



Livestock and conflict in South Sudan

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Question

- 1. What roles do livestock play in South Sudan's violent conflicts? What are the drivers and dynamics of this?*
- 2. What is the impact of conflict on the livestock sector in South Sudan?*

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1. Summary

Livestock are critically important in South Sudanese society¹ and this is reflected in the role livestock play in the country's conflict, both serving as drivers of conflict and being negatively impacted by the conflict, with the two often reinforcing each other in a vicious cycle.

This review drew largely on a mixture of academic and grey literature to assess the relationship between livestock and conflict in South Sudan. While gender issues were addressed to some extent in the available literature, the review found nothing on persons with disabilities.

Livestock are massively important in South Sudan. The sector is the main source of income and food for the majority of the population: pastoral farming is appropriate for South Sudan's challenging ecology, characterised by flooding, drought, swamplands and so on. Livestock bestow social status and prestige. They are used for payment of dowries, to pay compensation and settle disputes, and – in the absence of an established banking sector - serve as a reliable way to keep assets. Livestock outnumber people in South Sudan, leading to strain on natural resources – exacerbated by the fact that they are so revered that people rarely kill their animals for meat, preferring to pay for imported meat.

The South Sudan region has seen almost continual conflict for the past several decades: first civil war between the South Sudanese and the Government of Sudan, then following South Sudan's independence in 2011, civil war within South Sudan. Since the outbreak of the latest conflict in December 2013, over 4.5 million people are estimated to have been displaced in South Sudan, including 2.47 million refugees (ACAPS, 2018). Given the centrality of livestock to South Sudanese economy, culture and society it is not surprising that livestock have an important role in conflict: both as drivers of conflict, and being negatively impacted by conflict. Moreover, these two facets are heavily intertwined, with one often reinforcing the other.

Cattle raiding has been a traditional practice among pastoral communities in the region, notably between the Nuer, Dinka and Murle tribes. However, this generally occurred on a small-scale and involved minimal violence. A number of factors have contributed to this becoming more intense, involving greater violence and taking place on a far larger scale in South Sudan:

- **The proliferation of weapons in South Sudan:** whereas traditional cattle raiding involved spears, bows and arrows, and clubs, now guns and heavy weapons are used. This has led to a far higher death toll in such attacks, including women and children;
- **Exploitation by political elites of ethnic divisions and rivalries between pastoral communities:** fostering the formation of armed groups such as the Nuer White Army and the Dinka Titweng (often based on pre-existing community defence groups) who engage in cattle raiding/conflict on their behalf as well as independently;
- **Erosion of traditional constraints on cattle raiding:** notably the moral and spiritual cost associated with any killing (to be alleviated through purification rituals and ceremonies), and the authority of tribal chiefs and prophets. This has come about partly because of changing governance structures, but also in large part because of deliberate

¹ A second report focuses on the livestock sector, including a detailed description of the sector, its role in South Sudan, contribution of livestock to GDP, livestock markets and their dynamics.

attempts by political/military elites to remove what they saw as constraints on their ability to mobilize large armed groups to carry out their bidding;

- **Cattle raiding is a particularly effective tool of war** because it strips targeted communities of their most important assets – both economically and socio-culturally;
- **Cattle are a spoil of war and therefore in themselves an incentive to fight.** Insecurity in the country is exploited by criminal elements and those keen to settle old scores;
- **Cattle raiding is also spurred by rising bridewealth rates:** usually paid in cattle, without this young men cannot marry.

The review identified a number of ways in which South Sudan's prolonged conflict has impacted the livestock sector:

- **Elite accumulation of large cattle herds:** political and military elites have used resources gained during the war and post-independence to acquire massive herds – these, in turn, are used to build their own status and prestige, to cultivate networks of supporters (e.g. through payment of bridewealth and acquisition of wives), and to pay bridewealth for their soldiers to marry – thereby securing their allegiance. Distribution of livestock has thus changed, with the 'middle classes' squeezed out;
- **Abnormal migration:** pastoral farming in South Sudan traditionally involves seasonal migration away from flooded/dry areas to those with good grazing and water. Prolonged conflict has closed off routes/grazing lands and forced herders to go into new areas, putting strain on resources there and leading to spread of tension and conflict, both between different pastoral communities, and between herders and agriculturalists;
- **Increased livestock diseases:** factors such as abnormal migration and prolonged confinement of cattle in one place are leading to the spread of livestock diseases into areas where these were not found previously and/or emergence of new diseases not seen when livestock can move normally. The problem is exacerbated by severe disruption of veterinary services due to the conflict;
- **Reduced livestock numbers:** disease, abnormal migration, reduced access to natural resources have all led to a drop in livestock numbers, though the literature stresses that it is very hard to make anything more than very rough estimates of these because of the insecurity in South Sudan;
- **Livestock markets have been disrupted by various factors:** including insecurity of trade routes; market closures or destruction; lack of demand; the departure of traders from some conflict-affected counties; and increased live animal imports from Uganda.
- **Food insecurity:** traditionally the South Sudanese rely on cattle for milk and milk products – they do not kill them for meat - supplementing these with small-scale farming, fishing and/or purchase of food including imported meat. Conflict has led to food insecurity, with people being forced to sell their livestock to buy grain, or kill them for meat. Other negative coping mechanisms now seen include marrying girls off at younger ages to secure bridewealth cattle for the family;
- **Long-term poverty:** loss of cattle poses serious long-term threats to pastoral communities. As well as income and food, livestock are critical for education and marriage, and integral to South Sudanese culture and society. Any post-conflict recovery will have to include reacquisition of cattle for such communities.

