

# A Rapid Assessment Report on the social-economic status of Batuku and Basongora Indigenous Pastoralist Women.



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## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>The dimensions of Basongora and Batuku women pastoralist marginalization</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Who are the Batuku and Basongora Pastoralists</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Social and cultural norms</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Labour distribution.....	11
Marriage.....	12
<b>Education</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Cultural limitations to girl child education.....	14
Poverty as a limiting factor to Education.....	15
Week education systems in these pastoral communities.....	15
<b>Health</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Maternal mortality.....	16
HIV/AIDS.....	16
Gender based violence.....	17
<b>Economic Exclusion</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Livestock control and Management.....	18
Land Ownership and rights.....	19
<b>Environment</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>23</b>
To the Ugandan Government.....	23
To NGOs and donor agencies.....	23
<b>References</b> .....	<b>25</b>

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## **Executive summary.**

Pastoralism is one of the predominant livelihoods among the Basongora in Kasese and the Batuku in Ntoroko District. They contribute significantly to Uganda's national economies through cattle trade. However, these pastoralists have remained socially and economically marginalized and have little or no representation in local and national government. Despite the tasks women fulfil in these pastoralist societies, they face discrimination two-fold. They are even less able than pastoralist men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

Many Pastoralist women from these communities have been heard in different platforms complaining of their access to land and other productive assets. Very few of these women participate in decision making neither do they hold leadership positions. The total number of pastoralist women politicians in these Pastoral communities adds up to only a handful.

Little has been done to extend education and health services to pastoralist communities. Though the Ugandan government may have taken steps to address the gender gap in education in general, these measures are not reaching pastoralist girls in Kasese, Ntoroko and other pastoral communities in Uganda, this is similar to other studies done in other pastoral communities in other counties, for instance, A survey conducted in the Somali Region of Ethiopia found that the literacy rate for male pastoralists was 23% and for female pastoralists was only 05%.

They have also complained of their access to health services, pregnant women hardly access antenatal care services, adolescents and youth also hardly access HIV related prevention and treatment and family planning services. Very few health facilities have been put in this communities, one has to walk over 40 Kilometers to access the facility. Adolescent girls in schools struggle to access menstrual health services such as sanitary pads but also SRH services.

Economically, these pastoralists women have suffered in silence, they have been excluded in economic activities such as livestock trade and yet they do a pivotal role in its multiplication and management, returns in livestock have only been enjoyed at their expense. Many are only regarded as housekeepers and are not allowed to participate in income generation activities.

This situation therefore prompted RWCA to conduct a rapid assessment to understand the extent to which women pastoralist in Kasese among the Basongora and Ntoroko among the Batuku have been socially, politically and economically marginalization and propose evidence-based solution to curb down this situation.

## **Abstract.**

Over 5,200 Pastoralist women in Kasese among the Basongora and Ntoroko among the Batuku generate income and create livelihoods in remote and harsh environment where their access to land is restricted and conventional farming is limited or not even possible. They play a pivotal role in this community to assume diverse responsibilities in regard to the livestock, land and the household management but their efforts have not been fully appreciated. They have frequently been undermined by unfriendly policies and customary laws/cultural norms including competition for resources from more politically powerful neighbors and other interest groups, of the 522 women pastoralist that participated in this assessment, only 4% in Ntoroko and 7% in Kasese revealed to have ownership over land.

Economically, only 16% are engaged in business and the rest spend most of their time looking after children and doing other household work. These women find it difficult to build an independent economic status, they are unable to benefit from the principal output from the pastoralist economy, despite playing varied and often unacknowledged roles in livestock production and management. The commercialization of Land, livestock and its products has also occurred at the expense of women, who have been marginalized from the domains of power they are associated with. Male inheritance remains the norm despite national legislation enforcing equitable inheritance of property. With few assets or savings, and with little or no access to financial services, these women succumb more quickly to crises and take longer to recover economically, they only have far greater rights to access and sell products like chicken, eggs, cow ghee, hides and skins than they do over livestock itself. For a woman to sell livestock; permission has to be sought from the husband and if is a widow from the in-laws.

Only 5% of the women in these pastoral communities hold leadership/political position, and these have been confined in junior positions. They are less able than pastoralist men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. They are considered incapable to participate in decision-making. They are seen as second-class citizens.

