

## COVER NOTE

This article was written as an addition to the thesis trajectory of Van Hall Larenstein – University of Applied Science. It presents the deliverable for thesis students who are doing their thesis research for Kennisuitwisseling over Noodhulp (KUNO) and orientates itself on the requirements set by VHL and KUNO.

KUNO is acting as the publisher of the article. Hence the article is written for an expert audience, including KUNO/DRA members and other humanitarian experts. It is assumed that the audience has pre-existing knowledge and awareness of concepts and ideas that are standard in the development and humanitarian aid sector.

However, this article differs slightly from KUNO's main objectives for thesis researches on the impact of COVID-19 on the humanitarian and aid sector, as a second commissioner Africa Mission – Cooperation and Development is present. This led to the thesis focussing on the context in Karamoja region, north eastern Uganda and leads to understanding aid localisation based on present and emerging needs as well as past development in the region. Hence, the article also highlights findings regarding the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on pre-existing and emerging needs of (agro)pastoral communities in Karamoja. Subsequently, the argumentation for aid localization, as well as opportunities and challenges are built upon factors and conditions in Karamoja.

**THE OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM COVID-19 TO TRANSFORM THE AID SECTOR – AND ADDRESS EMERGING AND PRE-EXISTING NEEDS IN KARAMOJA, UGANDA**

The research, conducted by Melina Eberwein from VHL<sup>1</sup> was commissioned by KUNO<sup>2</sup> and C&D<sup>3</sup>, an Italian NGO working more than 40 years in Karamoja. C&D, in a consortium with two Ugandan NGOs<sup>4</sup>, addresses child migration from Karamoja to urban centres and supports their resettlement at home under the CaR<sup>5</sup> project<sup>1</sup>, which served as the case study to assess opportunities and challenges of aid localization during COVID-19 within a protracted crises context. Figure 1 depicts Karamoja’s location within Uganda and highlights the research area.

While migration is traditionally used by the Karimojong<sup>6</sup> to reduce shocks from recurrent droughts and floods, the rise in child migration to urban centres since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be identified as one of the coping strategies of families against the prevalent insecurity, poverty and food insecurity in the region, rooted in historic marginalization and long-lasting armed conflict<sup>7i</sup>. The progression of vulnerability is further illustrated in Figure 2<sup>iii</sup>.