The response to the problems facing the livestock sector in South Sudan has been poor, with all parties involved bearing some responsibility:

- **Ineffective state response:** Reduced income because of reduced oil production and diversion of funds (and effort) to fight the civil war, are some of the factors which have led to the state's inability to deal with conflicts over natural resources and livestock, or to provide the services needed by pastoralists. Failings in the country's legal system mean people can't get justice for cattle raids and so take matters into their own hands;
- **Neglect of pastoralism by donors/humanitarians:** The literature points to a bias in donor/humanitarian programming towards agriculturalists, and a failure to value or invest in pastoralism. Difficulties in accessing pastoralists (because of conflict and their mobility) and under-representation of pastoral communities among local staff in donor offices also contribute to this neglect;
- **Failure to address localised conflicts in the peace process:** While localised conflicts over livestock are clearly widespread and having a huge negative impact in South Sudan, they tend to be dismissed as cultural phenomenon and not included in mainstream dialogue about causes of conflict and prospects for peace. Peace agreements to date in South Sudan have been between the government and major opposition factions, and do not address localised conflicts and grievances.

2. Context

Importance of livestock in South Sudan

The literature stresses the importance of livestock in South Sudan, not just for livelihoods and in economic terms, but as a central component in culture, values, identity and social relations (FAO, 2014; Allison, 2016). Livestock are the main source of income and food in South Sudan with over 70% of the population participating in the pastoral economy (NRC, 2016: 2). Pastoral farming is particularly suited to South Sudan's ecology, characterised by different land types, patches of higher land, land that is waterlogged by rain, permanent swamplands, heavy rainfall leading to waterlogging and flooding, dry seasons (USAID, 2015). Pendle (2017: 2) explains that livestock are critically important in South Sudan because they provide resilience 'to the climatic variability that is a feature of the vast, fluctuating swamplands that dominate the ecology of over a third of South Sudan....Pastoralism and its mobility constitute a rational use of this otherwise marginal environment, where both droughts and floods are frequent visitors'.

Allison (2016) argues that, 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to overstate the importance of cattle to South Sudan's economy'. In the absence of banks and the migratory lifestyles of pastoral communities, wealth stored in cattle is the most reliable way to keep assets (FAO, 2014; DeCapua, 2014; NRC, 2016). 'Cows are living, breathing, shitting, lactating bank accounts, an extraordinarily resilient source of wealth and power in one of the poorest countries in the world' (Allison, 2016).

Alongside income and milk and (to a lesser extent) meat production, cattle are valued because they are used for dowries, and because ownership bestows prestige and status (NRC, 2016). 'Bridewealth in cattle is required for marriage, and herd size is often a reliable indicator of male social status as well as the status of the family into which he is marrying' (Wild et al, 2018: 3). 'Cattle are also political capital, as herd size correlates with economic and political success' (Lauren Hutton, South Sudan analyst, cited in Allison, 2016). One analysis suggests that the

prestige value of cattle outweighs material benefits: 'Cattle in South Sudan are a curse. It is not a resource that benefits people because they are not rearing cattle for economic benefits or for food security benefits. They are rearing it for prestige' (Doki, 2014).

The drive by South Sudanese to have large livestock herds has resulted in the country having more livestock than people: a 2014 estimate put the number of people at 13 million, with around 11.7 million cattle, 12.4 million goats and 12.1 million sheep (Doki, 2014). The vast number of livestock in South Sudan – and the fact that very few are used for meat - leads to strain on natural resources, with scarcity of grazing land and water (Doki, 2014). This is made worse by lack of regulation of natural resource use on the part of the government, for example for how long a specific piece of land can be used for rearing cattle (Doki, 2014).

The literature also indicates that in South Sudan livestock are not used for meat (FAO, 2014; DeCapua, 2014). 'In South Sudan, cattle are revered and there are communities where pastoralists won't even contemplate slaughtering one of their cows for meat. So the country imports cattle, mainly from neighbouring Uganda, which is then slaughtered for meat' (Doko, 2014). This is echoed by a study of pastoralism in Greater Upper Nile (which includes Jonglei State) which reported that, 'Only when people are at their most food insecure do they kill cattle for meat' (USAID, 2015: 24).

Livestock have also traditionally played a role in conflict mitigation and resolution (USAID, 2015: 8). 'South Sudanese have long used cattle sacrifice and compensation to bring justice and reduce conflict' (Pendle, 2017: 5). Cattle are awarded in settlements mediated by local chiefs in order to stop revenge and reconcile feuding families, even after the most serious crimes (Pendle, 2017).

Cattle are as important to women as to men: 'Significantly, they represent survival and wealth and a woman's ability to feed her children' (USAID, 2015: 41). By securing bridewealth (dowry) she is contributing to the welfare of her father's family. However, this also serves to bind the woman to her husband, because the cattle must be restored to his family if the marriage is broken by the wife. In cases where a large bride price has been paid, the husband feels more entitled to treat his wife as he wants – meaning a greater likelihood of physical abuse (USAID, 2015).

Conflict in South Sudan

The South Sudan region has seen almost continual conflict for the past several decades: civil war between the Government of Sudan and the opposition Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) lasted from 1983 to 2005, ended by signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and followed by a referendum and the establishment of South Sudan as an independent country in 2011. The current conflict is within South Sudan between the Dinka-dominated forces of President Salva Kiir, and former vice president Riek Machar who derives support from the Nuer. It erupted in December 2013 when President Kiir accused Machar of attempting a coup: violence followed in Juba and Machar formed the SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO) to fight against the ruling SPLA. The conflict has led to massive population displacement. As of July 2015, there were 1.6 million IDPs and 608,000 recorded South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as 4.6 million people severely food insecure in South Sudan (GHI, 2015).

A peace agreement signed in August 2015 failed to put an end to the fighting. In 2016 conflict deepened and spread beyond the Greater Upper Nile region. The opposition split into further factions, with some loyal to Machar and others to Taban Deng, who had taken up a position as representative of the opposition in the Transitional Government of National Unity. By autumn 2016 fighting had escalated in regions previously spared from conflict, including Greater Equatoria. By December 2017, one in three people in South Sudan had been forced to flee their homes since the outbreak of hostilities in December 2013 (IDMC, 2018).

