



Cattle herding in the Nile Basin (PAC field team)

Understanding the Livestock Economy of South Sudan Study

Adrian Cullis, Ole Stokholm Jepsen, Duku Ramson Kweji and Grace Muchunu

Introduction

There are many more livestock than people in South Sudan and hence livestock play a central role in the lives and livelihoods of almost all households. Livestock not only provide food and cash, but individual animals typically represent a 'bundle of rights' that form the basis of reciprocal social networks that underpin livelihoods and support households through difficult times.

The '*Understanding the Livestock Economy in South Sudan*' study was commissioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office funded East Africa Research Fund (EARF) to help inform contemporary investment choices in the livestock sector, and structured around three themes:

- The importance of livestock to livelihoods and how this has changed over time
- The state of livestock markets and how they are changing/ evolving
- Future prospects for the livestock economy and how these are expected to change

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the field work was delayed and eventually reassigned to Premium Agro Consult Ltd (PAC). Using qualitative Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools – wealth ranking, 'before' and 'after' scoring, proportional piling and scoring and triangulation and verification – the study sampled four agro-pastoral and one pastoral livelihood zone. In each, field work was carried out in four purposively sampled sites, within 30kms radius of a market town. The findings were triangulate by key informant interviews.

The importance of livestock to livelihoods and how this has changed over time

A historical timeline developed with participants and enhanced by the literature review provides a sobering account of conflict in South Sudan. Much of the violence has been perpetrated by and on livestock keeping communities as cattle are recognised as valuable assets. At the time of the 2018 peace agreement, the Civil War had resulted in the loss of at least 400,000 lives and displacement of 4 million people – 1.8m internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 2.2m in refugee camps in Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Annual cattle production losses during the civil war years were estimated to be more than US\$1 billion.

The study finds huge numbers of poorer households and significant wealth inequalities in livestock and land holdings, family size, and numbers of children being schooled and in employment. For example, 'wealthy' families own between one and two hundred times more livestock than the 'very poor'. Furthermore, a staggering 60 to 70 percent of agro-pastoral and 34 percent of pastoral households are classified as 'poor' and 'very poor' today. Poorer households are unable to meet their basic food needs from livestock. Such wealth inequalities threatens peace and stability.

The result of extreme violence, social networks in South Sudan are weaker than at any previous time as livestock-based transactions on which they are based are minimal and the number of poorer households is beyond the capacity of the 'wealthy' to support in the form of milk, food and livestock gifts, and bride price payments. It will take a decade or more for herders to patiently rebuild their herds and flocks, and longer if the rebuilding process is further interrupted by

conflict, livestock disease and other losses.

Efforts to rebuild herds include cattle raiding. According to scale and intensity, such thefts not only render victims' households destitute, but 'require' that affected youth engage in retaliatory raiding. This vicious cycle undermines household food security, reduces livestock production, and in injury and loss. Since the 2013 Civil War, the proliferation of militias and militarised cattle raiding, and extreme violence against women and children, have eroded long held social mores and frameworks. Women and children are now routinely killed and abducted.

The Civil War also dislocated livelihoods, including arable cropping. In 2014-2017, the collapse of national food production and remote herding of livestock away from the homesteads, resulted in famine in some areas. Milk has increasingly been replaced by collection of wild rangeland products and with food assistance, when available.

While livestock-cereals exchanges have again returned to near normal and people are again engaged in arable cropping, diets remain far more diverse than in the pre-Civil War era. In particular, reduced access to milk continues to impact child nutrition.

The state of markets and how they are changing/evolving

The findings confirm more women are engaged in the sale of milk and livestock products. With fewer livestock or immediate access to livestock, reduced yields and increased sales, child malnutrition is on the increase. The study also found that milk sales have negatively affected the customary gifting of milk and milk products by wealthier to poorer households. The commercialisation of milk has therefore weakened social networks.

The study findings confirm that agro-pastoralists and pastoralists routinely exchange livestock for cereals with their more agrarian neighbours, to 'trade up' calories, in particular during the dry season or in times of crises. Over time and with the penetration of the cash economy, barter has been superseded by sales in South Sudan's network of livestock markets, and annual sales are now valued in US\$ millions. While engaged in sales, livestock keepers remain acutely aware that the more animals they sell, the more they potentially threaten herd growth and therefore ultimately one of their staple food sources.

The study confirms that South Sudan's bloody Civil War and associated cattle raiding, and associated persistent high inflation precipitated a collapse in standard livestock-cereals terms of trade and the haemorrhaging of livestock from family herds. Looted and distress asset livestock sales have resulted in millions of dollars' worth of livestock changing hands and being sold out of the country. At other times, insecurity has brought livestock marketing to a standstill and the result of poor roads, conflict and flooding, livestock market integration in South Sudan remains a distant vision.

The future prospects for the livestock economy

The findings confirm that the main causal factors driving poverty in agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones are, in order of importance: insecurity, livestock disease, floods and the economy.

Many young men have no alternative but to live in cattle camps that are owned by relatives or by others in which they are simply hired on a casual basis. Tasks are allocated to age and ability. For their work, the young men receive food, clothes, young animals and support with cattle at the time they want to marry. Life in remote cattle camps inculcates young men into the importance of safe herding and cattle raiding. All sectors of agro-pastoral and pastoral societies are however embroiled, as older and wealthy men supply weapons, women sing praise songs about their fearless sons and young women prefer to marry brave and wealthy raiders.

