areas where herds encroach on unharvested crops, widespread conflict is often avoided. Farmers in Ganye in southern Adamawa State in north-east Nigeria, for example, reported that the number of pastoralists migrating into their area in the dry season has been increasing year on year, driven by pressure on land, climate change and insecurity. They reported several cases of violence committed by transhumant herders. However, while there are tensions, there is also a degree of coexistence between farmers and herders in Ganye chiefdom. There have been several incidents of violence but to date they have contained these, managing the various grievances and infractions and mitigating the escalation of conflict.[22]

In all aspects of farmer-herder relations, much depends on local negotiation and agreements. Where there is animosity and mistrust between pastoralists and farmers, it is more difficult to sustain economic exchange between them. In parts of Adamawa and Taraba States, farmers burn their fields after harvesting their crops rather than keeping the crop residues for herders to graze their cattle on. Some farming communities distinguish between 'local' pastoralists, whom they live among and relate well with, and 'migrating' pastoralists, who come in the dry season, and some of whom cause damage to crops and commit crimes.

There are also herders who deliberately invade farms and destroy crops, sometimes acting with impunity, and it can be difficult for farmers to know which herders are which – herders who are well intentioned but struggle to keep their livestock off crops, particularly at the edge of routes, due to lack of space or accidental encroachment; or herders who are deliberately causing crop damage and provoking trouble. This can negatively impact general relations between migratory herders and farmers. Farmers also complain about under-age herders: boys who they perceive to be too young to control the cattle under their watch.

Disputes between herders and farmers over land and water tend only to translate into larger scale violent conflict when those disputes are exacerbated rather than mediated by local power structures and wider political and security trends (see Krätli and Toulmin, 2020a, 2020b; Moritz, 2006). Inter-ethnic and inter-religious rivalries and politicised narratives play a significant role in amplifying tensions (Adigun, 2022). The diminished capacity of the judicial system, police, and traditional authorities to maintain law and order and to resolve disputes before they escalate into violence, and the consistent failure to punish perpetrators of violence, mean that grievances are often unaddressed and victims of violence lack access to justice.

Weak capacity in the justice system is acute in rural borderland areas. These institutions are not well resourced and they have too few personnel relative to the populations they are meant to serve. Traditional institutions still have an important arbitration role and their offices are recognised and have social status, but much of their power has been transferred to politicians under the state governor. The example of the Numan crisis of November 2017 in Adamawa state (see Box 6) illustrates how institutional failures combined to trigger serious violence between pastoralists and farmers.

Violent crime: banditry and kidnapping

Banditry and kidnapping for ransom are major problems affecting rural communities in many of northern Nigeria's borderlands and in parts of Cameroon. Violent crimes are impacting both farmers and pastoralists, and in many places have eclipsed farmer-herder conflicts in prominence and as the main security challenge.[28] Kidnapping for ransom is a phenomenon of the past decade in central and northern Nigeria, spreading from the north-west to other parts of the region. Some of this violence is carried out by gangs originating among pastoralists, but in some cases men of other ethnic and religious backgrounds are also involved.[29] They form networks between rural and urban areas in what has become a lucrative criminal activity, gaining illicit wealth from ransoms paid for the release of kidnapping victims.

Banditry can be large in scale, where raiders attack villages and camps in motorbike convoys at times more than 50 strong, killing and abducting people. This form of banditry began in Zamfara State – with its genesis around 2012 – and spread from there to other parts of north-west Nigeria and beyond to parts of the north-central and north-east.[30] These bandits tend to be armed with AK47s and other automatic weapons including light machine guns. But kidnapping, armed robbery and cattle theft can also be carried out by smaller gangs. They vary in size, but in Adamawa State XCEPT researchers heard reports of kidnappers consisting of about half a dozen men in a gang.

Criminals abduct people from their houses or pastoral camps at night and establish bases in the bush, usually in hilly, wooded areas, where they keep their captives. The kidnappers often torture and sometimes kill their victims, resulting in trauma to individuals and families, along with heavy financial losses incurred from ransom payments.[31] Some of the kidnappers are armed herders with cattle – often quite small numbers of cattle with more men than are needed to herd them, indicating they are probably cattle thieves – but other gangs do not rear livestock.

Field research in Adamawa State indicated that there is usually a rise in kidnapping for ransom during the dry season when transhumant pastoralists come into the area from further north in Nigeria. Transhumant or nomadic herders come from different directions, moving in small groups, many of which are not connected to each other. Some of these herding groups perpetrate crimes against others and against local farmers and herders in the places they migrate to. Transhumant pastoralists as a whole are not involved in crime, but those that are will be reflected in seasonal variations in crime rates. That was reported in Adamawa and Taraba States, and may also be the case elsewhere.[32]

A distinction was made between Fulani clans who had migrated from the north-west in recent years and Fulani clans who were longer established in Taraba State. In other locations, the difference between criminal gangs and the majority of herders who are not involved in or are opposed to crime was locally understood.[33]

Many farmers interviewed in XCEPT research associated herders with kidnapping and banditry, and Fulani young men are commonly linked to this form of criminality in public and political discourse.[34] However, even where perpetrators of kidnapping for ransom are Fulani, other Fulani pastoralists are among the main victims. This form of crime is not 'ethnic' – kidnapping gangs target herding *and* farming communities, regardless of ethnicity. Their aim is to get ransom money from whoever they think can pay, not to pursue an ethnic agenda. But cases of kidnapping generate suspicion of herders per se, including of the majority who are legitimately grazing their animals and who are not engaged in crime. Generalisations that wrongly associate the Fulani population as a whole with banditry are feeding the broader stigmatisation of pastoralists as violent. While victims include both non-Fulani and Fulani, the crime wave is fuelling anti-Fulani sentiments and contributing to tensions between communities.

Evidence from the field suggests variation in the composition of kidnapping and bandit gangs. Some consist entirely of people of Fulani ethnicity, while others are ethnically mixed. Within the Fulani, certain clans are perceived to be more involved in this form of crime, although not all are involved and many are also themselves victims. Kidnappers do not operate alone – they rely on local informers from host communities to identify wealthy individuals who can pay high ransoms.[35] XCEPT researchers met kidnapping victims from different backgrounds: a Chamba farmer was abducted from his house in Ganye, southern Adamawa, and tortured by kidnappers. He was released after paying a ransom of 10 million naira (about US$20,000 at the time). The kidnappers were Fulani but they were speaking Hausa, suggesting they were from north-west Nigeria, and likely had a local informer in the village who gave them the information they needed to target this specific individual, perceived to be a wealthy farmer.[36]

Researchers also met transhumant Fulani herders who had been kidnapped, in some cases more than once. Pastoralists are common targets of kidnapping in rural areas, because their families can quickly raise substantial ransom money by selling cattle. Very few cases are reported to the police or in the media. Testimonies of migrating pastoralists show that kidnapping is a driver of their migration; while many kidnapping gangs are indeed Fulani, the stigmatisation of herders in general as bandits or armed criminals fuels animosity against them and overlooks how they are commonly the victims of kidnapping.

The economic impacts of kidnapping have been severe and have elicited local responses. Vigilante groups in both farming and pastoral communities have been active in identifying and confronting kidnappers. In Taraba and parts of Adamawa, farmers and pastoralists were jointly participating in vigilante groups to combat kidnapping gangs. Vigilantes are often ethnically mixed and include Fulani pastoralists seeking to confront bandit gangs attacking their camps.

Where local vigilante and hunter groups are tasked with providing security, it raises issues around the resourcing and role of the police and other security agencies. Vigilantes have mounted effective responses to banditry in some areas, but their performance varies and some groups have perpetuated indiscriminate violence. In some cases, vigilante actions have involved killing suspects and taking the cattle, with questions over whether some of the suspects were in fact involved in kidnapping or banditry. A state-sponsored vigilante group called the Taraba Marshals operating in Taraba State south of the Benue River was particularly infamous during the last state administration (up to May 2023). This group allegedly killed many innocent people on the basis of ethnic and clan identity and stole their cattle, in the name of fighting crime. They also killed some prominent individuals who spoke out against them.[37] In parts of Taraba State, vigilantes expelled and killed many herders from north-west Nigeria due to their alleged association with banditry. Some were likely involved but others were labelled guilty by association.