A major contributing factor to the continued violence in South Sudan is the fractionalisation of the conflict: as well as fighting between the SPLA and SPLA-IO there are multiple other factions and parties (including militias and community defence groups) involved in multiple conflicts. Kiir's unilateral decision in late 2015 to increase the number of states from 10 to 28, and again in January 2017 to 32, has greatly exacerbated ethnic tensions and fuelled inter-communal conflict in Unity and Upper Nile states (IDMC, 2018; ACAPS, 2018). The generalised insecurity mean that looting, burning of homes and indiscriminate violence against civilians is endemic – driving further displacement (IDMC, 2018). Prolonged conflict, along with droughts and flooding, has led to food insecurity. In January 2018 nearly half the population was estimated to be facing acute food insecurity (IDMC, 2018).

The peace process was officially revitalised in June 2017, and in December 2017 the warring parties signed a ceasefire agreement (IDMC, 2018). However, early 2018 saw intense fighting in Upper Nile, Jonglei, Unity and Central Equatoria, triggering new displacements. In June 2018 Kiir and Machar met for talks in Ethiopia. A second round in Sudan led to the signing on 27 June of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, providing for a permanent ceasefire. Under a power-sharing agreement signed on 5 August, Kiir will remain president and Machar will become the first of five vice presidents. After an eight-month pre-transitional period led by Kiir there will be a three-year transitional period (ACAPS, 2018). While the agreement could address conflict between the SPLA and SPLA-IO, as well as other major opposition factions, it does not address the multiple localised sources of conflict in South Sudan. According to the latest figures, over 4.5 million people are estimated to be displaced in South Sudan, including 1.91 million IDPs and 2.47 million refugees; over 60% of refugees are under 18 (ACAPS, 2018).

3. Role of cattle in conflict

Tradition of cattle raiding

The literature stresses that cattle raiding has been a traditional practice among pastoral communities in East Africa, and specifically in the South Sudan region (Wild et al, 2018). A number of reports point to the prevalence of cattle raiding among the Nuer, Dinka and Murle 'with pastoralists from the three tribes participating in cyclical cattle raiding (as well as child abduction) (McCallum & Okech, 2013: 14; Manyok, 2017). Jonglei State in South Sudan is one of the main sites of cattle raiding involving these tribes.

The tradition of cattle raiding stems from the central role of cattle in livelihoods, as well as in social and cultural systems – the association of prestige with cattle ownership (Manyok, 2017). It is also perpetuated by growing cycles of violence motivated by a desire for vengeance. An attack by one community on another, leads to a reprisal attack by the latter, and so on. '(W)ithout acceptable forms of non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms or security agents to prevent the

criminal activities, cattle raiding has for years entrapped these communities in a loop of vengeance' (Manyok, 2017: 93).

Manyok (2017) writes that traditionally cattle rustling occurred on a small-scale and involved minimal violence. Wild et al (2018: 3), however, assert that such raids were not benign: 'Raids posed a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of pastoralists and to their communities in the form of mortality for young male warriors, decreased nutrition due to loss of herds, and decreased access to arable land and watering holes'.

Community divisions and cattle raiding persisted after the creation of South Sudan (McCallum & Okech, 2013: 15). A number of factors, discussed below in this report, have contributed to cattle raiding taking place on a far bigger scale. Key among these are the proliferation of weapons and the commercialization of cattle. Ethnic divisions and rivalries between cattle herders have been exploited by political elites (see below); there are also those who have taken advantage of the insecurity 'to settle old scores and steal millions of dollars of cows' (Hatcher, 2014; Allison, 2016). Allison (2016) points out that cattle are a spoil of war, and therefore an incentive to fight: 'Rare is the battle report that doesn't include a note on how many cattle were seized during this government offensive or that rebel attack'. A further factor leading to increased cattle raiding is increasing dowries: paid in cattle, households now need to pay more and more animals as bridewealth in order for their young men to get married (Manyok, 2017: 94). Cattle raiding as a tool of war is particularly effective because it strips communities of their most important assets – both economically and socio-culturally.

Erosion of traditional constraints

'Traditional' cattle raiding was characterised (and regulated) by customary practices, including highly ritualised purification ceremonies following killing. In the case of the Nuer these rituals were presided over by traditional authorities known as leopard-skin or earth chiefs, who were responsible for settling blood feuds (Wild et al, 2018). Thus, for example, a Nuer man who had killed sought refuge at the residence of the earth chief, who would carry out a ceremony to excise the dead from him (cutting his arm to release the blood of the dead) and negotiate with the family of the deceased an amount of restitution in bloodwealth cattle – 'failure to observe ritual prohibitions was believed to result in grave consequences, including death' (Wild et al, 2018: 4). Prophets were another category of spiritual leader who traditionally, and to a large extent still, 'played an important role in governing raiding behaviour, wielding significant power to both sanction and initiate raids as well as to prevent them' (Wild et al, 2018: 4). When raiders started using firearms instead of spears, new rituals were introduced for purification from deaths caused by bullet wounds – an indication of the importance of such rites, and of the perception of killing as a 'spiritual ordeal of significant magnitude' (Wild et al, 2018: 4).

Manyok (2017) writes that, in the past, tribal leaders made use of traditional conflict resolution methods, reconciliation processes and rituals and ceremonies to mend broken inter-communal relations. While 'these methods did not mean ultimate peace among the communities, ... they resulted in maintaining peaceful coexistence of the communities as well as intra-communal relationships' (Manyok, 2017: 102).

In recent years, however, those traditional norms, practices and leaders have been undermined. Again, a number of factors are involved. One is changes in governance systems that have weakened major cultural institutions and rendered traditional leaders irrelevant (Manyok, 2017: 108). 'Customary mechanisms for addressing cattle-raiding became less effective as governance

systems changed and respect for traditional leadership declined' (McCallum & Okech, 2013: 14). Another is abnormal migration and extended settlement in areas that were not part of traditional pastoral migratory routes (see below).

