

Social and Economic Cost of Livestock Rustling in South Sudan



1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of South Sudan, livestock are critically important as they play vital roles in the society. The sector is the main source of food and income for the majority of the population and a central component in culture, values, prestige and social relations.

Migration is a key factor in the pastoral system of South Sudan and traditional migration routes were developed over time to support strategic means of accessing water and pasture resources. This have always led to conflict and cases of livestock raiding.

Livestock rustling in South Sudan has existed for many centuries. Traditionally it was sanctioned by Native Administration/Elders and played as a game aimed at replenishing lost herds, for cultural practices including dowry payment, and as proof of one's manhood and bravery. However, in the last 30 years, the practice changed from a noble practice to a lethal commercial activity. Today livestock rustling attacks are conducted

by larger groups of youths and involve stealing massive herds of livestock and many human fatalities. The participants in today's raids have become more organized, using technology such as mobile phones to coordinate their tactics and movements. In addition, the proliferation of light arms and small weapons has greatly increased the frequency of inter-communal violence and the number of casualties.

Livestock rustling is perceived as a major threat to the livestock economy in the pastoral areas and hence there is an urgent need to assist the government at local and national levels to confront this challenge. However, to deal with such a challenge, a complementary integrated approach, which encompasses efforts of both state and non-state actors, is highly needed. The main objective of this policy brief is to derive credible evidence to draw sufficient awareness at national policy level, to the negative socio-economic impact of livestock rustling.

2. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The study covered three states namely Terekaka, Jongli, and Lakes States that are considered hotspots for livestock rustling (the map). The methodology is a product of mixed approaches that included comprehensive literature review, consultative meetings, and key informant interviews, focused group discussions, and field observations. As well, a sample of 315 respondents were selected from three categories that are involved in issues of rustling. The survey covers main hotspot counties in the three most affected states.



3. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. Factors that Influence Livestock Rustling in South Sudan

From the literature reviewed and according to the respondents, the main causes of livestock rustling include: proliferation of small arms and the concentration of weapons in the hands of youth, commercialization of this act, wide spread poverty, poor or weak governance, illiteracy, collapse of the traditional system of authority, ethnic tensions, environmental causes, socio-cultural values and perceptions, and protracted local and cross border conflicts among others.

B. Livestock Rustling in South Sudan: Frequency and Mitigation Mechanisms

Seasonality and transhumance affects frequency of rustling, with most of the cases happening during the dry season (November to May). Rustling has also become more frequent and intense given the proliferation of illegal weapons, weak governance, tribalism and increasing poverty and unemployment among youth.

Young people are the most common group involved in rustling, with youth frustration emerging as a central component of conflict dynamics. There is a high youth population throughout South Sudan (more than 51% of the population is under the age of 18) faced with massive developmental challenges. Various actions and

responses have been undertaken to deal with livestock rustling in these regions by communities, including community sensitization meetings, intercommunity peace and dialogue initiatives, peace preaching, inter-tribal marriage, establishment of peace committees, and peace songs.

Responses and mechanisms usually initiated by the communal administration mainly initiate the conflict resolution process when an incident of livestock rustling occurs. Also involved in that process, are the elders in the community, government workers, international and local non-governmental organizations, religious leaders and peace groups. There have been initiatives such as government projects funded by development partners that participated in the resolution process. Other efforts include community associations who lead monitoring of livestock incidents and report about them, customary courts and through judicial means. The cyclic conflicts within the country have fueled this practice through the proliferation of small arms, which are now used by the pastoralists as a means of protection and even for sale over the porous boundaries. There has also been a local community response through local trials/customary courts where local leaders, who often have better knowledge and understanding of livestock rustling, can preside over the case. Furthermore, local systems can often provide for quick, informal cases with compensation to livestock owners, in contrast to central court systems. These traditional courts were given a juridical status when dealing with livestock rustling. The Disarmament Programmes whether voluntary or forced, have been the approach of a number of countries in the region. This process has been supported in some instances through programmes designed to improve resilience of local communities, including through the provision of alternative livelihoods.

C. Livestock Rustling in the Surveyed States

Rustling is common in livestock keeping communities across South Sudan. For example; it is a persistent problem in Jonglei and Eastern Upper Nile between the Lou Nuer, Dinka, Murle and Jikany Nuer, in Eastern Equatoria between Toposa, Murle, Jie, Boya, Didinga and in the cross-boundary areas between Dinka and Nuer of Warrap, Lakes and Unity States.

In these states, the raiding is in part due to competition for grazing lands and use of water points in times of

scarcity, but also reflective of wider raiding aimed at accruing wealth. The most common types of conflict in Terekeka State are inter and intra-communal conflicts. Communities in these states largely comprise agro-pastoralists whose main livelihoods are subsistence agriculture and livestock herding. Many young men in these communities are idle, and a lack of education and training opportunities directly translates into the limited employability of the youth. As a result, some young men engage in violent actions such as livestock raiding as their only means of survival, while in Terekeka, livestock raiding is also a source of conflict, in terms of ownership of livestock; competition over water points, pasture, and land; and marriage, with the acquisition of livestock by violent means used to pay “bride price” and thus causing conflict.

Since 2005, livestock rustling has plagued Jonglei State. It has greatly disrupted many lives, destroyed homes, separated families, animals taken away, and many other crimes. In 2011, for instance, almost more than 500,000 livestock was lost to rustling and this perhaps represented what was reported, the number may have been higher.