There is a need to monitor and regulate vigilantes because while they are part of the communities in which they operate and tend to have local support and legitimacy, some groups have reportedly been compromised by political capture and abuse of power. Other vigilantes are not so extreme and they have local knowledge and personnel that are important for rural security. In parts of Gombe, Bauchi, and northern Taraba, vigilante groups in villages were ethnically mixed and consisted mainly of men from pastoral and farming backgrounds who had mobilised to deter and confront criminals. Similarly in Cameroon, pastoral associations – especially the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) – and pastoral leaders were working with the state to tackle kidnapping for ransom in the border areas with the Central African Republic and Chad.[38]

Insurgency in Borno and the Chad Basin

The security of herders in Borno State in north-east Nigeria and across the wider Chad Basin is affected by the Boko Haram insurgency – a violent conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives since 2009. The insurgency is region-specific, and so is covered in detail in the relevant part of the next section, which dives more deeply into geographically defined field research locations. Both pastoralists and farmers have been attacked by Boko Haram, with heavy loss of life and displacement. Boko Haram has attacked villages and camps, and raided pastoralist households stealing large numbers of cattle and sheep and killing and abducting people. Criminal and insurgent violence have become blurred, as Boko Haram uses the proceeds from cattle raids to fund its insurgency.

The highest levels of violence were recorded between 2014 and 2016 but the conflict has continued since then, with large parts of Borno State still controlled or rendered unsafe by armed opposition groups. Following a split in Boko Haram in 2016 that led to the creation of Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), armed conflict between Boko Haram, ISWAP and the militaries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad is having enduring impacts in Borno and across the broader area of the Chad Basin. Pastoralists across Borno State continue to experience attacks and raids on their cattle. This includes the diverse herding groups around Lake Chad who have seen their herds significantly depleted due to raids by insurgents. A minority of herders around Lake Chad have also been recruited into the insurgency. Recruitment numbers have varied between locations and groups – for example, some pastoral groups see association with the insurgency as a way to assert control over territory. Overall, unlike jihadist groups in parts of the central Sahel, pastoralists have not formed the main recruitment base for Boko Haram, and some herders have fought against the insurgents. Boko Haram and the responses and strategies of pastoralists are explored in more detail below.

Borderlands in focus

This section dives deeper into how pastoralists organise and network to manage and move herds peacefully and productively in borderlands and across borders of northern Nigeria, and explores patterns of insecurity and response in selected borderland areas, based on field research. It is structured around the three main geographies of the fieldwork.

First it looks at the Nigeria–Cameroon borderlands: how cross-border pastoral migration and transhumance is largely managed peacefully along the Nigeria–Cameroon border through different forms of networking and organisation, facilitated by kinship and other cross-border ties and institutional structures. However, migrating herders are vulnerable to exploitation by local and state officials on both sides of the border. Much pastoralist migration is eastwards out of Nigeria as a result of pressure on land and insecurity. Fieldwork in Cameroon, carried out by two research teams working in different locations, recorded that herders moving from Nigeria were regarded as law abiding but that the large number of livestock they were migrating with were exacerbating grazing pressures in some areas, with potential for creating tension.

Second it presents a short case study that documents systems, arrangements and agreements to facilitate peaceful pastoralism across the border between Nigeria and Niger Republic. Pastoral mobility has been an effective way to cope with shifts in available grazing land and to climatic and environmental change. In the dry season there has been increased integration between irrigated cropping, horticulture and pastoralism in some of Nigeria's border states with Niger. This has brought a measure of cooperation to social relations between herders and farmers in those areas and has reduced southwards transhumance movements in the dry season from those particular locations.

A third borderland case study looks at Nigeria's Borno State and at the Chad Basin more widely: at how pastoralists and other communities have been affected by the Boko Haram insurgency – including different forms of Boko Haram violence and administration, and the blurring of lines between insurgency and criminality; and at how herders have been killed or uprooted by the insurgency, or have found ways to live alongside it, and in some cases have joined it.

Borderlands of Nigeria and Cameroon

This section draws primarily on fieldwork carried out in the Nigeria–Cameroon borderlands.

Patterns and causes of cross-border movement

In the Nigeria–Cameroon borderlands, XCEPT researchers encountered nomadic herders who had migrated long distances across Nigeria to reach Cameroon – from places such as Niger State, Kogi State, and Kwara State in the north-central zone – in some cases over the course of a year or more. They migrated gradually so that their cattle adapted to changes in the environment along the way. In Fulfulde this process of migration to relocate on a long-term basis from one region to another is called *perol,* which is distinct from transhumance – the seasonal movement of herds. These migrating pastoralists typically had large herds of cattle and in some cases several families travelled together to Adamawa and Taraba States so that they could cross from there into central Africa to relocate.[39]

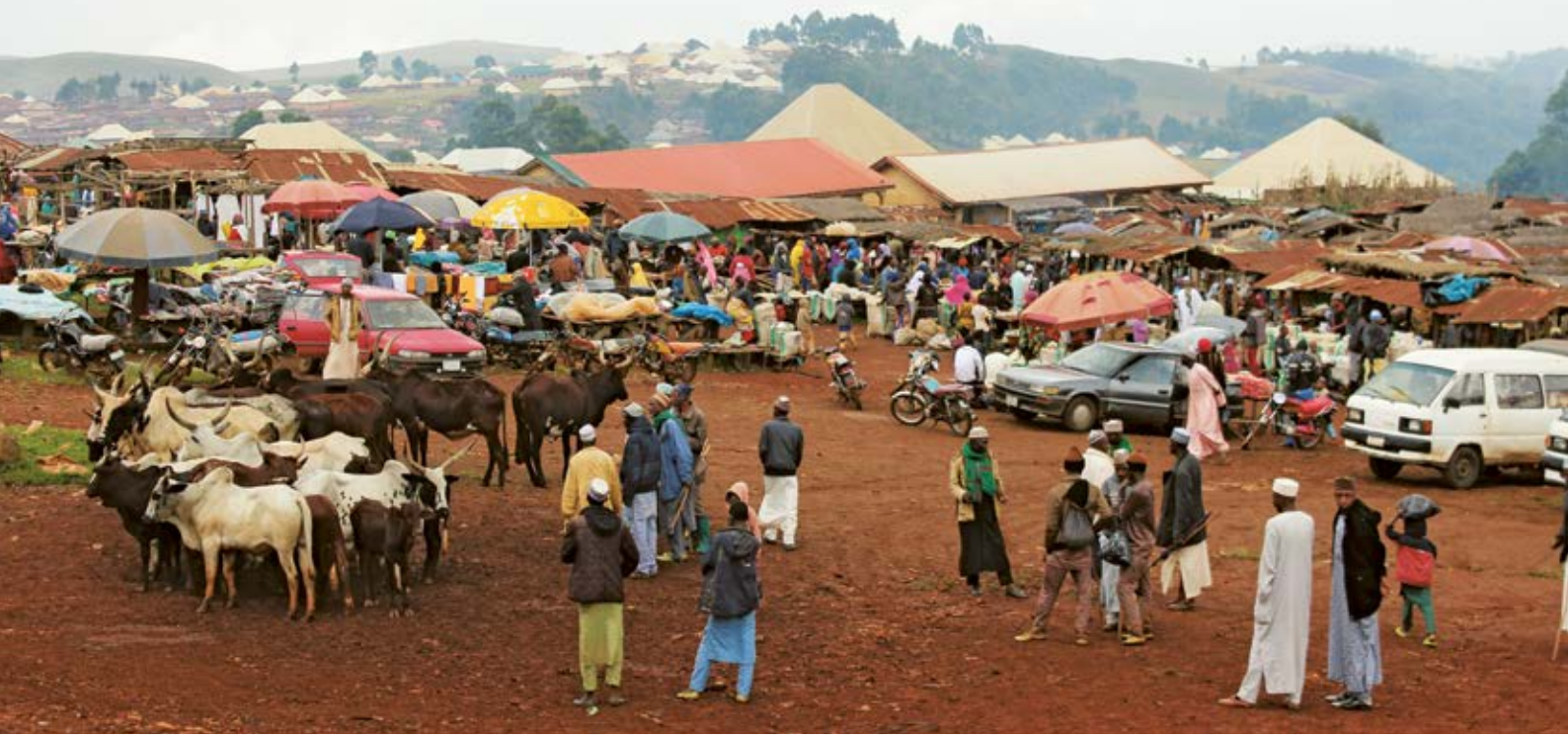
In most cases, herders moving across borders have relatives in both countries, and kinship ties along migration routes are often vital for getting information and supporting and facilitating their arrival in a new area peacefully and safely. XCEPT researchers also interviewed herders moving into Cameroon from southern and north-central Nigeria who did not have strong family connections in central Africa, and were pioneering a change of location for their families and herds. After crossing the border into Cameroon, many herders continue further into central Africa – mainly to the Central African Republic (CAR), in some cases to Chad, and potentially beyond to northern Democratic Republic of Congo. The attraction of the CAR is the vegetation, as it reportedly has excellent pastures. But this in counter-balanced by instability, which is actually forcing some herders to return from the CAR back to Cameroon and increasingly to Nigeria itself (see below, including Boxes 7 and 8).