Wild et al (2018) also highlight the erosion of traditional structures and their role in preventing, limiting or stopping violence, and in promoting restorative justice. They blame this on political elites: keen to mobilize civilian raiders for their own purposes, they wanted to remove what they saw as constraints to their ability to do so (Wild et al, 2018). 'Their efforts to undermine the rituals and cultural authorities that traditionally governed intercommunity violence have been devastatingly successful' (Wild et al, 2018: 2). Pendle (2018) echoes this, describing attempts dating back to the 1990s by South Sudanese military leaders to distinguish between acts of homicide/deaths in local feuding, and violent deaths during 'government wars' – arguing that the latter did not carry any moral or spiritual consequences (this point is elaborated below). Another report suggests that 'young men are so mobilized and incited for violence in the current context that the moral limitations on the use of force are being strained' (NRC, 2016: 4).

Traditional compensation mechanisms have also been undermined. Pendle (2018: 99) writes that, among the western Dinka, while cattle compensation is still used, it lacks 'the necessary spiritual and legal significance'. She cites a local chief who asserts that the cattle of compensation are of material benefit only for their milk – i.e. such compensation fails to bring about peace. Two factors are particularly relevant: one, government attempts to standardize compensation rates for killings – these fail to take into account the differing compensation required depending on who was killed (their status), if it was accidental or deliberate, the situation of the deceased's family, or, critically, fluctuating (rising) bridewealth rates; two, elite accumulation of large herds (see below) which means that, even if they have to give a few dozen cattle in compensation to someone, this is a tiny amount in relation to what they own and therefore causes them no real hurt (Pendle, 2018).

Mobilization of cattle raiders to support political conflict

The literature highlights the exploitation of intercommunity rivalries over cattle raiding by political elites: pastoralist raiders have been mobilized and armed to fight on their behalf – leading to larger-scale cattle raiding.

In the case of South Sudan, endemic cattle raiding creates dynamics that are easily co-opted by the military and political objectives of those in power and quickly mobilized along ethnic lines....Cattle raiding, a long-standing historical reality, now significantly exacerbates the political conflict and poses threats to civilian well-being that rival the more visible atrocities committed by the SPLA and opposition (SPLA-IO) forces (Wild et al, 2018: 2).

The confluence between political conflict and traditional cattle raiding in South Sudan was illustrated by the SPLA-IO's July 2016 attack on President Kiir's personal cattle farm near Juba in which they seized around 2,000 cattle (Okello, 2016). The co-option of pastoral groups dates as far back as the 1980s (Wild et al, 2018). Two of the most well-known armed pastoralist groups are the Nuer 'White Army' and the Dinka 'Titweng'.

The White Army originally referred to groups of Nuer pastoralists that formed to protect their cattle against raids. Armed herders would gather for finite periods of time in order to fight, and then disperse back to their cattle camps (Wild et al, 2018). Wild et al (2018) describe how the Nuer were mobilized in the early 1990s by Riek Machar, who had just split from John Garang

and formed a new SPLA faction. Garang was a Bor Dinka and Machar needed support to mount a large-scale attack on the Bor Dinka. He sought to mobilize youth from the neighbouring Lou Nuer cattle camp, as well as from the Jikany Nuer. The Lou Nuer were long-time neighbours and shared grazing grounds with the Bor Dinka. 'Knowing that they would be unmotivated by political ambitions alone, Machar provisioned these young men with arms and promised them abundant payment in raided cattle' (Wild et al, 2018: 4). He also propagated the belief that there was a separate category of secular violence that was exempt from traditional purification rituals and compensation requirements. He managed to convince the Lou and Jikany Nuer 'that any violence they conducted under the banner of political warfare would have no spiritual or material retributions' (Wild et al, 2018: 5).

This new form of warfare transgressed all the ethical limits on violence that had been honoured by previous generations of Nuer and Dinka leaders, swiftly transforming earlier patterns of intermittent cattle-raiding into no-holds-barred military assaults on Dinka and Nuer civilian populations armed with little more than spears (Wild et al, 2018: 5).

Machar was able to mobilise an estimated 30,000 Nuer youth to attack the Bor Dinka. In the infamous 1991 Bor Massacre that followed approximately 2,000 Dinka were killed (Wild et al, 2018: 5).

A similar process happened in mobilization of Dinka herders to participate in political warfare in units known as the Titweng (meaning 'cattle guards'). Though formed earlier, they were recruited by the SPLA led by John Garang in the 1990s – something made relatively easy by repeated raids by Machar's SPLA faction against Dinka communities. However, just as Riek Machar had to undermine cultural institutions governing raiding among the Nuer, so the SPLA had to disrupt such institutions among the Dinka. Traditionally, Dinka cattle raiders were strictly organised under a system of age sets, defining who could raid together. Youth were trained under the guidance of elders and oriented on the use of violence as a last resort, for defensive purposes or when denied access to grazing lands and water points – violence would be 'guided by a defined structure of beliefs, ideas and values' (Saferworld, 2017: 20).

In order to mobilise larger groups of Dinka raiders than would have been possible under the traditional system, the SPLA 'enforced a break in these deeply entrenched social systems' (Wild et al, 2018: 5). Dinka Titweng fought alongside the SPLA, their cattle were an important source of sustenance for SPLA fighters, and following the 2005 CPA, they were used in governance activities such as tax collection. By mid-2013 a specialized force of former Dinka raiders from the Bar el Ghazal region (Salva Kiir's home community) was integrated into the presidential guard (Saferworld, 2017) – 'solidifying a shift in the role of informal pastoralist armed groups from protectors and raiders of cattle to semi-integrated members of the state security apparatus' (Wild et al, 2018: 5). The proximity to the military had the effect of 'reducing the influence of chiefs and elders over their behaviour and eroding community norms that had limited their participation and conduct in violence' (Saferworld, 2017: 20).

