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South Sudan's Lost Decade

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Introduction

This Discussion Paper is an output of the 'Understanding the Livestock Economy of South Sudan' study that was commissioned in February 2020 by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office funded East Africa Research Fund. The study examined recent trends and projected developments in the livestock sector, with a view to informing future livestock sector investment choices. This Paper focuses on the impact of conflict on livestock-based livelihoods.

Post-independence current events

On July 9th, 2011 the people of South Sudan celebrate Independence Day and their first decade as a sovereign state. Selected livelihood outcomes of the independence struggle are presented in an historical timeline. Additional information on current events is presented subsequently in a short narrative.

| Year | Historical timeline |
|---------|---|
| 1955 | The 'Anyanya' or 'snake venom' mutiny starts South Sudan's struggle for independence and the First Civil War |
| 1956 | On the 1 st January, Sudan becomes an independent state |
| 1972 | The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement ends the First Civil War |
| 1983 | The introduction of Sharia law by the Government of Sudan triggers the Second Civil War |
| 2005 | The Comprehensive Peace Agreement ends the Second Civil War - 4.6 m people need food aid |
| 2005-11 | Strong livestock trade as communities/ returnees restock and marry with cattle |
| 2011 | Independence 9 th July. Central Bank rate USD 1=2.96 South Sudanese Pounds (SSP) |
| 2013 | Civil War. Upper Nile has 60% and Jonglei State 20% of conflicts. 4.5 m people need food aid |
| 2014 | US\$ 25 billion in lost GDP |
| 2015 | Central Bank rate USD 1=4.44 SSP. Parallel rate - USD 1=16.5 SSP. 6.4 m people need food aid |
| 2016 | Livestock prices fell to less than half 2005-2011 prices |
| 2017 | Livestock raiding a tactic of war - annual value US\$ 2 billion. Terms of trade increases from 1 to 8 - 10 goats (Jonglei and Lakes respectively) for equivalent cereals compared to 2013. 7.5 m people need food aid. Famine in some areas |
| 2018 | Ceasefire. The Civil War claims 400,000 lives and 4 m displaced - 1.8 m IDPs and 2.2 m refugees. Conflict continues in some areas. Annual value of raided livestock US\$ 2.7 billion |
| 2019 | Central Bank rate USD 1=158 SSP. Parallel rate USD 1=290 SSP. 7.1 m people need food aid |
| 2020 | Transitional Unity Government formed. Militarised raiding claims 2,500 lives in the year |
| 2021 | Central Bank rate USD 1=178. Parallel rate USD 1=600 SSP. |

¹ Based on field work carried out in collaboration with Premium Agro Consults Ltd.

In July 2011, the population of South Sudan was 9.8 million people and has subsequently increased to around 11.27 million. The annual population growth rate of 1.3% per annum is considerably lower than its neighbours in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, respectively 2.28%, 3.32% and 2.57%.ⁱ The lower growth rate in South Sudan is directly attributable to the conflict. In sharp contrast, South Sudan's Gross Domestic Product at independence was US\$ 1,900 per capita and hence significantly higher than its neighbours. Oil revenue however skewed the economy and was very poorly distributed. Of the 80% population who lived in the rural areas of South Sudan, 50% lived below the international poverty line.ⁱⁱ

The period immediately following independence was plagued by unresolved pre-independence issues - oil revenue sharing, disputed national and state borders, underdevelopment, corruption, and persistent and deep ethnic divisions. In December 2013 these issues spilled over into heavy fighting within the different ethnic factions in the presidential guard. The fighting spread rapidly to Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States and beyond and started South Sudan's bloody civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the SPLM in Opposition. Before the civil war was brought to a stuttering end in 2018, the United Nations (UN) had deployed 17,000 peacekeepers to protect life. The Transitional Unity Government was formed in February 2020 and returned the country to a 10-state and three administrative area structure. State Governors were appointed in 2020 and early 2021.