There are several routes that herders follow from Nigeria to Cameroon, most of them through Taraba and Adamawa states. One of the main routes is across the Mambilla Plateau in Sardauna LGA, south-east Taraba. XCEPT researchers interviewed migrating and resident herders around the Mambilla Plateau. A herder who lived on the Cameroon side of the border explained how he facilitated the movement of herders across the border, guiding them and negotiating their payments to border guards and local 'gatekeepers', including local pastoral leaders. This Jauro Dimndol (Fulfulde for 'head of migration') would go to Maraba Baissa, a meeting point in Kurmi LGA of Taraba State where pastoralists intending to cross to Cameroon would congregate. He would guide them on foot, with their animals, through Kurmi and Sardauna LGAs and across the border.[40]

These herders had not experienced violence or clashes with farmers. Some cattle routes were narrowed in places due to pressure from farms, but the herders divided themselves into smaller units to adapt. Some went ahead to see conditions in the CAR before deciding to migrate, or linked up with family members already there, while others were going based on what they had heard.[41] Pastoralists have to pay officials on each side of the border to be able to cross with their animals and gain the necessary papers. Immigration officials usually demand proof of identity and payment, but there are many other informal and formal charges as well.[42] The amounts herders reported paying to state officials and local chiefs during their time in Cameroon, including at the border, to get the necessary papers and permissions amounted to thousands of dollars for those with larger herds.

It was clear that the process of migration has changed due to a combination of pressure on land (with diminishing access to grazing land in Nigeria) and as a result of increasing insecurity, necessitating these long-distance movements. The livestock are herded on the hoof from different parts of Nigeria to the Cameroon border. This migration is carried out by young herders with one or two older men either present or visiting them along the way to check on them. In some cases, young women, usually the wives of herders, also migrate on foot, but in general the household unit no longer migrates together. This represents a change in the migration practice which was common in the past – even a decade ago – where the entire family migrated on foot with their belongings carried by pack animals (bulls and donkeys).

Nguroje livestock market, Mambilla Plateau, Taraba State, near the Nigeria-Cameroon border, 8 November 2021. © Adam Higazi



There are very few families migrating in that way across the border now. Increasingly, livestock are herded on foot through the countryside, while the women, young children, and elders travel in vehicles. At least some of them reconvene with the herders (their sons or husbands) and the family's cattle at the border before continuing. The women look after the family while on the move and help facilitate the logistics of the migration in important ways. Young men and boys left in charge of grazing their family livestock – and in some cases as hired herders – are away from their parents and elders for longer periods of time now than in the past. This has happened as families have increasingly settled while at the same time the mobility of herds has continued, or even increased, to find accessible pasture land and water.[43]

The change in the organisation of pastoralism, land alienation and increased constraints over access to land and water, and the hostile political context that herders often face, are important reasons for farmer-herder conflicts. Each herding group has a leader, but if there is a dispute with farmers, or in cases where herders are kidnapped or their cattle are stolen, other family and kin members will usually intervene to try and resolve the case. The way that such issues are handled depends on the situation and on the relationship between individuals and between the herders and the local communities in the location of the dispute or incident.[44]

Herders tend to have very good information networks and use mobile phones to find out about grazing conditions and the security situation in the places they are considering migrating to and along the routes they plan to follow. As pastoralists are widely dispersed and mobile, maintaining social networks is crucial for obtaining information and supporting each other. In the modern context, phone calls help sustain these relationships, and – when distance is not an obstacle – face-to-face meetings in markets and visits to each other's camps are also important. Before a significant migration or transhumance movement, scouts are usually sent ahead to assess the conditions along the way and at the intended destination. Pastoral movements therefore tend to be well planned. Mobile phones enable herders to communicate with each other across long distances and if there are problems or in cases of violent conflict, they are used to plan a response. Phone calls also allow herders to speak to pastoral leaders or relatives in the places they are migrating to, which can be important when moving with cattle into a new area.

Fieldwork on both sides of the Nigeria–Cameroon border found that the main direction of pastoral movement was from Nigeria to Cameroon. Some herders crossing the Nigeria–Cameroon border with their cattle are doing so on a temporary basis, mainly for dry season grazing, while others are carrying out what they intend to be a permanent migration, with their families and livestock, from Nigeria into Cameroon, often en route to CAR as the potential destination. XCEPT researchers did not find herders originating in central Africa attempting to relocate to Nigeria. There were hardly even cases of seasonal cross-border transhumance into Nigeria by herders based in Cameroon. There was however a growing trend of herders who had migrated from Nigeria to the CAR, or in some cases to Cameroon, but had decided to return to Nigeria (discussed below).[45]

Security, insecurity and conflict

Cross-border movement from Nigeria into Cameroon is in part driven by insecurity and conflict, but is itself largely peaceful and is not currently contributing to significant violence. During a month of intensive fieldwork in multiple sites in Cameroon, with two research teams working in different border locations, there were no reports of violent conflicts between nomadic pastoralists from Nigeria and either local pastoralists or farmers. Those coming from Nigeria were not perceived to be involved in criminality or violence. However, increased pastoral movement into Cameroon is exacerbating tensions in some areas, mainly linked to increased pressure on land. State authorities, along with local herders and farmers all confirmed that the impacts of cross-border movement are being strongly felt.[46] Nomadic herders crossing from Nigeria tend to come with large numbers of cattle – sometimes several hundred animals in a migrating group. Local cattle can be lost in the migrating herds – a key complaint of local pastoralists.

BOX 7: TESTIMONY FROM PASTORAL LEADERS IN CAMEROON

At a local Fulani leader's house in Ndokayo, an important transit point for cross-border pastoralists in the East Region of Cameroon, XCEPT researchers met a nomadic herder from the Daneeji'en clan who had migrated there from Niger State, north-central Nigeria. He was the leader of his migrating group and had relocated to Cameroon with 50 members of his family and 1,700 cattle. They had been given land in Cameroon near the border with CAR to graze their animals on, and his family had settled in Ndokayo where the children were attending school. They took three years to migrate from Bida (Niger State in Nigeria) to Ndokayo, crossing the whole of central Nigeria through Taraba and Adamawa States to the Adamaoua Region of Cameroon and then to Cameroon's eastern border. The reasons he gave for leaving Niger State were insufficient land to graze his animals, an increase in violent conflicts between farmers and herders, discontent with the local political situation, large-scale agricultural practices conducted without consideration of pastoralists, and insecurity from bandits, especially kidnapping for ransom and cattle rustling.[48] This is just one story out of many that researchers encountered in the field in Cameroon.

A vivid account given by the Sarkin Fulani in Ngaoundal (Adamaoua Region, Cameroon) – also a major migration route for cross-border pastoralists – illustrates the social dynamics between the nomadic herders and the local herders in the areas they pass through.[49] He was in his 60s and is the head of the pastoralists in Ngaoundal and surrounding areas. His grandparents migrated from Nigeria but he had never been there. According to him, most of the pastoralists around Ngaoundal have been there for a long time. But there are passers-by: pastoralists who are mostly Nigerians and use Ngaoundal as a transit point to CAR.

The host pastoral communities – the local Fulbe in the area – are not very friendly towards the nomadic groups, due to competition for grazing. The local herders claim that the migrating nomads often camp for a long time and will only leave when all the pasture has been grazed. The locals keep their cattle in the area on a permanent basis and don't move them even for seasonal transhumance. This means that they have smaller livestock holdings than the nomadic pastoralists.

The pastoralists who are passing face problems with cattle theft. This was confirmed by numerous sources, including nomadic herders. It was usually individual animals rather than herds that were rustled. The Sarkin Fulani explained that cattle theft was carried out by local herders who know the migrating pastoralists are only in the area temporarily. Pastoral youths in the area know the migrant herders have large numbers of cattle, do not know the terrain well, and do not know the local authorities. They use this tactic to drive them from the area early, as the nomads move away to avoid cattle theft. Sarkin Fulani said he gets reports after they leave the area of Ngaoundal.

The nomadic groups experience attacks in CAR – some have been killed or had their cattle stolen. A group that recently returned from CAR reported that they had lost many cows in attacks by militants. It was widely reported in the field while groups of migrating pastoralists did not tend towards crime or violence, their large herds meant they were liable to put pressure on local pastoral resources in the areas they grazed. They were subject to local extortion both in Cameroon and CAR and this combined with armed conflict in CAR prompted some to return to Nigeria, usually after having been in central Africa for a few years.

The influx of cattle from Nigeria had reportedly reduced available pasture for cattle owned by herders in the areas they pass through. Herders in Cameroon complained that, in addition, the migrant herds often carry diseases which spread to the local cattle. Some local pastoralists had even become farmers due to the death of their animals. There were also reports from farmers about damage to crops caused by nomadic herds, with such cases being resolved through compensation payments, facilitated by the local administration or traditional rulers. Cameroonian authorities, traditional leaders, and pastoral associations were playing an active role in managing tensions when they arise. Criminality was reported by multiple sources to be mainly by local herders stealing cattle from migrant herders as they passed through.[47]

Most of the nomadic herders crossing from Nigeria to Cameroon were trying to reach the CAR rather than stay in Cameroon, but due to insecurity in CAR they frequently moved back and forth across the Cameroon–CAR border, retreating back into Cameroon when violence in CAR threatened them, later returning to the better grazing conditions of the CAR when violence subsided. Mobility was therefore a response to insecurity as well as a means to access pasture.