Wild et al (2018) stress that, while opposing parties in the South Sudan political conflict were able to recruit armed pastoralist groups to fight for them, such groups were only weakly integrated into formal militias and had little in the way of consistent loyalties. Stringham and Forney (2017: 179) note that 'White Army fighters refuse to be anyone's pawns and regularly disregard, and even kill, Nuer elites who oppose their community-level goals'. The inability of political elites to control pastoralist militias fighting on their behalf has resulted in a worsened security situation: 'heavily armed, in some cases, military-trained, and completely disinhibited

from any forms of cultural authority that may have once held them in check, raiders mount deadly attacks on a routine basis' (Wild et al, 2018: 6).

The Saferworld (2017) report on South Sudan's informal armies makes it clear that pastoralist militias are part of a much wider context of community protection forces and informal armed groups. They identify three strands driving the formation of such militias: a) the need to protect local communities from pre-independence attacks by Sudanese forces and allied militias, and post-independence attacks by cattle raiders, militias and others; b) the political contest for power within the various liberation movements during the civil war, which continued as a contest for state power after independence – individual quests for power are turned into conflicts between their entire ethnic communities; and c) localised competition for resources that has occurred along ethnic lines – cattle raiding fits into this (Saferworld, 2017: 2-3). In their analysis of the White Army, Stringham and Forney (2017) stress the role of local level grievances as driving factors, including perceived injustice over distribution of resources, particularly between rural and urban areas – they argue this was a key reason behind the notorious attack on Bor in 1991.

Intensification and militarisation of cattle raiding

While cattle raiding has long been a feature of pastoral communities in the South Sudan region, its character has changed as a result of the wider conflict: 'the ready availability of arms and the incorporation of this practice (*cattle raiding*) into the larger political conflict in South Sudan have intensified the violence to unprecedentedly deadly levels' (Wild et al, 2018: 2). Where once raiders mounted attacks with spears, bows and arrows and clubs, they now use heavy arms including machine guns, AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades (Manyok, 2017; Wild et al, 2018).

Manyok (2017) points out that conflict and increased cattle raiding prompts herders to obtain weapons for protection – in turn, increasing the chances of violence. 'Communities bought into the myth that more arms meant increased security. But the more guns that South Sudanese – civilian and combatant alike – had in their possession, the less secure everyone became' (Saferworld, 2017: 2). One respondent observed: 'There are guns everywhere. Even women are armed with guns. It is easy for anyone who wants to kill more people to do that because of the guns' (cited in Manyok, 2017: 98).

Wild et al (2018: 2) note that many of the weapons have come from the state itself, 'as guns collected from sources including disarmament programs often end up back in the hands of civilians, whether through direct provisioning or via patronage networks with access to weapon depots'. The nature of raids has correspondingly changed with military-style attacks targeting civilians and entire communities 'routinely incorporated into the raiding repertoire' (Wild et al, 2018: 2). Manyok (2017) writes that, in contrast to small-scale traditional cattle raiding, today's attacks are conducted by larger groups and involve stealing massive herds of cattle with many human fatalities. Moreover, 'the participants in today's raids have become more organised, using technology such as mobile phones to coordinate their tactics and movements' (Manyok, 2017: 106).

Not surprisingly, the death toll in cattle raiding has escalated. The 2017 Saferworld report notes that the raiding and counter-raiding between the Dinka of Warrap and the Nuer of Unity State, among the Agar Dinka of Lakes, and in Jonglei State between Dinka, Murle and Nuer 'have been some of the most deadly in South Sudan over the past ten years (Saferworld, 2017: 3). Wild et al (2018: 1) note that vicious cycles of raiding between Murle and Lou Nuer tribes result in

casualties on a routine basis, numbering dozens if not hundreds at a time. In a period of just over a month between December 2011 and February 2012 a conservative estimate of the violence between the two communities reached a total of 44 attacks/counter-attacks, resulting in 276 deaths, 25 abductions and thousands of raided cattle (Wild et al, 2018: 2). A single incident in February 2013 resulted in over 100 people killed, many of these women, children and the elderly (Wild et al, 2013: 2). On 28 November 2017 the Murle carried out a deadly attack on the Dinka at Duk Pawiel, killing 41, injuring scores and making away with children and cattle (Wild et al, 2018: 3). Indeed, women and children are among the main victims of 'modern' cattle raiding. 'Contrary to traditional and cultural norms, the women and children are seldom spared. In fact, there are widespread violations of the fundamental rights of women and girls during clashes, including rape, murder, torture, mistreatment and neglect' (Manyok, 2017: 116).

4. Impact of conflict on livestock sector

Abnormal migration and social tension

Migration is a key part of pastoral farming in South Sudan, as herders move their livestock away from waterlogged/flooded areas, or during dry periods, to access good grazing land elsewhere. Continued access to such land directly benefits livestock health, and milk and meat yields (Pendle, 2017). Traditional migration routes were developed over time to support the efficient use of natural resources (USAID, 2015: 45). While annual movements of cattle in South Sudan, in search of grazing areas and water resources, have always led to clashes both among migrant pastoralist groups and between these and settled farming communities, these were generally contained and managed through traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

Conflict has brought radical changes in these migration patterns. Trekking animals over long distances has become difficult and insecure (Takana, n.d.). Pastoralists' mobility has been limited: they are forced to take routes driven by the need to protect their livestock, rather than making the best use of natural resources. 'South Sudan has abundant rivers and grazing lands, however, many of the richest nutritional grazing lands have become inaccessible because of conflict' (Pendle (2017: 3). Prolonged conflict means that 'many of the richest dry season grazing lands have been abandoned for decades and have become a no-man's land' (USAID, 2015: 45).