Lakes State has a strong dependence on livestock (around 80% of the people are pastoralists) which is used for many purposes such as payment of dowry, income and food. There is a considerable lack of other sustainable economic activity, making communities heavily reliant on the livestock culture. The assessment result shows that community members in Lakes State perceived livestock raiding as a source of conflict attributable to a number of inter-related causes. These causes included livestock being regarded as a source of wealth and prestige or as payment for dowry or debt.

D. Social and Economic Costs of Livestock Rustling at National Level

Social and economic valuation is a key and useful input in policy decision. Political and legal decisions are made based on information supported by evidence. In relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), livestock rustling can be one of the barriers to pastoral communities to realize their rights in achieving SDGs. This is clear from goal No 16, which is about promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and without achieving this goal none of the other goals can be sustained. Recent estimates for the cost of conflict in general for South Sudan indicated that the conflict will

cost the country between US\$ 22.3 billion and US\$ 28.3 billion losses in the GDP.

The overall economic cost of livestock rustling in South Sudan is shown in the table below. The total cost of livestock lost is estimated at SSP 352.1 billion (2.7 billion USD) during 2018 year, however the social cost was not included in this calculation. This alone is a significant figure that, annually, would go a long way in meeting the cost of implementing livestock identification and traceability system (LITS) or any other measurements that could contribute to curbing this deadly phenomenon.

Overall Total Cost of Livestock Rustling in South Sudan (2018)

Livestock Type	Livestock Loss (SSP Billion)	Total Cost (SSP Billion)
Cattle	254.170	
Goat	38.256	
Sheep	59.680	
Total	352.106	352.106 (US\$ 2.7 billion)

4. CONCLUSION

Livestock has become the trigger and the medium for sustaining conflicts through livestock raiding for wealth accumulation and for dowry payments. The militarization of the unemployed young men and related affiliation with various political groups has become a major driving factor in aggravating livestock-based conflicts.

Livestock rustling/raiding remains a major cause of insecurity and conflict among the pastoral communities in the ASAL of South Sudan. The factors found to influence livestock rustling and raiding include political instigation, idleness, unemployment and poverty among the youth, cultural motivation and environmental conditions such as drought. In terms of social and economic impact of livestock rustling, the assessment revealed that livestock raiders often use firearms causing loss of life, mental and physical trauma, displacement and destruction of property. Apart from accumulation of wealth, respondents interviewed believed that livestock raiding pervades because of poverty, weak rule of law, the presence of small arms, revenge, competition over grazing land

and/or water and unemployment. As a result, the government has made considerable efforts including increasing deployment of police staff; implementation of County Declaration, increasing awareness raising and sensitisation, research and knowledge generation, and increasing patrols by the government military forces to contribute to curbing this problem. Even

though the government has been in the forefront in curbing livestock rustling menace, the government may need additional information such as this comprehensive study with indicative estimations of the social and economic costs of livestock rustling/raiding in qualitative and quantitative terms, with clear implications on the local and national economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the general findings of this assessment, the following are the summary of some policy recommendations:

- As a starting point, there is need for high level political will on the part of leaders for national reconciliation and peace building process. This can boost up peace efforts at the grassroots as this conflict has affected everyone and at all levels.
- There is need for setting up a regional/cross-border monitoring and coordination mechanism to conduct joint vaccinations, security monitoring missions and conflict resolutions among others.
- A livestock information system is needed to collect, analyze and disseminate all relevant information on livestock related issues similar to that one for crops, this may help in establishing baseline data and it can also be used as a tracking system on key indicators, in relation to livestock mobility and other related information.
- Disarmament of pastoralists is a critical issue which most probably should be done on a voluntary basis and at the same time, in the affected regions, while addressing the drivers of conflict as well as involving mediation processes.
- A growing body of evidence demonstrates that modest peace-building initiatives advanced by local CSOs can complement disarmament efforts, fostering longer term reconciliation and security, therefore enhancement of such initiatives by the state can contribute positively to peace processes.
- Public and private sector need to develop and implement wealth and employment creation initiatives and social programmes to transition youth away from livestock rustling.
- Support civil society actors to promote change in the values that support livestock raiding. In addition to economic factors, cultural values and norms related to marriage, masculine roles, identity, and revenge contribute to raiding.
- Build relationships between communities in conflict to rebuild trust and social capital necessary for enhanced social integration and economic cooperation. These activities include community dialogues, facilitated negotiation over the use of grazing grounds and other common resources, cultural changes among others.
- There is need to initiate peaceful dialogue across the country and particularly in the hotspot areas facing rustling.
- Strengthen security forces and equip them to deal with livestock rustling. Such strengthening can include establishing and equipping livestock patrol units, developing and rolling out animal identification and tracking, entering into MoU with neighbouring countries to address livestock rustling among others.
- Strengthening the local government structures at all levels including pastoral areas that are remotely located, as well strengthening of judiciary and customary courts to create fear of practicing in this deadly action.
- There is need to consider provision of access to water, supplementary fodder and other inputs for pastoralists to reduce sources of conflict between pastoral communities.
- The government needs to adopt new technologies and innovation in livestock identification (RFID ear tags or boluses) and tracking (satellite or GSM) to curb the livestock rustling menace.

Acknowledgement: IGAD/ICPALD appreciates financial support from FAO for this activity