Returning migrants

As discussed above, the dominant cross-border trend for pastoralists was movement from Nigeria into Cameroon and towards CAR. But some herders who had previously left Nigeria were returning. Researchers recorded this at different points along the Nigeria–Cameroon border in Adamawa and Taraba States.

There were several reasons for this return migration. The most important was instability and violent conflict in CAR. Pastoralists were subjected to the predations of rebel groups, who demanded regular payments, and some were caught up in attacks by the Central African Armed Forces and Wagner, the Russian mercenaries. Pastoralists in the borderlands of CAR and Cameroon were also heavily impacted by kidnapping for ransom by bandits known as *zaraguina*. Pastoral families who left Nigeria due to scarcity of grazing land and violent conflict and kidnapping found that in the CAR there was good grazing land but that it was dangerous. Some families stay in Cameroon but keep their herds in the CAR and negotiate and pay for access to pasture with the rebel groups. When security deteriorates, the herders cross the border into Cameroon. Return migration could easily be misinterpreted as herders moving into Nigeria, when in fact they are going home.

BOX 8: PASTORAL EXPERIENCES IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Alhaji, an elder in the Adamaoua Region of Cameroon[50] originated in Nigeria but had migrated through Cameroon to CAR and spent 14 years there before returning to Cameroon due to instability. However, most of his herding group's cattle, with the exception of a few milking cows, remain in CAR. They send only herders and some supervisors of the herds to CAR to be with the cattle. This is Alhaji's account of their lives in the CAR.

> **CAR is like a paradise for any pastoralist who has cattle, because there are good grasses and the environment is very suitable for rearing animals. … There is not much animal disease over there: no flies, no ticks. Our main worry is this issue of instability. The environment is not really conducive for the family to be with the cattle, because of this lack of security and even facilities.**
>
> **Right now, with the operation of the white soldiers [Russians mercenaries from the Wagner group], they are killing many pastoralists in CAR. This makes it difficult for the pastoralists and real grazers to stay, because they may be attacked at any moment. In some cases, they wipe out whole families, because mostly they attack with helicopters, so anyone can be a victim. This is the major problem we have right now. Some of us have lost all our cattle, with some family members killed.**

Borderlands of Nigeria and Niger

Transhumance in the Nigeria–Niger borderlands is an important part of the pastoral system in both countries. The Nigeria–Niger border is over 1,600 kilometres long and runs through a zone of semi-arid savanna, merging into the Sahel. There is much shared history and culture between people on each side of the border. Communities are linked by family ties, language – predominantly Hausa, with Kanuri towards Lake Chad and Fulfulde among pastoralists – and trade. In the daily lives of many, it is hardly considered a border, especially in the rural areas where transhumant pastoralists cross. However, people are conscious of administrative differences between Nigeria and Niger and the boundary is known.[51] There are several established transhumance routes running on a north-south axis across the border.

Fieldwork indicated an increase in wet season cross-border pastoral movement from northern Nigeria to Niger due to the expansion of cultivation across the far north of Nigeria and clearance of bush that pastoralists previously depended on. The number of livestock herded across the border is not known. XCEPT research investigated the patterns of movement and the main trends. Cross-border transhumance varies from year to year depending on rainfall patterns and political and security conditions in each country. The general perception was that the user rights of pastoralists to land and water were better protected in Niger than in northern Nigeria.[52]

A herder originally from Damagaram in Niger (Fulani/Mbororo and identified as Laamanko'en by clan) who was living in Gaya LGA, Kano State, noted that the main advantage of Niger Republic was that there was more law and order there. Notwithstanding the military coup in Niger which occurred after fieldwork, this perception that Niger was more orderly and less violent than Nigeria was widely held. Rules tend to be enforced and the police apprehend criminals. The herder compared it favourably to Nigeria in terms of security, although noting that the challenge in Niger Republic is the scarcity of water in the dry season.[53] Nigerian herders have increasing dependence for wet season grazing in Niger Republic, with some herders keeping their stock in Niger all year round for safety and availability of sufficient grazing space.

Potential tensions with rural communities in Niger Republic are mitigated by the dry season movement of some of Niger's herders into Nigeria, and due to close cultural ties and negotiations between traditional leaders. The presence or absence of conflict largely depends on how mobility is managed – for instance maintaining grazing land rather than turning all land over for cultivation, ensuring stock routes are kept open to reduce encroachment onto farms, and promoting communication between pastoralists and local state authorities or traditional leaders. Timing is also important, as at least some fields of crops need to have been harvested before cattle are brought into an area.

Pastoralists originating in Niger Republic were generally viewed as being peaceful and law-abiding.[54] More widely, the reduction of pressure in northern Nigeria during the wet season, caused by herders migrating north to Niger, likely reduces conflict with farmers in Nigeria. A large part of cross-border transhumance between Niger and Nigeria is a return movement of livestock into Nigeria in the dry season and a wet season movement of Nigerian herds into Niger. In the dry season, pastoralists in the border areas of Nigeria and Niger feed their cattle on crop residues from irrigated farms. This has become an important source of animal nutrition in the dry season, with parts of northern Nigeria going for seven to eight months without rain.

Some dry season transhumant pastoralists have conflicts with farmers, but for most the pressure in the dry season is mainly from water scarcity and shortage of pasture. They depend increasingly on access to cultivated fields to graze on crop residues. Ensuring that this is facilitated cooperatively and at the right time has become a key local issue between farmers and herders.

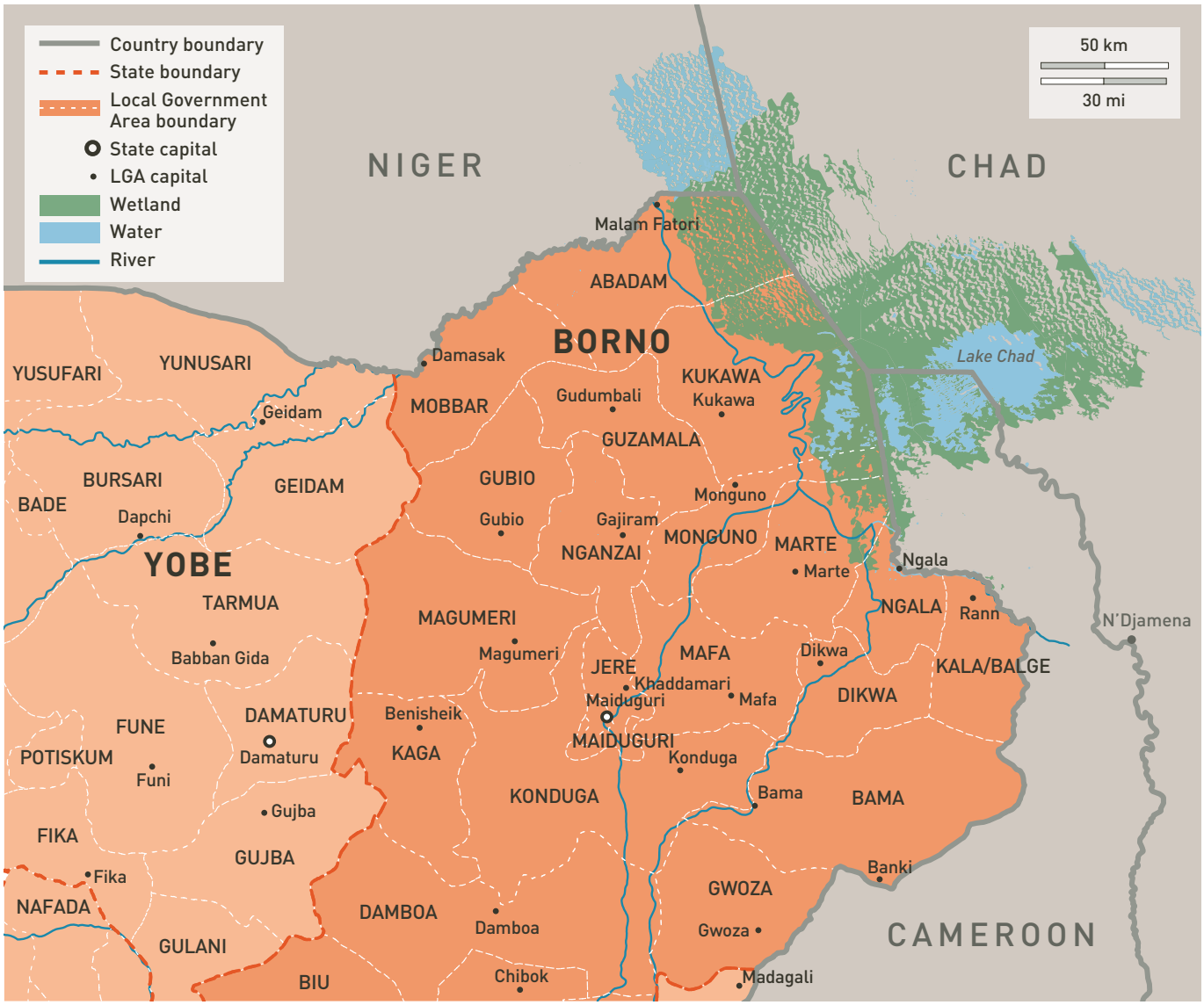
Borderlands of Nigeria and the Chad Basin – the Boko Haram insurgency

