

Pastoralism and Policy!



As a young Karimojong girl, my educational journey from primary to high school was entirely Westernized. Yet, I struggled to find connections between what I learned in class and the realities of my daily life. When livestock became the topic in science class, the spotlight always fell on the exotic Frisians, celebrated for their abundant milk production. Our Karimojong cow, however, remained relegated, seen as inferior. I harboured dreams of someday owning ‘modern livestock.’

Outside Karamoja, stereotypes about our pastoralist lifestyle persisted. Even policies meant to improve pastoralism lacked deliberate implementation. Then, in 2020-2021, I underwent intensive training in Pastoralism by Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU) in partnership with [IIED-specifically](#), the Pastoralism, Policy, and Practice Course (PPPC). It was an eye-opener. I discovered that our Karimojong cattle were remarkably resilient, thriving in Karamoja’s harsh climate. Moving from one grazing area to another wasn’t environmental destruction; it allowed the land to rejuvenate.

This course awakened my conviction: Pastoralism is our lifeline. I have become an advocate, using every available platform to rally support towards Karamoja’s Pastoralism. I envision a new generation of elite Karimojong who can defend our way of life. Government leaders need to recognize that pastoralism is not backward; it is a resilient livelihood source.

NGOs, too, should prioritize resources for strengthening pastoralism rather than pushing transformation. Pastoralism, I believe, holds the key to securing the Karimojong’s future. Amidst threats of cattle thefts and insecurity, we the Karimojong should strive for peace, it is

the only way we can rally more support to Pastoralism. Back in the years, our parents, sold a single bull to fill the granaries with cereals in hard times. Despite droughts, acute famine eluded us. But now, with several factors affecting pastoralism in Karamoja including cattle thefts, we see a drastic reduction in Karamoja's cattle. However, I remain hopeful. Our resilient Karimojong cattle have weathered storms, and our pastoralist traditions hold wisdom that can sustain this livelihood. To prevent the occurrences of acute food shortages like it was in 2022-2023, Government and development agencies in the region should consider to hugely invest in Karamoja's livelihood- pastoralism to strengthen the resilience of the people in the region.

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