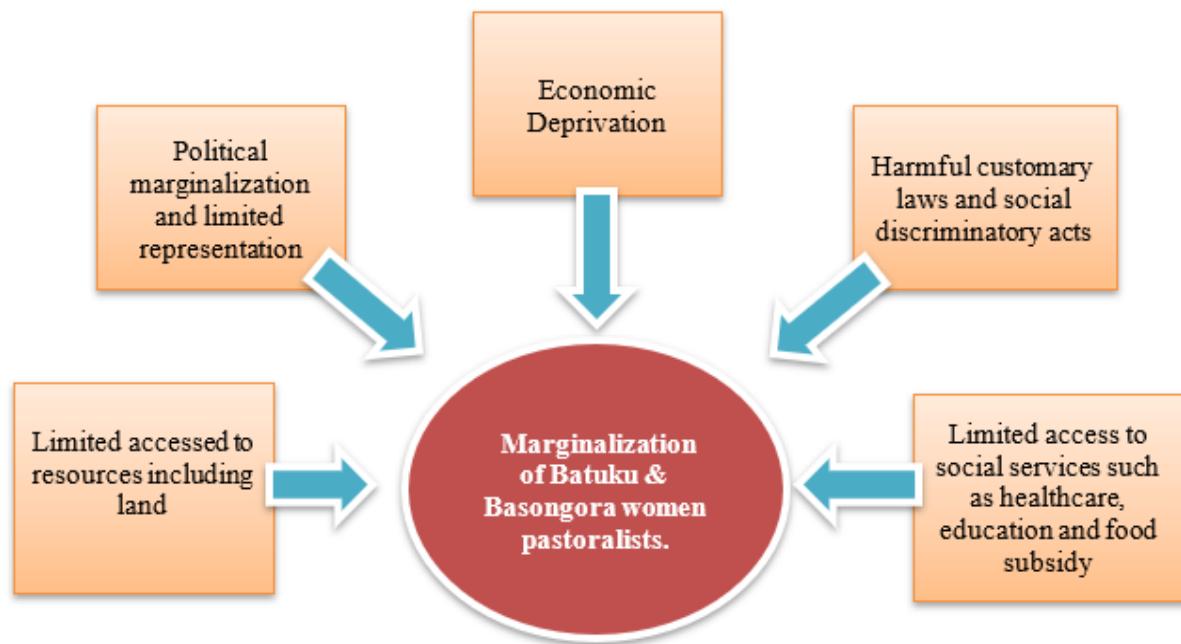
Although the government may have tried to bridge the gender gap in education, little has been done in these pastoral communities to support girl child education. Of the 522 women reached, only 21% of the Batuku and 19% of Basongora reported to have ever attended primary level of education and only 9% of these were able to complete this level. Girls are often married forcefully, or while still young, in order to maximize bride wealth, they have continuously been subjected to all forms of violence and assuming increasingly heavy burdens to provide for their families, they must work longer and harder than men, fulfilling “female” roles in the household, as well as making money from tasks traditionally deemed to be “women’s work”, including collecting firewood, and making and selling handicrafts.

Batuku and Basongora women pastoralist find it hard to access health services, of the 385 mothers interviewed, only 38% recalled accessing antenatal care services during their last pregnancy, health facilities are far away from them, they also claimed that services are not affordable and are not of quality. A few women who have some money have instead opted to seek these services from the

neighboring District Kabarole. The poor are left to die in silence. Adolescent girls like their mothers also hardly access Sexual Reproductive Health Services (SRHS) and menstrual health services.

Therefore, women in this communities need to be economically, socially and politically empowered to take advantage of their opportunities and rights. They should not be seen as victims of the pastoral challenges but rather recognize their potential as agents of change.

## The dimensions of Basongora and Batuku women pastoralist marginalization.



It is often stated that Basongora and Batuku pastoralist men do not only own and control livestock but also dominate politics and decision-making, they are the heads of households and clans. They see themselves as “real” pastoralists. Women are left to play secondary supportive roles in livestock management and hold subordinate roles to fathers, husbands and sons in the households. Basongora and Batuku Pastoralist women are vulnerable and unable to directly voice their concerns to those who make decisions over their lives.

In these two communities, Women and girls tend to be regarded, and regard themselves as the custodians of cultural values and beliefs, much more so than men and boys. they regard this as a source of authority since culture is not only defined but also imposed by men, women and girls become much more susceptible to gender discrimination. Their health and social status are adversely affected as well as their ability to participate fully in their communities.

Limited access to healthcare and education, high mortality rates, and a lack of knowledge about family planning and reproductive health all indicate that Basongora and Batuku pastoralist women continue to be disproportionately excluded from public services. While interviewing 522 women, we asked them of how many other women in their village who are facing these same challenges, averagely each would count 10 more women in her village, this therefore applies that more than 5,220 women pastoralists in Kasese among the Basongora and in Ntoroko among the Batuku create livelihood in harsh and remote environment.

## **Who are the Batuku and Basongora Pastoralists.**

**The Batuku:** They are a small native tribe which has lived in Ntoroko District as far as the 18th Century. They are cattle keepers from time immemorial, they live in the sub counties of Rwebisengo, Butungama, Bweramule, Kibuku and Kanara. They call themselves Bahuma. The 2014 national census puts their number at 35,350 people. They are listed among the 65 ethnic groups in the third schedule of Uganda's 1995 Constitution.