The 'Understanding the livestock economy of South Sudan' study

The study used the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) livelihood zone classification,ⁱⁱⁱ to select five livelihood zones - Toposa pastoral and two predominantly Dinka and two predominantly Nuer agro-pastoral zones. The five sampled livelihood zones, and 20 selected sites (four per zone), and the study zone reference are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample livelihood zones, towns and sites

| Livelihood zone | Towns | Sites | Ethnic group | Study zone reference |
|--|---------------------|--|--------------|-------------------------|
| SS02 - Ironstone plateau (agro-pastoral) | Rumbek Wulu | Deng-nhial and Maliath Malou-jeec and Abin Ajok | Dinka | Dinka ironstone plateau |
| SS05 - South-eastern semi-arid (pastoral) | Kapoeta Rwoto | Nanaknak and Locheler Chumakori and Najie | Toposa | Toposa pastoral |
| SS07 - North-western floodplain sorghum and cattle (agro-pastoral) | Aweil Maluaklon | Nong Thok and Nyileul Majak and Tit-chuar | Dinka | Dinka NW floodplain |
| SS09 - North-western Nile basin cattle and maize (agro-pastoral) | Bentiu Ding-ding | Mankuai and Litde Delmat Pakur and Juai | Nuer | Nuer Nile NW |
| SS10 North-eastern maize, cattle and fishing (agro-pastoral) | Mandeng Jikmir | Mandeng and Loul Jikmir and Nornyariew | Nuer | Nuer NE |

In South Sudan's agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones, livestock ownership is a key indicator of wealth status and household capacity to function independently of external assistance. The study found marked differences in median livestock ownership between households (see Table 2). Median cattle holdings for example ranged from 240 to 800 in 'wealthy' households, to 'virtually nothing' to six in 'very poor' households. Women participants confirmed that 'wealthy' and 'average' households have 'adequate' livestock holdings to meet their basic household food needs, while 'poor' and 'very poor' household do not.

Research in Karamoja, Uganda suggests that to meet basic household food and income needs, pastoral and agro-pastoral households require four and three tropical livelihood units (TLU)/ adult equivalent respectively. Hence, pastoral households require five cattle and forty sheep/goats per adult equivalent, while agro-pastoral households require four cattle or thirty sheep/goats.^{iv} However, the 'poor' and 'very poor' households in the study own 1.3 - 2 TLU/ adult equivalent, and so are unable to meet their household food and income needs from livestock.

Table 2: Median household livestock wealth typologies (n=40 groups)

| Wealth category | Dinka ironstone plateau | Toposa pastoral ^v | Dinka NW floodplain | Nuer NW Nile | Nuer NE |
|--------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| 'Wealthy' | Cattle: 500 Sheep/ goats: 1,000 | Cattle: many Sheep/goats: many | Cattle: 800 Sheep/ goats: 450 Equines: 30 | Cattle: 300 Sheep/goats: 300 | Cattle: 240 Sheep and goats: 240 Chicken: 80 |
| 'Average' | Cattle: 400 Sheep/ goats: 700 Chickens: many | Cattle: many Sheep/goats: many | Cattle: 200 Sheep/ goats: 150 Equines: 10 Chickens: 20 | Cattle: 120 Sheep/goats: 120 | Cattle: 125 Sheep and goats: 150 Chickens: 80 |
| 'Poor' | Cattle: 2 Sheep/ goats: 8 Chickens: many | Sheep/goats: some Chickens: some | Cattle: 5 Sheep and goats: 8 Equines: 1 Chickens: 10 | Cattle: 20 Sheep/ goats: 20 Many chickens | Cattle: 40 Sheep and goats: 50 Chickens: 100 |
| 'Very poor' | Virtually nothing | Cattle: 5 Sheep/ goats: 10 Chickens: some | Sheep/goats: 3 | Cattle: 4 Sheep/goats: 8 Chickens | Cattle: 6 Sheep and goats: 35 Chickens: 75 |