For the past 15 years, Boko Haram violence has been the major security problem for pastoralists and farmers in Borno State and in much of the Chad Basin, which encompasses the shores, waters and islands of Lake Chad and the river basins that feed the lake. The area covers Borno and Yobe States in north-east Nigeria, parts of the Far North Region of Cameroon, the south-west fringes of Chad Republic, and south-east Diffa Region in Niger Republic.

Borno State, where the insurgency began, has been the most affected by violence, but the other countries on the lake have also suffered attacks and a severe humanitarian crisis. The conflict has caused massive displacement. Over a million IDPs are still living in Maiduguri, Borno's capital, but some went to other parts of Nigeria and several hundred thousand crossed as refugees into Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Most of the Borno section of Lake Chad, along with the eastern part of the Diffa region in Niger, is still under Boko Haram control. This has impacted pastoral livelihoods and movements in the region and in north-east Nigeria through displacement and changes in transhumance patterns, with knock-on effects for farmer-herder relations.

Pastoralism in Borno is in some respects distinct from other parts of northern Nigeria. Firstly, there is a higher diversity of pastoral groups than elsewhere.[55] In the rest of northern Nigeria, the Fulani are the only group truly specialised in pastoralism. In Borno, pastoral groups include Fulani, Shuwa Arabs, Yedina (Buduma), and several Kanuri-speaking groups: Kwoyam, Badawi, and around the lake: Sugurti, Kanembu, Tummari, Kubri, and Mobbar.[56] This diversity increases the significance of inter-group dynamics between different pastoralist groups. Secondly, because the Chad Basin comprises territories of four countries, there is more cross-border mobility than in most other parts of Nigeria. Most but not all of the groups listed above extend across borders within the Chad Basin. Thirdly, Lake Chad is an essential resource for pastoralists as well as for farmers and fisherfolks, and the control and governance of the lake and the land around it has direct impacts on pastoral livelihoods, transhumance patterns, and farmer-herder relations in the Chad Basin and more widely.

BORNO STATE



Explaining Boko Haram

Boko Haram ('Western education is forbidden' in Hausa) was first named by people in Maiduguri, its original base. With loosely Salafi-jihadi ideological roots, the group emerged in around 2003, preaching in favour of jihad to establish its version of an Islamic system of government. The group announced its jihad against the Nigerian state and other perceived enemies in July 2009, during uprisings in Bauchi, Wudil (Kano State), Potiskum (Yobe State), and Maiduguri (Borno State).[57]

Having begun as an urban movement in cities and towns, insurgency spread to rural areas after July 2009, and especially from 2013, when Boko Haram was driven out of Maiduguri by the civilian population, with some help from the Nigerian military. The insurgency spread across large areas of Borno and bordering states in the north-east, with attacks also in major cities in northern Nigeria and in the federal capital of Abuja and across borders into neighbouring countries of the Chad Basin. Boko Haram fought against the Nigerian military plus vigilantes, and against the militaries of Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republics, but many bombings, terrorist attacks and massacres by Boko Haram also targeted civilians.

Boko Haram became aligned with the so-called Islamic State in early 2015 and became known as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). In August 2016 it split into two opposing groups: the existing very violent group led since 2009 by Abubakar Shekau, which reverted to its previous name, Jama'at ahl al-Sunna li'l Da'wa wa'l Jihad (JASDJ); and a new group, led by Mamman Nur, which retained the name ISWAP as it gained recognition from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Mamman Nur's faction opposed the level of brutal and indiscriminate killing of Muslim civilians

under Shekau's leadership. ISWAP then took control of northern Borno, including Lake Chad, while the Shekau faction, JASDJ, controlled the Sambisa Forest in southern Borno, the Gwoza Hills, and some adjacent areas of central Borno.

From 2016, civilian casualties were much reduced in ISWAP-controlled areas as it attempted to set up a form of Islamic administration that was strict but based on clearer rules. ISWAP tax the population in their areas of control for revenue, and pastoralists are very important to them in that regard. This arrangement has allowed pastoralists and farmers to pursue their livelihoods in places controlled by the non-state armed group, such as at Lake Chad and in neighbouring local government areas. Coexistence remains much more difficult, or impossible, in areas controlled by the rival Shekau faction, which is more predatory and has devastated the rural population of Borno and other areas through persistent attacks, killings, abductions and raiding.

Nur was killed in 2018 and Shekau in 2021. Currently, Bakura Doro is the leader of JASDJ and Habib Yusuf, widely known as Abu Musab al-Barnawi, is the ISWAP leader.[58] As of August 2023, JASDJ – the Bakura group – has gained more control of Borno and pushed ISWAP back, especially in and around Lake Chad. This has had serious implications for pastoralists, as well as for farmers and fishers, as JASDJ has been raiding them, constraining access to the Lake, which is an important resource. The composition and territorial control of these armed groups is dynamic, with regular changes in their areas of control having serious implications for pastoral mobility and livelihoods.

Impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency on pastoralists

Pastoral men and women from different parts of Borno State and from all ethnic groups describe widespread and persistent attacks by Boko Haram, by the Shekau and now Bakura faction (JASDJ). Pastoralists and farmers have suffered heavy fatalities in violent attacks, loss of wealth and displacement, and reduced access to food, medicine and land.[59] Shuwa Arabs – pastoralists and farmers – experienced massive displacement and loss of life in Boko Haram attacks. The highest levels of recorded violence were between 2014 and 2016, with 1,900 Shuwa people reported killed,[60] although attacks on herders and raids on livestock have continued to date. Some Shuwa pastoralists fled to Cameroon as refugees, others moved to Maiduguri and other Nigerian towns as IDPs.

Police reports between 2013 and 2022 record Boko Haram attacks against pastoral Fulani in Borno, stealing entire herds of livestock,[61] with the owners often killed.[62] However, many pastoralist interlocutors in Borno said that they usually do not report violence because the state authorities do not do anything in response.[63]

There is no state presence in most rural and areas of Borno or along the borders where Boko Haram operates, except during military operations and at military bases. Most of the bases are in towns, mainly at local government headquarters.[64] As most violence goes unreported, the actual number of casualties during 15 years of insurgency in Borno State is far higher than the published figures of around 35,000 deaths due to direct violence, and this increases even further when considering the whole of the Chad Basin.

Boko Haram has killed far more men and boys than women and girls, although the latter have suffered from abductions and some have been killed. There are many destitute widows and female-headed IDP households in Maiduguri, including from pastoralist and farming households. Government policies have returned some IDPs to their LGAs of origin, to fortified IDP camps in town, but the rural economy of Borno cannot yet to recover due to continuing violence and insecurity (ICG, 2023, 2024). Humanitarian assistance for the IDPs must remain a priority.

A significant source of Boko Haram funding has come from stealing hundreds of thousands of cattle across the Chad Basin – according to records of pastoral associations and estimates by livestock traders in Maiduguri.[65] Cattle stolen in Borno are transported to Yobe, Jigawa and Kano, and then on to more distant markets in Nigeria or across the border into Cameroon.[66] Cattle have a high market value, as well as emotional and social significance for pastoralists. Theft is often impoverishing. For example, a Sugurti elder described a raid at a watering point in 2016 when 1,600 cattle were stolen, none of which were ever recovered.[67] After their cattle were stolen, they had to turn to farming and petty trading to survive, as very few of them had any animals left.[68]

At Lake Chad, the pastoral groups raising *Kuri* cattle have also seen their herds depleted by Boko Haram, which has been raiding them throughout the insurgency.[69] Attacks have occurred in Nigeria, Niger, and Chad, and the victims included herders from multiple groups. The number of attacks surged during Shekau's leadership, and reduced in ISWAP-controlled areas after mid-2016. However, as the Bakura faction maintained a presence at Lake Chad and has advanced and displaced ISWAP, attacks and rustling continue.[70] There are reportedly few *Kuri* cattle left around the Nigerian section of the lake today.