**The Basongora:** just like the Batuku are also the minority group known as Bahuma and Bachezi who speak Rusonsora language which is similar to Rutoro and Runyankole, they are found in Kasese District. They are mixed Bantu/Nilotic. They emerge from the Batenbuzi empire and their traditional homeland is the foothills of Mount Rwenzori in western Uganda.

In 1952, the Basongora lost most of the land during the establishment of queen Elizabeth national park where they were evicted in order to protect the wild life.



## Social and cultural norms.

As is widely recognized, custom and culture determine the social standing of men and women. This does not spare the Basongora and Batuku pastoral communities either. Social norms enforced by Batuku and Basongora community elders continue to be observed irrespective of the growing body of legislation enacted to protect and promote women's rights.

Batuku and Basongora girls are socialized early to accept their role as helpers to their mothers, who are themselves subordinate to their husbands. As the young girl grows older and enters marriage, she too will occupy the same position as her mother in a household that her husband heads. Folk tales, stories, legends, sayings and proverbs help to reinforce these prescribed roles. The impact this has on girl child education and their overall participation in society is described later in this report.

Girls are cast as the weaker sex and are taught to obey, respect and submit to the leadership of men. While young men gain prestige for managing and controlling livestock and protecting the community, young women are taught respect. Among the Basongora of Kasese, girls respond to greetings from men with shrill voices as a sign of respect as Annet (*not real name*), A Musongora woman from kasese explains *chart box 1*

### **Chart Box 1.**

*“Basongora women and girls are expected to have two voices, one for normal talk and another little voice used to demonstrate respect for men. Boys and men are not required to change their voices at any time”.*

while among the Batuku, a girl will kneel down when greeting men, Amutuku women kneels down to greet every man from her paternal side be it a young boy or an old man, they call them “marumi” meaning Uncle. women continue to do this even when they enter adulthood,

## Labour Distribution

Pastoralist production is entirely dependent on the complementary roles of Batuku and Basongora men and women. Today, women's tasks may involve activities such as constructing houses, milking among Basongora, managing sheep and goats, small-scale trading, producing butter, cheese and ghee, cultivating crops, producing handicrafts and collecting water, firewood, fodder, wild foods and preparing cattle crawls by setting smock from dry cow dug. Men's roles have tended to remain much more restricted to livestock production, managing grazing grounds, collecting or finding water sources for their herds, livestock trading, controlling predators, ensuring security and hunting.

Although Basongora and Batuku women contribute heavily to livestock management and multiplication, they are not recognized as livestock owners. However, recently there is declining importance of livestock in these pastoral communities and the increasing diversification of the pastoralist economy has as well challenged the status of men. Emerging livelihoods such as small-scale trading, handicraft production have all been adopted by women, with men unwilling to engage in what they term as "women's work". This has made pastoralist men feel that their identity is undermined, as they cling to the remnants of livestock herds. As a result, pastoralist men are increasingly turning to alcohol as a distraction, which is also often sold by pastoralist women.

In these communities, there are taboos in place that prohibit men from undertaking tasks deemed suitable only for women. This can often include collecting water and preparing food, handcraft and etc, that a man would be ridiculed for undertaking. At the same time, while there are far fewer taboos limiting women's work. As a result, women work longer and harder than men and their workloads are rarely confined to the domestic environment as is often assumed. In addition, factors such as increased crop cultivation and environmental degradation are creating additional burdens for women. In support of this point, Robbinah (*not her real name*) A Mutuku pastoralist women in Bweralemule, Ntoroko District, estimates that 90% of livestock activities are undertaken by women. See chart box 2

### Chart Box 2

*"There is no limit to the work we do because all tasks wait for the woman ... I prepare breakfast then go to the field to farm, fetch water, take care of the children, build and repair the house, prepare food and take care of goats. Prepare and set smock in the crawls. We do not get even a bit of rest." Said Robbinah during the FDG.*

However, while livestock represents a central element of pastoralism, agriculture is gaining greater importance in these pastoral communities as well. For Basongora in Kasese, this began some years ago while for Batuku in Ntoroko it has had little or no impact. Agropastoralism represents a partial settlement of the household and a dramatic shift in the division of labour. While men continue to herd livestock and some move to look for employment in towns and abroad, women are left behind as household heads responsible for all their previous tasks and have the added burden of crop cultivation.

### **Chart Box 3**

*“many of our husband have gone to Congo looking for pastures and others to Duban in search for more paying job, we women have been left behind as household thus taking on the family responsibilities”. Said Kobusinge.*

This is explained by kobusinge in Rwebisengo in chart box 3

Female labour in these pastoral community is in such demand that girls are removed from school either temporarily or permanently, and women forgo many of the social occasions in which men

make decisions and debate issues concerning the whole community. In light of this evidence, it is accurate to state that pastoralist households are dependent on the labour of women and girls who work from start to sunset, providing for their families' immediate needs eking out additional incomes and tending livestock.