Abnormal migration has its own negative effects. Some parts of South Sudan have been more affected by the conflict than others. Pastoralists have fled areas of insecurity for those seen as less volatile. According to the FAO, 'there has been large-scale and long-distance displacement of livestock from the conflict-affected states into agricultural zones outside their traditional pastoral domains' (Green, 2015). The huge influx of people and cattle has undermined stability in areas less affected by the wider political conflict (FAO, 2014; FAO, 2015). 'The impact of massive abnormal livestock movements has resulted in extreme cases of cattle raiding, destruction of crops and deadly clashes over access to pasture and water' (FAO, 2015: 4). 'The arrival of large numbers of livestock...has challenged the local power structures, squeezed natural resource availability, and altered disease patterns' – in turn leading to confrontation (Green, 2015).

This is most pronounced in the Equatorias (Western, Central and Eastern states), a region of strategic importance. Western Equatoria is the main area of agricultural production for the whole of South Sudan, the capital Juba lies in Central Equatoria, and the main trade route from South Sudan (the only all-weather access road) crosses Central and Eastern Equatoria (ACP, 2017). In

1991 700,000 Dinka pastoralists were displaced by conflict with the Nuer from Jonglei state, and most came to Eastern and Central Equatoria and never left – leading to disputes over land between agriculturalists and farmers, often resulting in violence (ACP, 2017).

The situation has been exacerbated by the latest conflict. In 2014 large numbers of pastoralists from Jonglei and Lakes States migrated into the eastern counties of Western Equatoria State. While this movement took place traditionally during the dry season, cattle-keepers would return to their areas of origin. But due to the conflict, they not only extended their normally temporary stay, but also moved deeper into Western Equatoria State (FAO, 2015). Tensions boiled over between pastoralists and farmers, leading to the issuance of a Presidential Decree ordering all cattle keepers to leave the Greater Equatoria region and return to Jonglei and Lakes States by 8 May 2015 (FAO, 2015: 3). Despite the order, as of August 2015, civil unrest between communities continued to escalate. Clashes in Mundri West County resulted in a large number of civilian fatalities, and to the displacement of at least 25,000 civilians around Ibba, Maridi, Mundri East, Mundri West and Yambio counties in Western Equatoria State (FAO, 2015: 3). Overall, competition for land and water resources is exacerbating tribal and ethnic tensions and conflicts (FAO, 2015).

The international border created between Sudan and South Sudan in 2011 cut through grazing lands containing important migration routes, especially for northern (Sudanese) pastoralist groups, enabling them to access dry season pastures in the south for up to five months of the year (Young & Cormack, 2013: 12). Conflict and insecurity along the border region have significantly disrupted these livestock migratory routes. A further factor in this is that, during Sudan's long civil war, the Sudanese government recruited pastoralists as pro-government militia, and bitterness persists (Young & Cormack, 2013: 12). However, Gebreyes et al (2016: xvii) claim that, in contrast to the disruptions in internal migration patterns, 'the seasonal movements of livestock herders from Sudan into the three states of South Sudan that border Sudan have been relatively smooth since 2013'. They attribute this to agreements made on a yearly basis between state officials, local officials and leaders of migrant groups.

Elite accumulation of cattle

As noted above, political elites have co-opted herders to form armed groups who are used by the former as a tool to pursue their interests. However, political and military elites have also themselves become large-scale cattle owners – President Kiir, for example, had 2,000 head of cattle stolen from his personal farm near Juba in 2016. A study of pastoralism in Greater Upper Nile (USAID, 2015: 9) highlights elite accumulation of vast cattle herds:

Many elites in government, themselves from (agro-) pastoralist communities, have invested large amounts of personal wealth from government oil money in cattle..... Military and political leaders have used government oil wealth to accumulate large, private herds, inflating cattle prices. Some elites have also used their military and political might to secure personal access to the best grazing lands at the exclusion of others, either by arming cattle guards or using legal command to reform their rights over land.

One result of this elite capture of livestock is that it makes pastoralism much harder for ordinary herders: cattle prices are inflated, bridewealth rates increase, access to good grazing land is limited, and so on. South Sudan is thus seeing a significant redistribution of livestock wealth, with concentration in the hands of those at the top.

These herds are used by elites to build relationships, for patronage and to nurture large groups of loyal supporters who can be relied on for political backing and who can be easily mobilized to fight on their behalf (USAID, 2015). Pinaud (2014) describes the formation of a new military elite which established hegemony both through capture of resources during the civil war with Sudan, and post-independence through embezzlement of state resources. She highlights the importance of cattle: SPLA commanders converted their newly acquired wealth into human and social capital through cattle exchange – more precisely bridewealth exchange, mostly paid in cattle (Pinaud, 2014: 201). Thus commanders engaged in polygamy, with acquisition of wives and payment of bridewealth used to develop and strengthen kinship ties and loyalty. They also paid bridewealth for their soldiers, enabling them to get married and have heirs (considered very important in South Sudanese society) – and, in turn, securing those soldiers' allegiance (Pinaud, 2016).

Pinaud (2014) argues that the current crisis in South Sudan should be understood in terms of wartime and post-independence accumulation of resources (including cattle) through various predation strategies by this new elite, and the class resentment this has fostered. The association of cattle 'with the militarized might of an elite national leadership' has raised new tensions: in the 1980s and 1990s, for example, some SPLA leaders ignored previous norms of negotiating access to grazing lands and instead used their military might to demand access for their herds, particularly in the Equatorias (Pendle, 2017: 5). Pendle (2017: 5) notes that, since the current conflict began in 2013, herders from Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile 'have repeated some of these politically contentious herd movements, as other grazing lands become frontlines in the war'. The context of historic tensions and conflicts over previous cattle movement, means these more recent movements 'contribute to a narrative of marginalisation of minority groups and predatory behaviour of political elites' (Pendle, 2017: 5).