Most pastoralists in insurgent-controlled areas try to find ways to survive and access grazing land, or actively resist JASDJ. A minority of pastoralists have been recruited to fight for Boko Haram. The Tummari ethnic group reportedly have generally not joined; a few Sugurtihave joined; while the Mobbar and Buduma have joined in larger numbers. The Bokolo'en accounted for most of the Fulani recruits into Boko Haram in both the Nigeria and Niger Republic sections of the lake.

Herders who joined Boko Haram in some cases raided those who did not. Inter- and intra-group rivalries were exacerbated and reshaped by recruitment into Boko Haram. Some joined ISWAP while others joined JASDJ, but most of the above refers to recruitment into the Shekau faction, and now the Bakura faction (JASDJ), which raids and kills civilians.

Motivation for joining is complex. A possible explanation for the Buduma joining Boko Haram was to reassert their control over the resources of Lake Chad, which they view as their homeland.[71] The shrinking of Lake Chad in the 1970s-90s due to reduced rainfall and abstraction of water from the lake and its feeder rivers has been accompanied by an influx of farmers and herders, including various pastoral Fulani groups moving there in larger numbers, particularly Bokolo'en. Pastoral Fulani increasingly competed with the Buduma and the other local pastoral groups at the lake for pasture, while farmers cultivated the fertile soils in areas that the water had retreated from.[72] The Buduma have a history as raiders on the lake and the insurgency provided an opportunity for those who joined to raid other groups and push them out.[73] Some Buduma displaced, but those who joined Boko Haram maintained allegiance to the Shekau faction and are now aligned to Bakura. In 2023-34 they have been driving ISWAP away from the lake, which is detrimental to most other pastoralists but gives the Buduma and some of the Kanuri-speaking pastoral groups more control over the area.[74]

Pastoralists' responses to Boko Haram

Pastoralist mobility occurs within certain parameters and known locations where herders have kinship networks and where their cattle are adapted to the ecology. The Boko Haram insurgency blocks movement into some areas. On the Niger Republic and Nigerian sides of the lake, the presence of the Bakura faction of Boko Haram has put some areas off limits and reduced the number of herders coming across from Chad and Cameroon into Nigeria.

Due to persistent raiding, some pastoral Fulani moved to from Borno to other states in Nigeria, or across the border into Cameroon and Chad. Some chose to stay within Borno State, adopting a range of survival strategies in order to navigate, or co-exist with Boko Haram: moving their cattle outside of Borno while the family remained in Maiduguri; moving closer to towns with a military presence, or to areas controlled by ISWAP, away from the remnants of Shekau's group, which has now regrouped under Bakura Doro.

In areas controlled by ISWAP, pastoralists pay annual *zakat* if their animals number above 30, as well as other taxes. They are essentially protected by ISWAP and grazing conditions are favourable as many of the larger farmers left, so there is more land, although there are still some incursions by JASDJ. Farmers also have to pay taxes to ISWAP. Herders and farmers interviewed for this study resented having to make these payments, but they need access to the lake and to grazing land and farmland. The Nigerian military complains about people giving money to the insurgents and at times arrests herders as a result. The Bakura faction has now taken control of most of Lake Chad, so access is much reduced, especially on the Nigerian and Niger sides.

Pastoral leaders have been in dialogue with traditional rulers and they have been writing to state officials and the military to try and resolve issues around the arrest of herders grazing in ISWAP areas. Furthermore, as pressure in northern Borno increases due to the advances being made by the Bakura faction, pastoralists from that area may be willing to cooperate with the Nigerian military to liberate the areas under Boko Haram occupation.[75] At the time of fieldwork, the military looked to ex-Boko Haram fighters for intelligence, but many herders' stated willingness to mobilise against Boko Haram if given support is an indication of their frustration with the continuing insecurity in the region.

Like other parts of northern Nigeria, Borno has experienced difficulties maintaining grazing reserves and stock routes. Grazing reserves have been encroached by farmers and crops are in some cases destroyed by cattle, with related disputes between farmers and herders. Boko Haram violence reconfigured farmer-herder relations to some extent, but now has become a serious political issue again. From 2016, as herders and subsequently farmers began returning to rural areas that either the military or ISWAP controlled, tensions over land began to rise. Farmers asserted their rights over farms they had abandoned when they fled the countryside for Maiduguri but which in some cases had been taken over for grazing, while herders complained that grazing land in accessible areas of Borno was being cultivated. Such disagreements are exacerbated because much of rural Borno is still too dangerous for productive activities like farming and grazing, so a large number of people are confined to areas considered to be safer.

Areas of significant displacement presented high risks for pastoralists, but also high rewards in terms of plentiful space and pasture. This incentivised some to maintain or increase their presence at Lake Chad, especially where ISWAP established control. Safer parts of Borno included areas of countryside around towns with a strong military presence, such as Monguno, and LGAs controlled more by the military than by Boko Haram. Much of Borno is still insecure, and many farmers and herders have moved into these areas of relative safety where there is at least a degree of military protection. The rural population has become more concentrated in and around Konduga, Jere, Maiduguri, and to some extent Damboa and Gwoza, as well as Monguno in the north. These are also the areas where most farmer-herder conflicts are now reported.[76]

Inter-group tensions reported in these areas have been caused by herders destroying farmers' crops, and in some cases by farmers obstructing stock routes and taking over grazing land. Conflicts tend to peak in the rainy season after farmers have planted their crops, and in the early dry season before harvest when the potential for mobile herds to damage crops is highest. For pastoralists, the hostility of farmers is an additional complication as they try to adapt to the advance of the Bakura faction, which has cut off most of the lake west of Marte, and arrests by the military and their ex-ISWAP informers. The low rainfall (as reported in 2023) is also a problem for herders and gives the water at the lake added importance even in the wet season. In 2023, pastoralists depended on access to Lake Chad via Marte and Ngala LGAs but if remnants of the Bakura faction displaces ISWAP from there, as they have done in most of Abadam and Kukawa, more herders will relocate at least temporarily to Chad and Cameroon.

Priorities for pastoralists' and farmers' peace and security

Land governance is an important element of peace and security in the borderlands of northern Nigeria, to enable of animals to be moved peacefully between grazing areas and water points, and for herders and farmers to have access to land, through user rights or ownership. Deficiencies and irregularities in land governance, which includes the seizing of farmland and grazing land from local people by politicians, are contributing to insecurity. Infringement on the ability to move and graze animals and the lack of support for the pastoral economy costs herders their livelihoods and weakens Nigeria's domestic livestock sector. These are factors in rising crime rates, tensions between farmers and herders, increasing food insecurity, and cross-border pastoral migration out of Nigeria.

Grazing reserves that should be protected are being turned over to cultivation by farmers, degraded through tree-cutting and over-grazing, or taken over by urban-based elites. The loss of grazing reserves increases the encroachment of herds onto crops. Livestock routes (*burti*) that allow animals to be herded from one place to another without trampling fields of crops are being blocked, which can trigger conflicts – such as if a route has been cultivated and merged into a farm. XCEPT field research encountered stock routes that had been blocked by farms owned by politicians, raising concerns among local community about rising insecurity as a result. Protecting and reviving stock routes and grazing reserves would help towards long-term prevention and management of conflicts in Nigeria's borderlands. Some of these ideas were envisaged as part of Nigeria's National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019–28) but have not been implemented (NEC, 2019).

In Cameroon's borderlands, in places where fieldwork was carried out, cattle tended to be kept in designated areas similar to grazing reserves or small ranches but were also mobile with organised transhumance and rights of passage at specific times of year. The rights of pastoralists are better protected in Cameroon than in Nigeria, and disputes between farmers and herders, or between nomadic pastoralists and local pastoralists, more rarely escalate into violent conflict compared with Nigeria. The state plays a more active role in conflict prevention and resolution in Cameroon and the pastoral association MBOSCUDA (Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association) is active in dialogue and local development initiatives.

Dialogue is a cornerstone of building good and peaceful relations between pastoralists and other communities. Routine dialogue is essential in addressing land issues and community relations, and enabling economic cooperation between farmers and herders. Traditional rulers – emirs or chiefs, or district and village heads – play a key role in preventing, mediating and resolving tensions and conflict. Religious leaders can also facilitate dialogue when there is a religious element to potential or actual disputes, such as between predominantly Christian farmers and Muslim herders. Women and young people are generally under-represented in dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms. Effective dialogue relies on genuine representation of different age, gender and social strata of herding and farming communities. Successful outcomes also depend on the capacity of state or of customary institutions to implement decisions and recommendations that emerge from dialogue. Currently, there is little government support for inter-community dialogue in most Nigerian States. The Adamawa State government has a farmer-herder committee and dialogue initiatives supported by the state and by international partners, but with minimal resources.