### **Marriage.**

Marriage is an important part of pastoralist kinship and young women have little say to whom they will get married. Early and forced marriages are common and bride wealth, as well as discriminatory inheritance. It was noticed that it is difficult for a widow to seek divorce following the death of a husband, the widow is instead inherited. A young brother to the deceased inherits his brother's wife, even when this young man does not want the women, the clan elders force him to inherit his brother's wife. This kind of practices have however gone reducing dramatically of recent although some of the pastoralist's clans still practice this.

Most marriages are arranged during adolescence or even earlier. This is partly contributed to rising levels of poverty in these communities, women are increasingly becoming commoditized, as Juliana (*not her real name*) from Butungama village in Ntoroko puts it in Chart box 4:

Increasing bride wealth payments seem to have transformed the perception of women from mediators of social relations to pure commodities, in fact, the Batuku call a young girl “**EMALI**” a term used to describe goods for sale. For example, in one instance in 2015, Moses (*not his real name*) a businessman and a mutuku who stays in Kampala gave 24 livestock as bride wealth in order to demonstrate his prestige.

### **Chart box 4**

*“The problem with paying bride wealth is that when a woman disagrees with a man over anything, the man reminds her that he paid a lot of animals for her. Also, since the whole clan contributes marriage animals, the whole clan controls women married to their clan. The woman's independence, self-esteem and dignity are reduced” said Juliana during the FGD.*

Nevertheless, marriage arrangements involving bride wealth can be associated with rape and sometimes forceful abduction of girls, as is the case in these two pastoral communities.

However, while abduction is usually followed by marriage in these two pastoral communities, should a man abduct a girl without the intention of marrying her, he would be perceived as a rapist and could even risk being killed by the girl's brothers and clan members. Abduction with the intention to marry and as part of the marriage "process" is considered perfectly acceptable, as is evident from Jane's

**Chart Box 5**

*'You identify the girl, start wooing her, but sometimes it takes too long and so you decide to abduct and marry her. This usually happens while the girl is on her way to school, to fetch water or firewood. The boys organize his peers and abducts the girls and the boy forcefully sleeps with the girls. The next day the boy's clan elders move to the girl's house asking for a hand in marriage. They negotiate bride price and the next day a good number of lactating cows are delivered to the girl's family.' Jane (not her real name) A musongora woman explains*

statement in the *chart box 5*.

As a man's herd accumulates, additional wives may be sought to form a polygamous household. A senior wife directs the labour of the junior wife(s), who are expected to provide the majority of the family's labour. These junior wives will shoulder the heaviest burden. As the husband is considered the household head, the family's resources are shared out between his co-wives. This can lead to conflict between the women, who try to secure the greatest portion for themselves and their children, and may even see the household temporarily break

up during drought or other periods of crisis.

Upon the death of the household head, his wife or wives will often be inherited by his brother or his cousins. This practice ensures that the children, as well as the property of the deceased, remain within the family or lineage. Although the new husband is expected to treat the widow and the children of his brother well, this is not always the case. Furthermore, some women may not wish to be inherited, which creates conflict between her and the family.

However, like earlier explained, these practices have gone reducing. Of recent, some pastoralist women after losing their husbands, take control over her own destiny. If the deceased had more than one wife, often a high percentage of resources are taken by the oldest widow in the households or else the clan elders mediate and thereafter, a widow or the widows are free to do what they want with their time and resources.

## Education.

Batuku and Basongora are among the few communities in Uganda with poor education outcomes. According to this study finding, more than 79% Batuku and 81% Basongora women pastoralist that participated in this survey never had formal education at all. Only 21% Batuku and 19% Basongora women pastoralist ever attended primary level of education and of these only 9% transitioned to secondary level of education. While the steps taken to increase girl child education on a national level have significantly contributed to universal primary education, few such commitments have been made in pastoralist regions such as in Kasese and Ntoroko District.

### Cultural limitations to girl child education.

There is less commitment towards girl child education than there is towards that of boys. More males than females have acquired at least primary level education (57.7% vs 36.5%) in both communities.

#### **Chart Box 6**

“There is also the fear of rape and sexual harassment as well as the belief that an educated girl will not accept marriage arrangements, jeopardizing her family’s important bride wealth payments”, Beatrice a pastoralist musongora woman from Kasese and Chair of Basongora goat keeping women group states bluntly,

The gender difference in attainment of education was significant. As has been discussed, girls’ labour is in greater demand and bride wealth results in early marriage thus hindering education attainment by girls. In Kasese, the Basongora perceive few opportunities for pastoralist women to find paid employment that requires an education, which is a significant determining factor in this and many other instances. Beatrice from Kasese explains in *chart box 6*. Parents lose interest in supporting somebody who will move away; “*why invest in someone who will leave you and who will be exchanged for property*”

In these communities, family prosperity rather than individual wellbeing is prioritized and can often be maximized by educating boys for as long as possible and keeping girls at home. Findings indicate that most Batuku and Basongora have a low interest in educating girl children, they do not acknowledge the benefit of educating a girl child. The society has it that by keeping a girl at home makes her “a good” wife in future and it gains her parents bride wealth, they are therefore considered as marriage materials, they are born and raised for marriage just. Actually, men who give birth to girls are seen as rich because of the number of cows they will get in exchange of their daughters for marriage. Like earlier mentioned in this report, girls have often in these communities been referred to as “**Emali**” a word used to describe goods for sale. parents therefore don’t see the importance of educating a girl child who will after all get married. they regard girl child education as a total loss. Kabasinguzi (not her real name) narrates to us during FGD *Chart box 7*.