Disease outbreaks

The FAO note that even before the current crisis, South Sudan's herds were susceptible to a number of diseases including foot-and-mouth disease and East coast fever (FAO, 2015: 2). However, these were previously confined to specific areas. Thanks to abnormal migration patterns and concentration of high numbers of livestock in condensed areas for prolonged periods, such diseases are spreading into new territories and infecting healthy herds. East coast fever, a disease transmitted by ticks, was once contained in Greater Equatoria, but has now spread into livestock populations in Jonglei and Lakes States, causing a devastating number of deaths (FAO, 2015: 2; Pendle, 2017). 'There have been new strains of Foot and Mouth Disease in Eastern Equatoria and Lakes States. In 2017, there were Foot and Mouth outbreaks, including in Mayendit, Guit, Duk and Aweil (the centre, east and west of South Sudan) and Nimule' (Pendle, 2017: 3).

Some diseases are caused by livestock not being able to move normally, particularly when they get stuck in waterlogged areas: 'We begin to see issues of rot, foot rot. We begin to see issues of liver flukes that the livestock owners would normally know how to avoid if they could move properly' (Sue Lautze, FAO South Sudan Representative, cited in DeCapua, 2014).

Spread of diseases is exacerbated by increased difficulty in accessing veterinary services (and lack of cold chain facilities for vaccine storage and delivery) because of the conflict (FAO, 2015). The government is unable to provide comprehensive public veterinary services and humanitarians face huge difficulties in accessing the most food insecure regions because of ongoing insecurity (Pendle, 2017). However, during the wars of the 1990s, humanitarian actors developed a network of community animal health workers (CAHWs) who provided mobile, local

livestock support in the absence of international aid workers. By 2005 there were about 4,000 CAHWs in the country. But because of the lack of funding in veterinary services over the past decade, an estimated 70% of these 4,000 trained CAHWs were forced to look for alternative work – ‘many ironically in the army’ (Pendle, 2017: 4). This resulted in a deterioration in veterinary provision, which remains limited (Pendle, 2017).

Livestock numbers and markets

The FAO’s 2016 report on the impact of conflict on the livestock sector in South Sudan points to an overall decline in cattle wealth in communities (Gebreyes et al, 2016). In addition the distribution of cattle wealth has changed: before the conflict, better off and middle wealth families owned 12 and 5 times more livestock respectively than the poor; more recent figures show a drop to 3.5 and 2 times more respectively (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xv). The mean herd size of better-off households has decreased by 46% for cattle and by 52% for sheep and goats, and for middle wealth families by 59% for cattle and by 39% for sheep and goats (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xiv). By contrast, cattle holdings among the poor increased by 15% - not necessarily due to the poor owning more cattle, but to more middle-income people falling into the poor economic category. However, as discussed above, there is evidence that more cattle are being concentrated in the hands of the political elite (NRC, 2016).

A study of livestock in South Darfur, conducted over three years from 2011-2014, found the following changes had taken place in the sector as a result of previous conflict (Takana, n.d.: 1):

- Forest area had increased by 173% since eruption of conflict in 2003 because a lot of land was left by farmers fleeing conflict and had turned into forests. Free grazing decreased by 17% after conflict, and for security reasons the average number of grazing hours per respondent decreased from 9.6 hrs before conflict to 7.5 hrs after conflict. The number of waterings per day fell from two times to once after conflict;
- The average number of heads of cattle, sheep and goats of respondents fell by 44%, 28% and 13% respectively. This caused a dramatic rise in prices of beef, lamb and goat meat by 45%, 50% and 40% respectively. Milk production per interviewed household from cattle fell by 21%, while that from goats increased by 19%. Some cattle herders changed to mixed herds of cattle, sheep and goats to cope with the security situation;
- About 63% of respondents had access to government veterinary services before the conflicts: this fell to 25% after the conflict.

The findings give an indication of the detrimental impact of conflict on livestock numbers: figures can be expected to have dropped further since the renewal of conflict in 2013.

However, it is important to stress that estimates for livestock numbers in South Sudan are precisely that – estimates. All the studies carried out to assess livestock numbers, e.g. the 2015 FAO study, have clear limitations. There is a similar lack of accurate data on cattle migration, including abnormal migration.

Livestock markets have been radically changed – in a negative way – as a result of conflict (Gebreyes et al, 2016). Major factors include: insecurity of trade routes; market closures or destruction; lack of demand; the departure of traders from some conflict-affected counties; and increased live animal imports from Uganda (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xv). Exports of cattle from Bentiu to El Obied and from Malakal to Kosti have ceased due to insecurity and border closures, while imports from Uganda dominate the market in Juba. For Uganda, livestock trade has

increased by 250 percent for cattle and 1,200 percent for sheep and goats between 2013 and 2015 (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xv). 'Such imports represent lost market opportunities for local livestock producers and have eroded the capital base of traders in dollar terms while contributing to a scarcity of dollars in the country' (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xvi). Prices of beef and goat meat had more than doubled in Juba in 2015; in other states, median cattle prices increased from SSP 2,188 in 2013 to SSP 3,542 in 2015 (Gebreyes et al, 2016: xvi).

In other parts of the country, other dynamics are at play driven by food insecurity (see below). In Ler County, for example, supply of livestock in markets has increased as people are selling them to buy food. This contrasts to pre-conflict times when many pastoralists were farming and selling their production to buy cattle and increase their herd. Conflict has limited their ability to farm, leading to a shortage of crops and money – people don't have the money to buy cattle, and have to sell some of their cattle to buy grain. Between 2013 and May 2015 prices for livestock in Ler County had decreased two-fold, while cattle sales were three times higher and goat sales nine times higher (USAID, 2015: 51).