In pastoral contexts, raising animals has traditionally involved the whole family – elders, women, youths and children. But responsibilities for looking after livestock are increasingly becoming the domain of young men. This is not the case everywhere, but is an emergent trend the full implications of which still need to be explored. But it is affecting generational and gender divides and insecurity. In longer-term pastoral migrations, for example, elders, women and small children tend to travel in vehicles while the cattle are herded by young men and boys 'on the hoof'. Older men with cattle are a target for kidnapping as they are assumed to be the owners of the livestock – younger herders can be dismissed as 'hired herders'. Some women and girls still migrate with the cattle, but more are settling permanently in camps and villages, leaving young men and boys with the main responsibility for herding the animals. Income for sedentary pastoralist women when separated from migrating herds, such as from selling dairy products, has shrunk as a result.

These emerging trends also mean that younger male herders are spending longer periods of time away from their wider communities and from education and other important social structures, and can be more exposed to threats and risks as a result. Farmers involved in XCEPT research complained that young herders grazing cattle without supervision are less capable of controlling herds, which can exacerbate encroachment onto crops and cause disputes with farming communities as a result. XCEPT research also encountered anecdotal evidence that younger male herders are increasingly susceptible to experiencing problems with drugs, which further affects their ability to maintain livestock effectively and safely, or to navigate peaceful passage of herds. Rural development projects rarely include pastoralist youth, who are hard to access and are not well-represented in pastoralist associations and networks.

State security providers – the military and police, and also intelligence agencies – have formal responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the borderlands of northern Nigeria and its environs. But particularly in Nigeria, the failure of state providers to protect communities from threats of armed conflict and violent crime has left gaps that are increasingly being filled by non-state security groups. Vigilantes have become the main security providers and first responders in many borderland areas of northern Nigeria. Vigilantes in Nigeria are officially answerable to the state authorities, but in practice they have taken on significant security work acting autonomously, including gathering local intelligence, patrolling, and confronting armed gangs. Vigilantes' role has grown over the past decade in Nigeria, and many are officially recognised and are registered with the police. Their members are issued with identity cards and some of their operations are carried out alongside the police or military. Examples include the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), different Hunters Associations, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State, and Tabital Pulaaku vigilantes in Adamawa and Taraba States.

Vigilantes have contributed to improving the security for some groups and in some circumstances. But weak systems of accountability mean that vigilante groups can also commit serious violations of human rights and of the law, such as extrajudicial killings and targeting specific ethnic or clan groups. The multiplicity of security actors presents challenges for migrating herders. Mobile pastoralists need to make themselves known to local authorities in the areas they move through as part of the strategy for safe passage an due to local regulations. But many are deterred from registering due to fear of informal taxes placed on them by state authorities, traditional rulers, and non-state security groups. In Cameroon's borderlands, the state retains a primary role in security, even while working with non-state groups in some instances. Herders have responded to different forms of violence by relocating away from high-risk areas, or mitigating risks within those areas. Contrary to prevalent narratives that insecurity in northern Nigeria's borderlands is being caused by cross-border herder movements into Nigeria, many herders are leaving Nigeria as a result of insecurity.

Pathways towards more peaceful relations between pastoralists and farmers in the borderlands of northern Nigeria in terms of land use could include improving the quality of grasses in degraded areas, planting native trees on deforested land, and strategies to coordinate and integrate pastoral activities with crop farming to avoid conflict. There is currently scant investment or policy and programme implementation on these issues, and at the same time education in rural areas and the delivery of key services such as veterinary expertise and human health care have been much neglected. The lack of attention to education is particularly serious as it reduces the life chances and opportunities for young people and prevents livelihood diversification. As a result, pastoralism in Nigeria is at crisis point, with implications within and beyond herding communities.

Endnotes

1. Fieldwork for this study built on several years of prior research by the same researchers on pastoral issues and farmer-herder relations. This study enabled research in new field sites, as well as follow-up work in existing ones. The specific focus on the cross-border aspects of pastoralism was also new, in relation to environmental change, peace and conflict.
2. In the Nigerian press, herders are frequently blamed for much violence and kidnapping. In the sense of herders being involved in violent incidents this is correct, but the implicit assumption or impression that herders in general are violent is not correct and compounds this 'hostile environment'. During fieldwork in Adamawa State, farmers usually distinguished between herders who they have problems with and those who they coexist well with. In conflicts, hostility becomes more generalised on both sides.
3. Stories of herders being kidnapped are now common in pastoral communities. Researchers met victims who were ransomed and frequently heard of cases. And it was reported in livestock markets that some of the cattle being sold were to pay ransoms. The rate of kidnapping is higher in some states than others and even within states there are known danger zones.
4. Such crimes can be perceived as a negative reflection on Fulani people as a whole, increasing suspicion. This is evident across Nigeria and it was expressed in the field in Adamawa State, for example, notably among Chamba farmers and vigilantes in Ganye – even as they have maintained relative peace there – and in Numan, where there has been violent conflict between Bachama and Fulani (see below). Fieldwork in Adamawa State in 2022–23.
5. This is a common assumption but usually made without evidence. If herders from outside Nigeria are present in the country and involved in conflicts there, this is undocumented and, most likely, exaggerated. A report by the International Crisis Group (2017: iii) recommends that Nigeria 'Coordinate with neighbours to stem cross-border movement of non-Nigerian armed herders', although the report does not provide evidence, give indication of scale of movement, nor discuss movement of herders from Nigeria into neighbouring countries.
6. Scholarship on pastoralists in other countries also documents these difficulties. Detailed empirical work has been carried out in the Far North of Cameroon, for example (see Moritz et al., 2013).
7. For example, see Federal Government of Nigeria (2015), Momale (2001) and Abdullahi et al. (2015). For a report on the loss of grazing reserves due to encroachment: Federal Government of Nigeria (2018).
8. Field research on land-grabbing in Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi, and Jigawa States, 2022–23. Initial findings published in: Yusufu Bala Usman Institute (2022).
9. All of these points are widely reported by pastoralists in the field, in previous work and research for this study. For example, author fieldwork in Yobe State (2019), Jigawa State (2019, 2022) and in Adamawa and Taraba States (2021–23). The method of research here is ethno-ecology, recording changes in the distribution of grasses, shrubs and trees that herders utilise for grazing and for household use.
10. Fieldwork among pastoralists in Hadejia and Kiri Kasama LGAs, August 2019 and February 2022, and in Guri and Dutse LGAs, February 2022, Jigawa State.
11. Field notes from research among pastoralists in Adamawa State, August–September 2022, and Nigerian herders after they crossed into Cameroon, November–December 2022.
12. We have observed this pattern across northern and central Nigeria over the past decade. See also Momale (2016), who documents this trend and its social implications in north-west Nigeria.
13. This assessment and what follows is based on observations by respondents in the field (farmers and pastoralists), personal observations, and scientific evidence: Doherty, et al. (2022); and selected chapters in Sultan et al. (2017).
14. This assessment is based on observations by respondents in the field (farmers and pastoralists), personal observations, and scientific evidence: Doherty, et al. (2022); and selected chapters in Sultan et al. (2017).
15. Fieldwork among farmers and herders in Ganye, Adamawa State, August 2022.
16. In Adamawa State the nomadic youth organisation, Bibbe Gaccungol, registered over 50,000 pastoralists before the 2023 elections, giving that constituency more political voice and relevance than in any previous elections. Fieldwork and meetings in Adamawa State, 2022–23.
17. Fieldwork from 2020–23 for this study, and existing studies highlighting the relevance of drug abuse to violent crime and conflict (Blench, 2018).
18. These were among complaints recorded during fieldwork among herders in north-east Nigeria, 2022–23, including when crossing the Nigeria–Cameroon border. Vulnerability of herders to predatory law enforcement is also identified by Krätli and Toulmin (2020a: 50).
19. Project fieldwork and Krätli and Toulmin (2020a: 48-50).
20. For a detailed historical geography of pastoralism in Nigeria, see Fricke (1979).
21. The Sullubanko'en (or *Sullubawa* in Hausa) are a Fulani clan originating in north-west Nigeria who are known for their pastoral mobility and animal husbandry but they generally only speak Hausa, not Fulfulde (the indigenous language of the Fulani).
22. Fieldwork in selected villages in Ganye LGA among Chamba farmers, August 2022. That was the latest of several field trips by the author to the area, working closely with a Chamba research assistant.
23. Meetings with IDPs displaced from Numan, in Fufore LGA and Mayo Belwa LGA, Adamawa State, August 2022. Researchers also had detailed conversations and interviewed victims and participants in this conflict in the aftermath of the initial violence of November 2017, while clashes were still occurring, in the rainy season of 2018.
24. Some of this internal displacement is recorded by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in its Displacement Tracking Matrix – see data for Adamawa State: https://dtm.iom.int/nigeria
25. This was stated very clearly by several pastoral leaders in the case of Numan. An Ardo (pastoral leader) recounted how their camps in the area he resided in, in Numan 1 and Volpi, were attacked from three different villages: allegedly Kikang, Shaforon and Kedemti. He said that eighty-three people, mostly young children, were killed by the attackers, but afterwards no one was arrested. He said the reprisal attack two weeks later would not have happened if the perpetrators of the mass violence they experienced had been brought to justice. Conversation with an Ardo displaced from Numan LGA, now living with his family in Fufore LGA, Adamawa State, 26 August 2022.