#### **Chart Box 7**

*‘In these communities, parents believe that if their daughters attain formal education they will become less competent wives, prostitutes or run a way to marry non Batuku or Basongora men who will divert them from the cultural ways of life’.* Says one Kabasinguzi during FGD.

Alternatives to formal education are often seen as the way to address these issues, however, where alternatives have been attempted, they have remained small scale interventions with limited impact. The Accelerated learning and Youth in Action Basic Education Programs which were established by Save the Children, is one such example. According to Save the Children, different learning centers which had hosted 3,298 learners, 1,427 of whom had gone on to formal education. However, its impact has been limited due to a lack of technical capacity. Girls in particular have not greatly benefited since, once they reach early adolescence, they are often taken out of these programs to get married, a situation that has not changed significantly even after the introduction of food rations aiming to improve attendance and retention. It is clear that a concerted effort will be needed to change attitudes to girl child education, as Ibanda David, the District Education Officer for Ntoroko notes.

### Poverty as a limiting factor to Education.

Despite increased access to free education under the Universal Primary Education Program (UPE), this program has not provided quality education to children in these communities, this study also found out that lack of educational materials like scholastic materials, uniforms, school fees, sanitary pads for girls contributes to poor educational attainment among the Batuku and Basongora women pastoralists. More importantly, they do not have access to food at school and neither is it readily available at home. Shortage of food in these communities is due to limited access to land to cultivate, men think land is only for grazing their animals however many mothers would love to see their daughters go to school. Their hands are tied up since they do not have businesses, they struggle to earn some money and support their daughters in schools, they have also been incapacitated by the domains of powers they are associated with, they are not the decision makers in the household.

### Weak education systems in these pastoral communities.

Finding also indicated that there are weak education systems to foster girl child education in these pastoral communities, the education department at the district level tend to neglect pastoral communities, few teachers are appointment in schools found in the pastoral sub counties. they hardly monitor teachers to find out whether they indeed teach nor do teachers follow up pupils who go missing from school. There are no designated community committees like parent-teacher associations (PTA) that would support and emphasis education in these communities and where they have been constituted, they have not been trained of their roles. Teachers report late at schools and leave early. Most of the government development partners have not concentrated in these communities apart from save the children and Baylor Uganda that have tried their level best to develop these communities.

This study therefore recommends that there should be interventions aimed at improving the learning environment in these pastoral communities and address the unique needs of Batuku and Basongora school-going children, improve family incomes targeting improved capacity to provide for school requirements, Increase the number of Batuku and Basongora children's school completion rates especially for females.

## Health;

A number of fundamental health challenges threaten the well-being of Basongora and Batuku Pastoralist women and their children, including under-5 maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. Access and coverage are still lower than the national and global averages and targets

### Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality appears to be a major cause of death among pastoralist women. Among the Basongora in kasese, only 38% of mothers that participated in the survey recall attending antenatal care during their last pregnancy whereas and at least 60% recall having their last delivery at a health facility while among the Batuku in Ntoroko, only 43% recalled to have attended ANC during their last pregnancy and 55% had their last delivery in a health facility. The proportion of participants who delivered at health facilities was lowest among the Batuku 25%. The proportion of participants who recall using a family-planning (FP) method was 37%. Overall, 72% of Basongora and 79% Batuku women recall having completed the routine immunization schedule of their lastborn children under 5 years. These have been attributed to long distances to health facilities, poor health services in the public health facilities and expensive services in private for-profit health facilities. 70% of the participants reported that they cannot afford the health services given in private clinics and most of the time government facilities have no drugs and health care providers (health workers) are so irregular. others reported that these services are not even of quality be it in private health facilities or in government facilities. Other women who have money have instead opted to have their treatment in the neighboring District Kabarole.

#### **Chart Box 8**

*“.....most of the time our government health facilities don't have drugs, health workers are always absent from duty, the treatment given to us is not of quality, this actually force some of us to seek medical care from our neighboring District Kabarole”.  
Olivia from Rwebisengo, Ntoroko narrates during the FGD.*

### HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS also appears to be a significant problem for pastoralists, although this study was unable to capture and authoritative data is unavailable, little is known about its prevalence and transmission, data gathered during our interaction with the study participants indicate that factors such as culture, gender, poverty, conflict and displacement appear to be driving its spread. It was also noted that married women from these pastoral areas are extremely unlikely to use contraceptives and have comparatively less knowledge about the HIV and its prevention than pastoralist men based on the views submitted during the FGD. This is because access to information by women is limited since they spent most of their time home unlike men or their husband.