Study group perceptions of the proportions of households in the different wealth categories are presented in Table 3. Toposa pastoral groups estimated the number of *nyabarit* or 'wealthy' to be around 40% and the number of *nyekulokit* or 'poor' and *nyekulokit lodochi* of 'very poor' to be 34%. In contrast, commensurate percentages for the agro-pastoral sample ranged from 3% - 15% and 60% - 70%.^{vi} These findings offer credence to the 'Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) - January 2021 Update' that forecasts that 7 million people - 60% of South Sudan's population - are expected to face severe acute food insecurity in 2021.^{vii}

Table 3: Average percentages for household wealth distribution (n=20 men's groups)

| Wealth category | Dinka ironstone plateau | Toposa pastoral | Dinka NW floodplain | Nuer NW Nile | Nuer NE |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|------------|
| 'Wealthy' | 11 | 40 | 15 | 3 | 4 |
| 'Average' | 28 | 26 | 18 | 37 | 26 |
| 'Poor' | 44 | 21 | 31 | 28 | 30 |
| 'Very poor' | 17 | 13 | 36 | 32 | 40 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The study findings on hazards and risks that negatively affect household livestock holdings and hence wealth, are presented in Figure 1. As economic crises in South Sudan are proximally associated with the Civil War and militarised raiding of livestock, the aggregated scores for insecurity and economic crisis are more than twice the score for livestock disease and the cost of medicines, which scored the second highest.

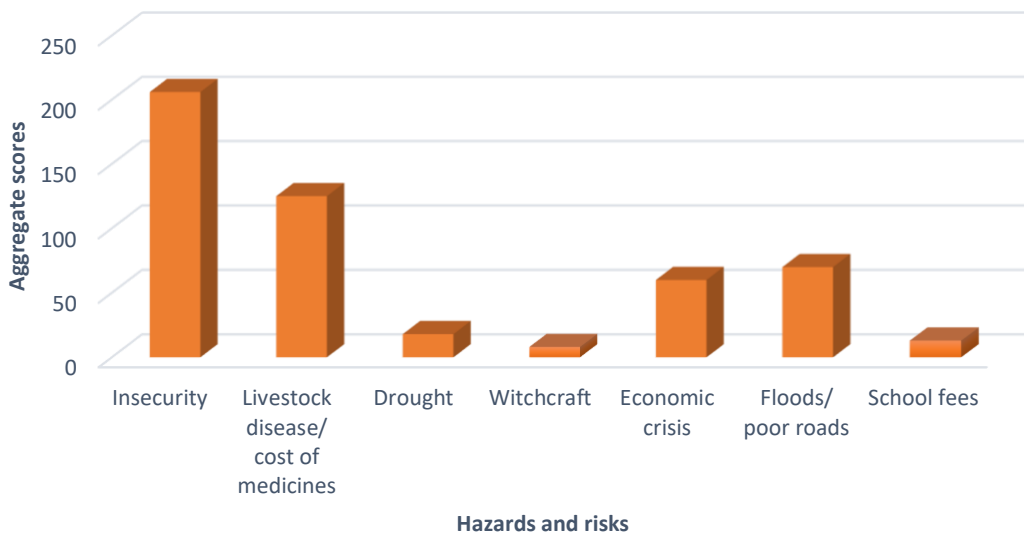


Figure 1: Aggregated hazards and risk scores affecting livestock holdings (n=20 groups)

Discussions with young men involved in cattle raiding identified the multiple roles that livestock play in pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods (see Figure 2). In descending order of importance, livestock are valued for the following key reasons: a food source - milk and blood in season and occasionally meat; bride price payments; an income source including trade and barter; payments for fines - blood money, adultery, sex with an unmarried young woman; and inflation-proof savings - wealth accumulation, prestige and expanding social networks.