26. Interview with a Bachama representative from Numan Federation, September 2022.
27. Field visits to pastoral communities that had been residing in Numan LGA for decades but who are now in Mayo Belwa and Fufore LGAs.
28. Research findings from Nigeria and Cameroon fieldwork based on individual and group interviews with farmers and pastoralists, 2021–23. There is some variation depending on location, but kidnapping for ransom had increased in the past five years in our field sites in both countries and had become a serious and often expensive security problem for herders.
29. Fieldwork in Adamawa and Taraba States, including interviews with vigilantes who directly confront kidnapping gangs, 2021–22, and conversations in Abuja with researchers on north-west Nigeria.
30. Fieldwork among pastoralists and vigilantes by this research team in all these regions, 2020–23.
31. Interviews with victims of kidnapping in Fufore and Ganye LGAs, Adamawa State, from pastoralist and farming communities, August 2022.
32. Interviews in Ganye, Adamawa State, and Gashaka, Taraba State, with farmers, herders and vigilantes, November 2021 and August 2022.
33. Fieldwork interviews with herders and vigilantes in Gombe, Bauchi, Taraba and Adamawa States, 2022–23.
34. Direct observation from fieldwork but views of farmers can also be nuanced, as they know that it is not all herders that are into kidnapping. In some places vigilante groups from different communities work together against bandits. See also Adigun (2022) and Kabir (2021).
35. Interviews with vigilantes in Adamawa and Taraba States, 2022–23, and with victims of kidnapping.
36. This eyewitness account was narrated to field researchers in Ganye, southern Adamawa State, by the victim, who was kidnapped from his house at night and tortured by the gang. Interview in Ganye, 22 August 2022.
37. Field research in Taraba State, August 2023.
38. Interviews with state officials and MBOSCUDA in the East and North regions of Cameroon, November–December 2022.
39. Interviews in East Region and Adamaoua Region of Cameroon with herders from Kogi State and Niger State, north-central Nigeria, Nov-Dec 2022.
40. Jibrilla Cede interview with Jauro Dimndol, Sabon Gari (Cameroon), on the border with Sardauna LGA, 2 March 2023. Migrating herders were also interviewed in Sardauna LGA, Taraba State, on the Mambilla Plateau.
41. Fieldwork on the Mambilla Plateau, Taraba State, February–April 2023; Gashaka LGA, Taraba State, November–December 2021; and in the Adamaoua, East, and North regions of Cameroon, November and December 2022.
42. Field research among herders on each side of the border, in Adamawa State (August–September 2022) and in Cameroon (November–December 2022).
43. This has also been documented in a study by Momale (2016).
44. Ethnographic research in pastoral Fulani camps in central and northern Nigeria, with repeat visits, 2012–2023.
45. This trend was observed most strongly during research among migrant herders on the Mambilla Plateau, Sardauna LGA, Taraba State, February–April 2023.
46. This was apparent during fieldwork in the East and Adamaoua Regions of Cameroon, November–December 2022.
47. Fieldwork by in the Adamaoua Region of Cameroon, November–December 2022.
48. Interview with Daneejo family head in Ndokayo, 1 December 2022.
49. Interview with Sarkin Fulani, Ngaoundal, Adamaoua Region, Cameroon, 28 November 2022.
50. Recorded by researchers near Meiganga, Adamaoua Region, Cameroon, 26 November 2022.
51. On the history of the Niger-Nigeria border, in its nineteenth century context - when the area was part of the Sokoto Caliphate -and its colonial and post-colonial forms, see Lefebvre (2015).
52. Fieldwork in pastoral camps, villages and livestock markets in Jigawa State and northern Bauchi State, February–March 2022. The supplemented earlier field visits to those states and to Kano and Yobe States, both of which border Niger.
53. Interview by researchers during field visit to pastoral camps, pastoral settlements and migrating herders in Gaya LGA, Kano State, 24 February 2022.
54. There were no complaints from the farmers and local pastoralists about transhumant herders from Niger. They were not seen as troublesome. Fieldwork in Jigawa, Kano and Bauchi States, February–March 2022.
55. There is an excellent historical and ethnographic literature on pastoralism in Borno, but very little on the past thirty years. Key studies include Stenning (1957, 1959), Adamu and Kirk-Greene (1986), Braukämper (1996), Baroin et al. (2005), Konrad (2009).
56. During field visits to Maiduguri in 2022–23 we interviewed representatives of all these groups.
57. On the origins and ideology of Boko Haram, see Mohammed (2014).
58. See Crisis Group Africa Briefing no. 196, *JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters*, 28 March 2024. This briefing gives a detailed outline of the two main insurgent groups in the Chad Basin and their rivalry and infighting.
59. A United Nations Development Programme report estimated in 2020 that nearly 350,000 people, 90 per cent of them children under five, have died as a result of a decade of conflict in north-eastern Nigeria, due to the violence itself and, more commonly, to indirect causes (Hanna et al., 2020).
60. A documentary source from the Shuwa Arab pastoral association is 'Preliminary investigations conducted by Al-Hayah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria on the loss of lives, livestock and properties of its members due to Boko Haram activities in Borno State, Nigeria – December 2015', a 35-page summary document obtained by the author in Maiduguri, June 2016. It names more than 1,900 Shuwa Arab pastoralists who were killed by Boko Haram in Borno State. In the period up to December 2015 it records that Boko Haram destroyed 364 Shuwa Arab villages, burned down more than 19,000 houses, stole some 160,000 cattle, 67,000 sheep and goats, and more than 400,000 sacks of grain.
61. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, representing Fulani herders, has case records, but these only scratch the surface because most cases are not reported to associations or government.
62. For example, in a letter to the Borno State governor, it was reported that 'on Friday 13th December, 2019, gunmen suspected to be members of Boko Haram invaded the Fulani community at Fuye village (Gamboru Ngala LGA) and killed 19 children ranging from age 7 years and above.' Report of Killing of Fulani Herders by Boko Haram

at Gamboru Ngala LGA, Borno State. Letter to the Borno State Governor, Prof. Baba Gana Umara Zulum. Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, North East Zonal Office, 4 January 2020.

63. Interviews in Maiduguri, May 2023.
64. Interviews with respondents from LGAs in rural Borno and with CJTF vigilantes in Maiduguri, 2022-3. ICG (2023) also touches on the state presence.
65. Interview with a leading livestock trader in KasuwanShanu (Maiduguri livestock market), 10 November 2022, and documentation from pastoral associations in Borno State, *op. cit*. and below.
66. Interviews with pastoralists whose cattle were stolen, and with a Civilian Joint Task Force leader from Gwoza, Borno State, November 2022 and May 2023.
67. Interview with a Sugurti pastoral leader, Maiduguri, 8 May 2023.
68. Interview with a Sugurti pastoral leader from Monguno LGA, Maiduguri, 8 May 2023.
69. A record compiled by the Kuri Development Association – whose members include herders from all the groups raising *Kuri* cattle – lists 34 separate attacks by Boko Haram from 2015–2017, resulting in the killing of pastoralists and the alleged theft of a total of 36,206 *Kuri* cattle.
70. Letter by Jibrin Gunda & Co. on behalf of the Kuri Development Association to the Inspector General of Police, Force Headquarters, Abuja, 1 June 2022.
71. This was expressed by Fulani pastoralists during interviews in Maiduguri in May 2023, as ISWAP had lost ground to the late Shekau faction at the lake. The Buduma were associated with the latter whereas the Fulani found it easier to coexist with ISWAP.
72. Information here based on multiple interviews in Maiduguri with pastoralists from the Lake, May 2023.
73. Citing historical literature, anthropologist Catherine Baroin wrote of the Buduma: 'They used to be extremely efficient raiders, dashing out from the lake waters at night, taking back cattle and people on their reed-boats and disappearing into a frightening natural environment where no mainland dweller ever dared follow them' (Baroin, 2005: 200).
74. Interviews with pastoral leaders in Maiduguri, including Buduma leaders, May 2023.
75. There are precedents for this, where in parts of Taraba, Plateau and Bauchi States, herders have been active as vigilantes – notably through the organisation TabitalPulaaku – working closely with soldiers to identify and confront armed bandits.
76. Interviews with herders and farmers in Maiduguri, May 2023.

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