Misinformation about condoms is apparent in some instances and stems partly from the exclusion of pastoralists from health education. For example, Sarah (not her real name) an elder in Nyakatonzi, Kasese, believe that condoms actually cause AIDS because the two appeared at the same time. Similarly, interviews with Batuku women in Ntoroko reveal the widely held belief that condoms are ineffective and even dangerous. See Margret's (Chart box 9) Submission during FGD.

**Chart Box 9**  
*"I don't believe that they work they're too thin and easy to break. Besides, what happens if they break inside the woman and cause her problems?" said Margret (not her real name) from Makondo Village, in Ntoroko.*

Subordinate social status, women abductions/forced marriages and dependence on men to access resources such as livestock can often lead women to have a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Pastoralist women may not be able to refuse unsafe sex, which helps to explain discrepancies in contraceptive usage. Furthermore, some Batuku and Basongora pastoralist communities practice high-risk sexual behaviors, that exchange of semen is crucial for a girl's development thus making the use of condoms extremely rare among the youth. As a result of this notion, early sexual debut is common.

### Gender based violence.

Concerning gender-based violence (GBV), at least one (1) in every four (4) women pastoralist that participated in the exercise reported having experienced gender-based violence in the last one month. This violence was largely perpetuated by their spouses/husbands (75.2%). At least 30% reported physical

**Chart Box 10**  
*"we are beaten by our husbands because they think that by doing so, they are instilling dripline in us. Our elders have also told us that if you husband doesn't beat you, then he doesn't love you. Said monica (not her real name) in Kasese.*

violence, 15% sexual violence, 24% emotional violence and 18% economic violence. 'Wife battering is seen as the best way of men "instilling discipline" in their wives and daughters. It is not seen as a big issue even though evidence shows that it causes psychological and physical injuries to women. Others say that a man battering his wife is one way to show love to her and women have become susceptible to this vise. People simply say that she is just being disciplined a little, there is no problem.

There is therefore need to enhance the health status and wellbeing of Batuku and Basongora Pastoralists women and their children through improved access to information and services. Interventions should address the health and wellbeing of the Pastoralists as individuals, families, and communities informed by, but not limited to, the following initiatives:

- a. Community-based health services that strengthens the capacity of village health teams (VHTs), intensifying HIV testing and prevention education
- b. Rollout HIV differentiated service delivery modals to increase service uptake, education on family planning commodities and other SRHS.
- c. Improve maternal and child health services at health facilities and
- d. Establish Innovative ways to address gender-based violence and support mechanisms for



victims of gender-based violence.

- e. Establishment of women movements and networks to fight for the rights of Pastoralist women.
- f. Improve menstrual hygiene for girls to ensure their retention and better performance in schools. etc

## **Economic Exclusion**

Without sufficient social capital, Batuku and Basongora pastoralist women find it difficult to build an independent economic status. From this survey, it was found out that only 16% Batuku women and 18% of Basongora women participate in income generation activities (IGAs). Women in these communities play a big role in the multiplication and management of livestock but very few that benefit from the principal output despite playing varied and often unacknowledged roles in livestock production. The commercialization of livestock products, land and other productive assets has also occurred at the expense of women, who have been marginalized from the domains of power they are associated with. Male inheritance remains the norm despite national legislation enforcing equitable inheritance of property.

In addition, conflict and environmental degradation have eroded the pastoralist economy. Female headed households have become entirely dependent on activities such as firewood and handicraft making in order to eke out subsistence living standards. With few assets or savings, and with little or no access to financial services, these women succumb more quickly to crises and take longer to recover economically. Widows and other vulnerable pastoralist women who have lost or have no livestock instead abandoned the pastoralist economy and have been forced to settle on the outskirts of urban areas doing casual work to earn some money to feed their children. This has tempered some of their children to go on streets and start begging for money and young girls to engage in transactional sex with men in these urban areas.

## **Livestock control and Management.**

When it comes to describing pastoralist gender relations, Batuku and Basongora women are unable to own and sell livestock which represents not only the principal economic output of the pastoralist economy but also serves as a sign of prestige and social status. However, women tend to have far greater rights to access and sell livestock products like milk, butter, cheese, ghee, hides and skins than they do over livestock itself. They are not even allowed to sell agricultural produce that they have grown without first consulting their husbands. This situation was explained by Komuhendo (not her real name) during FGD.

### **Chart Box 11**

*“Women own no livestock and the value of their work is not appreciated. Even to sell a goat, permission has to be sought ... in fact even to sell a seed of maize that I have planted myself, I have to do it secretly.”*

Basongora and Batuku women pastoralist spent most of their time grazing animals such as goats and sheep around the homestead. They also collect water and fodder for sick animals and have extensive knowledge concerning animal health.