Food insecurity (and poverty)

The FAO reports that the livestock crisis is contributing to deepening food insecurity in South Sudan (FAO, 2015). Milk is the main source of nutrition for families and children in cattle camp communities (FAO, 2015: 4). 'Declines in milk production and the loss of cattle to disease increase the risk of malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant and breastfeeding women who rely on milk as an essential part of their diet. For most herders, the loss of cattle means the loss of their entire livelihood' (FAO, 2014). The spread of diseases also reduces milk production in cattle (FAO, 2015: 4). Both factors are leading to rising food insecurity:

Before the crisis, selling cattle was traditionally reserved for dowries or paying off debts. Due to the worsening food security situation since the crisis, pastoralist communities have engaged in selling and slaughtering their livestock as a primary coping mechanism (FAO, 2015: 3).

Households with smaller herds are more negatively affected than those with larger herds: they are typically more food-insecure and unable to cope with shocks. 'A shock isn't even necessarily a death. An individual cow's illness is enough to spell economic ruin for some families. There is the immediate loss of milk as a source of nutrition for the household, but it also becomes less likely the cow will reproduce and its trade value wanes' (Green, 2015). He adds, though, that the scale of the current crisis is well beyond the individual household level, 'with the potential to sink entire communities' (Green, 2015).

In December 2014 the FAO warned of a 'silent emergency' among agropastoral communities in South Sudan, due to undermining of their livelihoods by ongoing conflict and instability (FAO, 2015). In a 2015 update it warns that 'intensive and abnormal migrations due to insecurity have seriously depleted the health conditions' for animals, and that 'it will take years for these communities – representing an estimated 65 percent of South Sudan's population – to rebuild and strengthen their herds' (FAO, 2015: 1).

As well as food insecurity, loss of cattle has long-term implications: 'It has put marriages and educations on hold and will make it more difficult for people to emerge from poverty' (Green, 2015). Allison (2016) echoes this, noting that loss of each cow is a financial disaster for many families, impacting their ability to access food and healthcare and disrupting important social traditions, notably payment of dowries and thus marriages. Manyok (2017) highlights the fact that

it is mostly young males who are killed in cattle raiding: losing young men at their most productive ages greatly hampers development among their communities.

As people become poorer and more desperate, they could resort to negative coping strategies such as marrying off daughters at younger ages (to obtain dowries in the form of cattle), or lowering dowry demands (NRC, 2016). Chamberlain (2017) reports that, 'Conflict and desperate hunger are driving families to marry off their daughters to secure precious cows, despite the girls having to forfeit their education'. He describes cases of girls being married off young (aged 15-17 years) solely so their families could obtain cattle in dowry payments. He also describes a cycle in which a family could marry off their daughter for cattle, which in turn are used to make the dowry payment to enable their son to get married. Ironically, food insecurity and poverty due to conflict and cattle raiding, itself becomes a spur for further raids and conflict (Manyok, 2017).

Given the critical role of livestock in South Sudan – and the limitations on agricultural farming imposed by the country's ecology – any post-conflict recovery will have to include reacquisition of livestock for pastoral communities.

5. Response

Ineffective state response

A number of factors are identified in the literature as contributing to the state's inability to contain conflict over livestock and prevent damage to the sector. One is reduced income because of reduced oil production. A second is the diversion of funds – as well as time and energy - to fight the civil war. The FAO South Sudan Representative noted that competition for resources between groups as livestock were moved towards pastures and water was normally managed by the governors of the states and would be contained by the security forces. But the conflict means the political and security apparatus is engaged on that, and unable to deal with clashes over natural resources, hence 'we see these types of fights erupt without any control on them' (Lautze, cited in DeCapua, 2014). This is echoed by Green (2015):

South Sudan's government – well aware of the social and economic primacy of cattle – has traditionally taken the lead on animal health and protection. The army and police are deployed during the country's dry season to deter cattle raids and community-based health workers assist with vaccinations. But now conflict has taken precedence over the animals. The government has shifted resources from caring for livestock to the war effort.

The literature also points to the ineffectiveness of the country's legal system – with criminal cases taking a long time to be heard – forcing people to take 'justice' into their own hands (Manyok, 2017). This is echoed in Saferworld's report on South Sudan's informal armies: 'an absence of justice in the wake of attacks...leaves revenge the only recourse available to South Sudanese citizens' (Saferworld, 2017: 5).

Donor/humanitarian neglect of pastoralism

The literature points to a failure on the part of donors and humanitarian actors to support pastoralism in South Sudan. A USAID study of pastoralism in Greater Upper Nile found: 'Development programmes have been explicitly designed to move away from pastoralism, or have actively opted not to invest in pastoralism.....The systematic undervaluing of this livelihood has resulted in an underinvestment in NGOs that specialise in veterinary services and supporting

pastoralists, forcing a reduction in their capacity' (USAID, 2015: 10). Other factors in the donor sidelining of the livestock sector are the difficulties involved in accessing pastoralists (because of conflict and their mobility), and the fact that pastoralist communities are under-represented in South Sudanese staffing of donor offices (USAID, 2015).

Peace process

Wild et al (2018) stress the importance of localised conflicts over livestock, and the need to consider these in their own right rather than dismiss them as cultural phenomenon. They note that cattle raiding has commonly been omitted from serious consideration in the mainstream dialogue about causes of conflict and prospects for peace (Wild et al, 2018). 'Neither the 2005 CPA nor the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan included substantive provisions to address the grievances and crucial role of non-state actors and informal armed groups such as the Nuer White Army or the Dinka Titweng/Gelweng² in the larger political conflict' (Wild et al, 2018: 8). They warn that continued failure to address the grievances which motivate informal armed groups engaged in cattle raiding to participate in the wider political conflict will prove a persistent barrier to durable peace in South Sudan (Wild et al, 2018). The interests of the political elite cannot be treated as equivalent to those of the informal armed groups who may under certain conditions fight on their behalf (Wild et al, 2018: 9).

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