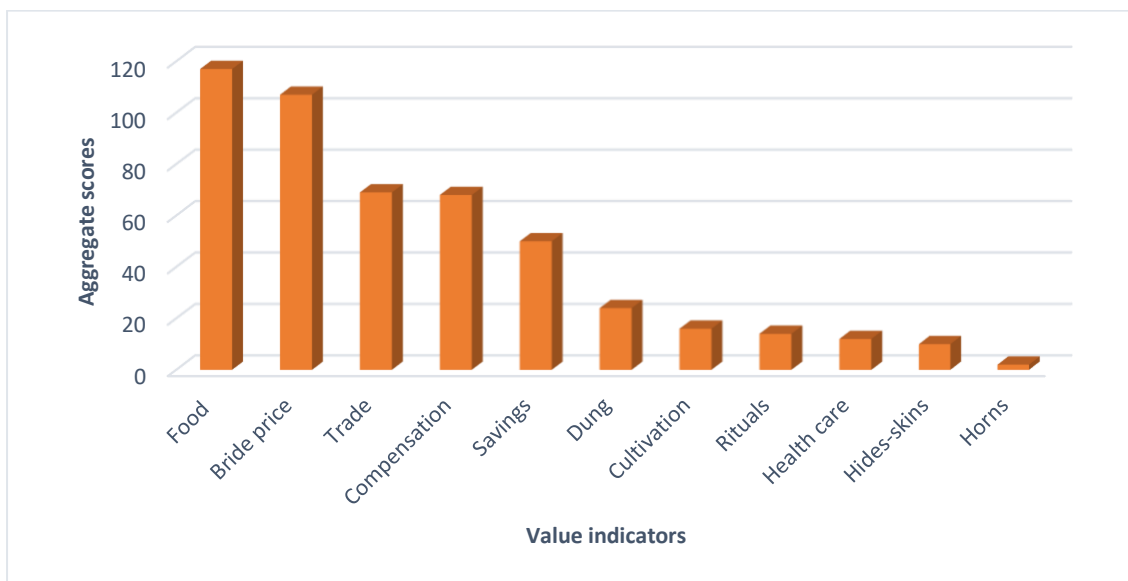


Figure 2: Aggregate 'value of cattle' indicator scores (n=20 groups)

The bride price payment for marriage indicator scored the second highest, demonstrating the significance of cattle transfers to a bride's family as a route to create or strengthen social networks. Social networks are a critical means of survival including during times of crisis, when milk and livestock may be gifted to support affected households. Since the Civil War there have been some notable changes - both increases and decreases - in bride price payments as measured in cattle numbers (see Table 4).

Table 4: Pre-Civil War to the present, median bride price cattle payments trends (n=20 men's groups)

| Wealth category | Dinka ironstone plateau | | Toposa pastoral | | Dinka NW floodplain | | Nuer NW Nile | | Nuer NE | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------------|------|--------------|------|------------|------|
| | Pre - 2013 | 2020 | Pre - 2013 | 2020 | Pre - 2013 | 2020 | Pre - 2013 | 2020 | Pre - 2013 | 2020 |
| 'Wealthy' | 200 | 50 | 90 | 70 | 45 | 150 | 30 | 130 | 40 | 30 |
| 'Average' | 70 | 25 | 70 | 48 | 20 | 40 | 25 | 60 | 25 | 20 |
| 'Poor' | 15 | 55 | 45 | 30 | 6 | 25 | 12 | 20 | 15 | 10 |
| 'Very poor' | 2 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 20 | 10 | 6 |

Increases in bride price cattle payment numbers (see highlighted figures in Table 3) suggest that it will be increasingly difficult for 'poor' and 'very poor' to marry, resulting in weaker social networks and standing and resilience to withstand shocks. This situation fuels cattle raiding and family expectations that young men should raid to secure cattle. When 'successful', cattle raiding can transform livelihoods. As one study participant explained, 'some young raiders have become wealthy in a single night'. In other areas, bride price cattle payments have fallen since the start of the Civil War and potentially this may make it easier for poorer men to marry, provided their social networks are sufficiently strong and include men with access to average and large cattle herds.

Discussion

Much has been written about pathways to peace in South Sudan including by people more qualified than the study team of livelihood specialists. While perspectives on livelihoods usefully inform development and humanitarian programming, they may offer less when the drivers of poverty are violent competition over cattle and natural resources and a political system structured around 'winners' and 'losers.'