But while it appears that pastoralist women have rarely been able sell livestock independently of their male kin, what is troubling currently is their loss of control over livestock products which men had earlier taken to be “women’s cheap work”. Women have of recent started losing full authority over the production, distribution and sell of these livestock products too, men have begun removing women’s control over milk, butter, cheese and ghee and commercialization whether for meat or milk production, tends to be realized by men. Women are unable to be engaged in this process again because of their heavy household workloads and lack of mobility. Men also have authority over the location of the household, which determines the accessibility of markets. Since livestock can be trekked to markets but livestock products cannot, men can establish full control over the commercial activities of all household members. As a result, Batuku and Basongora men have taken over nearly all the activities previously associated with dairying by women, which has been aided by the tendency of development interventions to recognize men as herd owners as evidenced above.

In the search for alternatives to the dwindling authority of pastoralist women over livestock products, and in order to strengthen their livelihoods in general, many NGOs have assisted them to form savings and credit groups. These provide opportunities to women who have few assets and who would otherwise have been unable to access credit from formal financial institutions, even if such institutions were present in these pastoralist regions. As a result, many women have established individual or group businesses that purchase, process and trade in pastoralist products such as skins and hides, milk, ghee as well as other ventures including handicrafts and textile. In fact, this is how Rwebisengo Widows Cultural Association was found.

However, while the interest of NGOs over the last decade has been to strengthen and support the pastoralist economy, the prevailing view Ugandan government has is that pastoralism represents an old production system that needs to be changed. A large part of this is driven by the national focus on economic growth and the perception that the pastoralist economy is inefficient and a waste of vast tracts of ‘no-man’s land’. As a result, non-government interventions that target specific aspects of pastoralism, such as veterinary services, may be undermined in the long term by government agendas. One way of redressing this situation is an approach that seeks to identify the total economic value (TEV) of pastoralism. This framework takes into account both direct economic gains and indirect benefits such as biodiversity, conservation and tourism that would significantly contribute to gross domestic product (GDP) as well as numerous indirect benefits.

### Land Ownership and rights.

Coupled with discrimination and inadequate access to social economic opportunities, lack of land ownership has driven most Batuku and Basongora women pastoralist to live a destitute life.

This study found out that the majority of Batuku (96%) and Basongora (93%) women pastoralist do not own land. Only 4% Batuku and 7% Basongora women pastoralists reported to own land which they also inherited from their late husbands. In this study, we also noticed that most of the land was not registered (84.3%) and 70. % had no sale agreement and documents to show for the land they claimed was theirs including men who take themselves as the sole proprietors of pastoral land. Batuku and Basongora women pastoralists remain marginalized yet it is everyone's human right to have a life and find sustainable means of livelihood to have healthy and productive lives in the social, economic as well as political spheres.

Because of these pastoralists' stewardship, these arid and semi-arid rangelands have also retained a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. This has encouraged the establishment of Semulike game reserve in Ntoroko and Queen Elizabeth national parks in Kasese. These places have been protected from pastoralist livelihood activities such as livestock herding and hunting by the Ugandan government and other conservation agencies. Pastoralists in these places have been evicted. In September 2007 the Basongora pastoralist communities were evicted from a designated conservation area, when more 8,000 people were removed from Queen Elizabeth National Park.

## **Environment**

Natural resources in these two pastoral communities are suffering from environmental degradation brought about by climate change and over exploitation. Many of the tasks performed by Batuku and Basongora women are closely involved with the exploitation of natural resources, their workloads have also increased rapidly. While putting up their temporary shelters and grass thatched houses, they normally cut trees as building materials and, as some migrate in search of water and pasture, these houses must be dismantled, transported and rebuilt with greater frequency.

There is increasing depletion of forest resources by women through firewood collection and charcoal burning as these seem to be the only avenues where they can eke some incomes. Like earlier stated, materials for house construction such as thatching grass and wood are also coming under threat. In both communities, men have of recent begun constructing modern houses, and as a result end up using more wood, which increases the burden on women whose role is to collect and carry the materials.

It is also important to consider that non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as medicinal plants, and fruits like palm tree (Omukoga in the local language) are increasingly becoming significant contributors to household incomes and are important for subsistence, the Batuku harvest local alcohol they call Obugeme in this tree and women are actively involved in the selling of this drink.

Handicraft production in particular is becoming an important livelihood strategy for some pastoralist women and has grown with the spread of tourism, although it remains a notoriously fickle market. Handicrafts generally use communally held natural resources, although access and use rights can change to the detriment of women as commercialization and exploitation intensifies.

These pastoralist activists have brought about prolonged droughts in these Pastoral communities. of course, richer pastoralist households can withstand the impacts of drought for longer, but poor pastoralists, a category that often includes female headed households, are less resistant to such shocks.