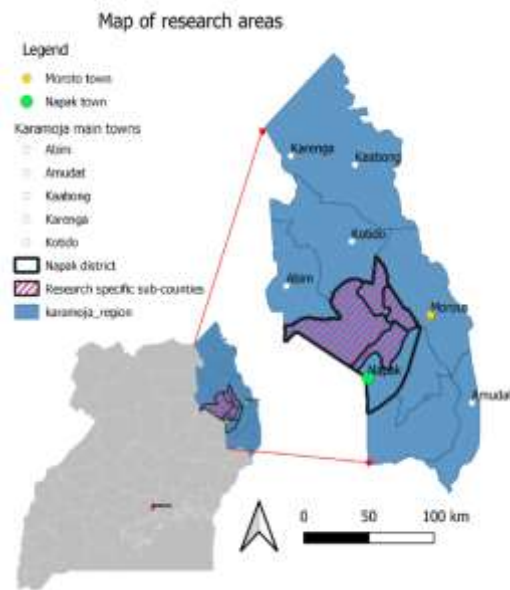


Figure 1 Map of Karamoja region with research target district and sub-counties

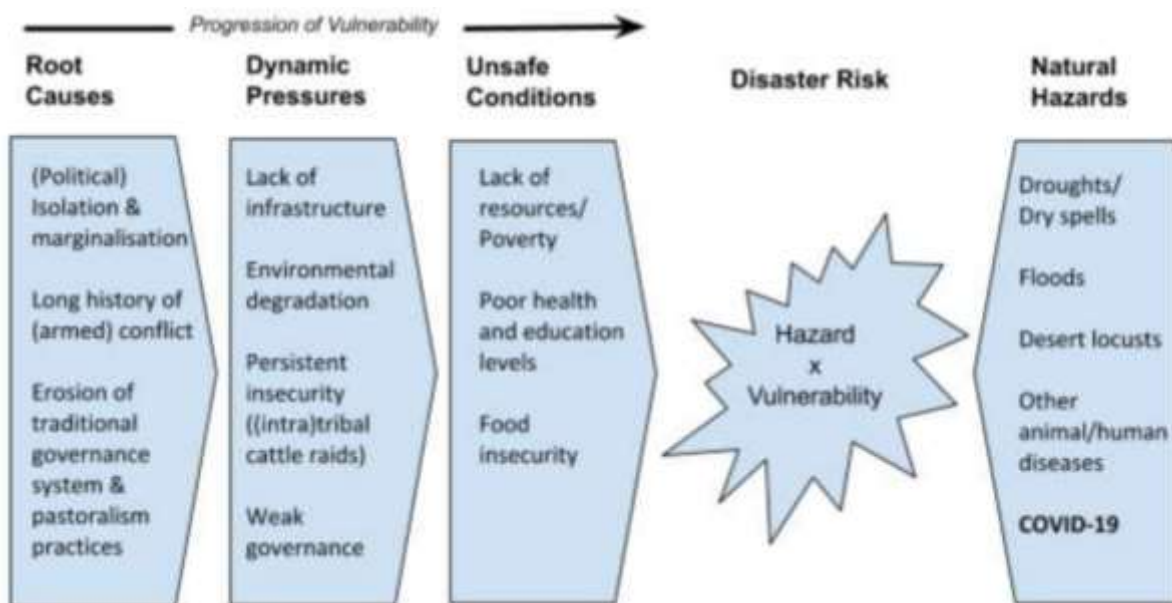


Figure 2 Pressure and Release Model for Karamoja, Uganda

<sup>1</sup> Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Science

<sup>2</sup> Kennisuitwisseling over Noodhulp

<sup>3</sup> Africa Mission – Cooperation and Development

<sup>4</sup> The consortium furthermore consists of Uganda Change Agent Organisation (UCCA) and Dwelling Places (DP)

<sup>5</sup> Children at Risk

<sup>6</sup> The Karimojong are a Nilotic ethnic group relying predominantly on (agro) pastoral livelihoods and are the main group inhabiting Karamoja region

<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth overview of the region and context, as well as child migration refer to chapter 2 of the report

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in Uganda<sup>8</sup> have impacted multiple aspects of people's lives in Karamoja and exacerbated pre-existing conditions<sup>iv</sup>. The research assessed the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on livelihoods and food security, as well as the prevalence of violence amongst communities, disaggregated by GAD factors<sup>9</sup>. Figure 3 provides a short overview of those findings, in accordance with the research dimensions<sup>10</sup>.



Figure 3 Brief overview of the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on communities in Napak, Karamoja

Considering the previously highlighted progression of vulnerability, the findings indicate that the impact of COVID-19 in Karamoja exacerbates pre-existing needs, which were created through a multitude of factors, including historic marginalization and disempowerment.

Aid localization is argued as necessary to deliver effective, adequate and empowering assistance to affected people and support sustainable development<sup>v</sup>. In a context such as Karamoja, which is affected by decades of insecurity, disempowerment and widespread poverty, the transformative agenda of localization<sup>vi</sup> offers to address the broader systemic issues of the aid sector and historical trends which have undermined real progress in the region. At the same time, COVID-19, its sector wide impact and exacerbation of people in need let to renewed calls to transform the aid sector's approaches and the underlying unequal global power structures<sup>vii</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the pandemic and lockdown in Uganda refer to chapter 2.1 of the report.

<sup>9</sup> A Gender, Age, Diversity lens was applied to the research, using the following criteria: *Gender*: female- and male-headed households, *Age*: age-group of household heads (18-35, 36-65 and 65+ years), *Diversity*: sub-county of household and CaR project/non-project households). Additionally, differences between boys and girls (14-18 years) were considered

<sup>10</sup> Refer to chapter 6.2 and 6.3 of the report for the conceptualization and operationalisation of the research. An in-depth overview of the results and discussion regarding the impact on communities and the Gender, Age and Diversity disaggregated can be found in chapter 8, 9.1, 9.2 and figure 49 of the report.

Hence, this study investigated if and how localization offered opportunities and challenges to respond to the underlying vulnerabilities and impact of COVID-19 in Karamoja.

The assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on current localization structures within the CaR project and how those impacted the projects functioning during the pandemic and lockdown used the 7 Dimension of Localisation Framework<sup>11viii</sup> and focussed on Coordination Mechanism, Capacity Enhancements and Participation Revolution.

The CaR project already presents a form of aid localization, having been set up by the donor KIA<sup>12</sup> with the intention to localize their approach and focus on national partners. That the CaR project was able to adapt to changing circumstances and keep operating throughout the lockdown can be related to pre-existing localization structures. Physical proximity, an extensive history of cooperation, mutual trust and understanding enabled the consortium to rapidly adapt and coordinate the response to changing conditions. KIA further enabled this through flexible budgets, which granted the consortium partners new freedom to adjust to the ever-changing context. This generated not only a great amount of trust between the partners but also increased awareness for the need for flexible budgets that reflect the reality on the ground.