The study found strong correlation between the causal factors driving poverty listed above and the participants' perceptions and key informant recommendations for priority livestock sector investments. These can be clustered under the following themes: peace and security, livestock sector and alternative livelihoods.

Recommendations

Informed by the findings, the study offers the following recommendations for future investment in South Sudan.

1. **Civil society engagement** with cattle camp/militia leaders, cultural prophets, elders and women's and youth representatives to explore:

- *Customary codified frameworks* - a return to customary protection frameworks for women and children in different parts of the country to afford increased protection during cattle raiding and increased support to prophets to discontinue 'cleansing ceremonies' for perpetrators
- *Migration* - negotiated peaceful migrations (see rangeland management below)
- *Disarmament* - the phased, equitable and voluntary disarmament of heavy weapons as a first step to the wider control of small arms
- *Bride price payment amounts* - capping and progressive reduction in cattle bride price payment numbers, irrespective of cattle prices in markets
- *Youth initiatives* - provision of alternative livelihood opportunities for young men
- *Institution building* - long-term investment in strengthening state institutions responsible for law and order, justice, and ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

2. Livestock sector informed by Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS).¹ and local knowledge and experience and lessons learned in the delivery of livestock projects at individual state level, in particular those affected by high incidences of conflict:

- *Destocking* - informed by livestock market and livestock-cereals terms of trade monitoring and analysis, increased support for destocking (both commercial and slaughter destocking) during times of crisis, to mitigate distress livestock sales, stabilise livestock prices and protect agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihoods. In particular, expanded support for poorer households through targeted destocking of small ruminants and poultry
- *Veterinary support* - the detailed mapping of former and current

decentralised animal health delivery services - community animal health workers (CAHWs) and private veterinary pharmacy networks (PVP) - to identify and address gaps and weaknesses. To improve the delivery of efficacious veterinary medicines and phase out and replace the distribution of free livestock medicines with voucher-schemes implemented through local service providers. Also deliver reliable, seasonal vaccination campaigns through local animal health service providers and strengthen indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) networks to research, document and promote the use of efficacious treatments in particular for poultry and small ruminants

- *Livestock feeding* - specifically rangeland management issues that threaten viable livestock production systems. Priorities may include work with cattle camp leaders, elders and administrators to develop local agreements that facilitate seasonal transhumance movements and eventually to develop a legal transhumance framework to protect routes and ensure the continued passage of livestock between wet and dry season rangelands. Agreements will need to resolve outstanding local conflicts and include mechanisms to resolve issues as they occur

Other priority investments may include community commitments to protect key rangelands from agricultural development and better management of seasonal grazing - resting rangelands for recovery. Where appropriate, the control of invasive species and re-seeding with locally important rangeland plant species

- *Livestock water* - the participatory mapping of livestock grazing and water points in wet and dry season grazing areas with the full and active representation of all groups with recognised customary rights. Priority

¹ LEGS. (2014).

investment for rainwater harvesting systems that prevent year-round grazing and the establishment of permanent settlements, protect key rangeland resources and can be maintained by the communities themselves

- *Livestock provision* - informed by a detailed review of the lessons learned in previous livestock provision or restocking projects. Priorities for investment should be on community-led initiatives that include community contributions, albeit modest in size. In this way, the provision of livestock can help strengthen social capital and reinvigorate personal networks, that have been progressively undermined by the conflict
- *Livestock product marketing* - targeted support to women in 'very poor' and 'poor' wealth categories to produce and market eggs and poultry meat
- *Skills training* - for employment of young men in ancillary livestock sub-sectors - health, marketing and conditioning of animals - that may also offer 'alternative' livelihood opportunities
- *Policy and advocacy* - The priority policy and advocacy challenge for the livestock sector in South Sudan is improved governance to address conflict, insecurity and cattle raiding. In this context, it is important to develop and use locally appropriate delivery strategies that ensure good practice and good returns on investment

3. Alternative livelihoods

- *Non-livestock sector* - significantly increasing investment support for vocational training and non-livestock

dependent livelihoods, including small-scale irrigated vegetable production and marketing

- Fishing inputs supply - the provision of inputs, training and management for locally sustainable fisheries

4. Nutrition informed by the United Nations work in South Sudan:

- *Nutrition appropriate emergency food assistance* - increased use of locally sourced animal proteins including milk and milk products, eggs and poultry meat, fish and meat using voucher-based schemes
- *Cash transfers* - unconditional and conditional cash transfer can be augmented by nutrition voucher schemes
- *Emergency seed distribution* - with a primary focus on seed fairs that promote the multiplication and sharing of locally important field crops, vegetables and fruit trees as opposed to imported hybrid seeds that require sophisticated market systems and cash
- *Agricultural input supply* - seeds and tools for displaced communities where emergency needs have been met. As recognised above, with a primary focus on seed fairs and locally appropriate tools
- *Processing and storage* - for locally important and perishable vegetables, crops and fruit, to extend availability in particular, where possible, into the 'lean season'
- *Vegetable gardens* - technical training and ongoing advisory support for agro-ecological/ perma-gardening methods for increased vegetable production in community and private managed gardens

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Tana Copenhagen ApS | (tanacopenhagen.com) | Palægade 3, 4th DK-1261 Copenhagen K Denmark
| [+45 3536 1915](tel:+4535361915)