The current peace remains fragile with continued bitter rivalry between the two main political groups and new conflicts in Equatoria, Greater Upper Nile and Bahr El Ghazal.^{viii} South Sudan's next major hurdle will be the elections, expected before the end of 2023. While no date has been set, it is widely recognised that international partners will need to ensure the necessary pre-election dialogue between factions if a relapse into conflict immediately after the election is to be avoided. Not surprisingly perhaps, some South Sudanese enviously view Kenya's devolved federal system that avoids the marginalisation of election 'losers.'^{ix}

The *UN Strategy to Mitigate Cattle Raiding in South Sudan*^x provides a useful framework for the design, implementation and review of livelihoods-based interventions. The strategy's goal and principles are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: UN strategy goal and principles

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Goal | To reduce livestock-related violence through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, increased engagement and accountability and improved access to natural resources |
| Principles | Community-oriented solutions - use participatory approaches to gather information on risks, capacities and potential solutions |
| | Conflict sensitivity - recognise livestock interventions change power dynamics and therefore require that intentional and unintentional consequences are appropriately addressed |
| | Gender responsiveness - understand that bride wealth commodifies young women and is a driver of raiding, women and girls are affected by gender-based and sexual |

violence. Understand too that women and girls are not just hapless victims and may incite violence

Land and resources - ensure detailed local assessments are made of customary land ownership and disputes

Livestock-related conflict - recognise different types of conflicts a) between pastoral groups - in Bahr-el-Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei); b) between pastoralists and farmers - in Jonglei, Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Lakes, and Western Bahr-el-Ghazal); and c) cross-border livestock-related violence - in Abyei, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap, and Eastern Equatoria

Focus on youth - understand the militarisation of youth and the limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods and alternatives to bride wealth payments as a livelihood opportunity for families

Centralisation of power - appreciate cattle raids are used as instruments to centralise power and marginalise opponents

Use of traditional mechanisms – recognise that while the 2009 Local Governance Act does not permit customary courts to adjudicate serious crimes, in the absence of formal courts, they do. Also, that customary courts can play an important mitigation role in cattle raiding and related violence, by breaking cycles of retaliatory violence

Informed by these principles, this Discussion Paper offers the following priority investment areas for South Sudan's international development partners for further consideration:

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

2. **Livestock sector development** that is well coordinated to facilitate learning, information sharing, documentation and review and evaluation. Technical assistance may include the following areas of intervention:
 - **Veterinary support** – consolidation of investments made in the 1970s-1980s in decentralised animal health service delivery that included community animal health workers (CAHWs) and private veterinary pharmacy networks. Also, delivery of reliable, seasonal vaccination campaigns including for poultry and small ruminants
 - **Rangeland management** - development of local agreements that facilitate seasonal transhumance routes that ensure the continued passage of livestock between wet and dry season rangelands and reduce year-round grazing. Such agreements would need to resolve outstanding local conflicts and include mechanisms to resolve issues as they occur
 - **Livestock water** - rainfed systems appropriate for seasonal grazing that prevent year-round grazing and the establishment of permanent settlements
 - **Livestock provision** – distribution of poultry and small ruminants in modest numbers and informed by technical reviews of previous local livestock provision projects

And, in times of deteriorating livestock prices and deteriorating livestock-cereals terms of trade:

- **Destocking** - both commercial and slaughter destocking to help stabilise livestock prices and terms of trade and protect livelihoods. To support poorer households, destocking may target small ruminants and poultry

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Endnotes

- i Worldometer. (2021).
- ii Frontier Economics. (2105).
- iii Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET). (2018).
- iv Catley et. al. (2018).
- v Toposa pastoralists were reluctant to provide specific livestock numbers and chose to speak instead in general terms.
- vi Dinka ironstone - *raan ci bany* or 'wealthy', *angang* or 'poor' and *angang parcurcel* or 'very poor'; Dinka NW floodplain - *ajak beer* or 'wealthy', *abuur riel* or 'poor' and *lang aguar* or 'very poor'; Nuer - *riang* or 'wealthy', *can and* or 'poor' and *can mi diit* or 'very poor'.
- vii United Nations Children's Fund. (2021).
- viii United Nations. (2019).
- ix Brown. (2011).
- x United Nations. (2019).

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