The consortiums close relationship with local governments enabled the project to function under lockdown measures and led to a high level of coordination and awareness amongst actors. The consortium partner working in Kampala, the main urban migration destination, was strongly impacted due a stricter enforcement of the lockdown in the capital as well as a simultaneous crackdown of police on child migrants<sup>ix</sup>. However, the open communication, mutual understanding of each actors' activities, and a flexible budget allowed the consortium to re-assign and adapt specific project aspects to continue supporting child migrants in coordination with police forces<sup>13</sup>. Having worked closely with different governmental authorities and the police pre-pandemic resulted in a continuous stable and effective relationship amongst them and consortium partners.

In the case of the CaR project, aid localisation increased the projects sustainability. Even when international support ceased, the owned structures by national actors remained. It enabled better adaptation to a changing context, allowed the project to keep operating and led to higher coordination and understanding with local government actors.

However, regarding Participation Revolution it was noted that the contact to project targets strongly reduced during the lockdown and participation is foremost realized through consultation<sup>x</sup>, such as needs surveys. However, those do not imply a share in decision-making for communities and do not guarantee that actors consider people's perspectives.

In conclusion, the findings of this study validate the call for aid localization to improve the humanitarian response and sector, especially in protracted crisis settings. It offers to sustainable address root causes of vulnerabilities, which are generated through historic events and the sectors own structures, that have prevented sustainable improvements in Karamoja for years. The localized structures of the CaR project have proven their sustainability and adaptability in emerging crisis settings, such as COVID-19. However, to further improve and build upon those existing structures, a stronger focus and inclusion of affected people is needed to transform the humanitarian response to be adequate, effective and empowering.

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<sup>11</sup> The research used the 7 dimension of aid localization framework of the Start Network to assess aid localization and the relation of stakeholders. Three dimensions, Participation Revolution, Coordination Mechanism and Capacity Enhancement were chosen (see chapter 6.1.2, figure 9 and chapter 8.4 of the report)

<sup>12</sup> Kerk in Actie

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 9.3.1 for an in-depth overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the organisational capacity of the consortium and the adaptation to emerging needs

Thus, to achieve the transformative aim of aid localization and empower L/NAs<sup>14</sup> as well as affected people and provide sustainable and empowering support within Karamoja, it is recommended to **enable true participation of affected communities**. Rather than passive feedback mechanisms, communities should be included actively in project design and implementation, to empower people and design a project that fits local needs while addressing root causes of vulnerability. Additionally, based on the success of the consortium within Uganda, it is recommended to **extend coordination mechanisms regionally**, to respond to the rise of child migrants to Kenya and allow L/NAs to play a more important role in regional coordination mechanism, as aimed under the Grand Bargain<sup>15xi</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup> UCAA, DP, C&D, 2018. The Karamoja Children at Risk Program (CaR) - A consortium proposal submitted to ICCO Cooperation for the period 2019 - December 2021. Kampala: s.n.

<sup>ii</sup> International Organization for Migration, 2014. Child Migration from Karamoja, Kampala: IOM

<sup>iii</sup> *The following sources have been used for the PAR Analysis:*

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<sup>iv</sup> Development Initiatives, 2020. Socioeconomic impact of Covid-19 in Uganda, s.l.: Development Initiatives.

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<sup>14</sup> Local and National actors

<sup>15</sup> The Grand Bargain is an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian sector. The agreement was set up after the World Humanitarian Summit 2016

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[https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press\\_release/2020/06/29/uganda-world-bank-provides-300-million-to-close-covid-19-financing-gap-and-support-economy-recover](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press_release/2020/06/29/uganda-world-bank-provides-300-million-to-close-covid-19-financing-gap-and-support-economy-recover) [Accessed 29 September 2020]

<sup>v</sup> Patel, S. & Van Brabant, K., 2017. *The Start Fund, Start Network and Localisation: current situation and future directions*, s.l.: Start Network

<sup>vi</sup> Patel, S. & Van Brabant, K., 2018. *Localisation in Practice: Emerging Indicators & Practical Recommendations*, s.l.: The Start Network

<sup>vii</sup> IASC, 2020. COVID-19: Global Humanitarian Response Plan demonstrates the need for effective and efficient humanitarian response. [Online] Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/covid-19-global-humanitarian-response-plan-demonstrates-need> [Accessed 10 September 2020].

<sup>viii</sup> Patel, S. & Van Brabant, K., 2018. *Localisation in Practice: Emerging Indicators & Practical Recommendations*, s.l.: The Start Network

<sup>ix</sup> Independent, 2020. KCCA starts process to reunite over 40 street children with family. s.l.: The Independent.

<sup>x</sup> Oxford Policy Management, 2013. *A Framework for Analysing Participation in Development*, s.l.: Norad.

<sup>xi</sup> IASC, 2020. Interagency Standing Committee. [Online] Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargainofficial-website/covid-19-global-humanitarian-response-plan-demonstrates-need> [Accessed 10 September 2020].