An important coping strategy adopted by pastoralist women is the collection of wild foods to supplement their families' diets, although their availability is continually being reduced because of environmental degradation and land privatization. Batuku and Basongora women also distribute livestock products among themselves throughout the year, so that they may support each other's households in times of heightened vulnerability. These informal groups may also engage in small-scale trading during times of drought. Among the Batuku in Ntoroko, richer households or those that have not been affected so seriously from drought transfer milk cows to those left in destitution especially if they were their relatives affected at the same time.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for policy-makers to begin to see pastoralism as the solution to environmental degradation, not the cause. Recognizing the significance of pastoralist production methods in conserving the current biodiversity of arid and semi-arid rangelands would be a significant step in the right direction. Criminalizing pastoralist livelihoods and evicting pastoralists from areas deemed important for wildlife conservation will endanger both the local economy and conservation efforts. In many cases, customary rangeland management regimes have been undermined due to the intervention of the state and need to be reinstated. Pastoralist women should be identified as having key roles to play in conservation as they are most likely to manage and, increasingly, depend on these resources for their livelihoods. With natural resources becoming increasingly important for household well-being, particularly for those households headed by women, value chains for the marketing of particular natural resources both locally and nationally are needed. This should include assessing the feasibility of processing environmental resources around the home, which is crucial to avoid marginalizing pastoralist women during commercialization.

## Conclusion

Pastoralism is not only a viable livelihood but also successfully conserves fragile natural resources and contributes significantly to national economies. However, with high population growth rates, reduction in livestock herds and restrictions on rangeland access all being worsened by climate change, those on the margins of the pastoralist economy are particularly vulnerable and more so Batuku and Basongora women Pastoralists. Although these Pastoralist women hold crucial roles in the pastoralist economy, they are marginalized by institutions and policies both within their own communities and in wider governance. Pastoralism has a bright future in these two communities of Basongora in Kasese and Batuku in Ntoroko, but only if the basis of women's marginalization is identified and addressed. This report has highlighted some of the ways in which the marginalization of women and the marginalization of pastoralists intersect to leave Basongora and Batuku pastoralist women extremely vulnerable. For example, public services such as education and healthcare have been shown to be chronically insufficient for pastoralists in these communities. However, women lag even further behind than men due to socio-cultural factors such as bride wealth and other forms of violence. These pastoralist women also have extremely limited rights over resources such as land and livestock despite legislation designed to offer them an equal footing.

In many instances, the issues affecting pastoralist women are not being addressed at all while elsewhere interventions are not accorded the importance they deserve, thus they suffer from chronic underfunding and a lack of sustainability. The roles that pastoralists play in their wider national economies and societies in general, and the more specific responsibilities of pastoralist women, must be acknowledged. By doing so, livelihoods can be secured through appropriate developmental planning, which will allow fragile environmental resources to continue to be exploited in a sustainable manner.

Finally, we must conclude on a note of caution. Women from these pastoralist communities are often portrayed as silent and subordinate individuals existing on the margins of an already marginal system. But they are far from helpless. As this report has tried to show, pastoralist women face multiple challenges in achieving their potential. A few of them have been able to overcome these challenges and rise through taking up leadership positions, participating in economic activities and managing and control their own resources, much remains to be done, but by providing access to the necessary skills, experiences and knowledge, pastoralist women can address the constraints on their participation themselves, and pastoralism can continue to thrive.

## Recommendations

### To the Ugandan Government.

- 1) Health and educational services must be adapted to Pastoral communities. Plans to do this must be drawn up in consultation with pastoralist communities and women, with adequate funding and clear deadlines.
- 2) Universal primary education must be fully realized in pastoralist communities. Curricula that increase their skills and include subjects they value, such as veterinary skills, should be introduced
- 3) Statistical data on pastoralists should be disaggregated between pastoralists and non-pastoralists, and between men and women.
- 4) The threat of HIV/AIDS to pastoralist communities and its impact on pastoralist women should be urgently assessed as a priority and the determinants of transmission identified and addressed, as they have begun to be in other communities.
- 5) Pastoralist communities should be valued as conservators of their environment.
- 6) Policy makers should refocus efforts currently concerned with sedentarization and work in closer collaboration with NGOs concerned with the future of pastoralism, in consultation with pastoralist women.
- 7) Policies that revoke pastoralist rights to access and use natural resources without free, prior and informed consent and compensation should be abandoned.

### To NGOs and donor agencies

- 1) Existing knowledge of pastoralist gender relations must be taken into account when developing pastoralist women's programs.
- 2) Statistical data on pastoralists should be disaggregated between pastoralists and non-pastoralists, and between men and women. This will highlight areas of acute marginalization and inherently strengthen the advocacy message.
- 3) Negative attitudes towards girls' education must be advocated against and the value that an educated girl has needs to be exemplified.
- 4) Pastoralist women who become community leaders should be supported and promoted to help create positive role models within the community, educate wider society about pastoralism and help put pressure on governments.
- 5) Pastoralist women should be supported in economic empowerment programs as they have proved their skills and intimate knowledge in livestock and land management.
- 6) Pastoralist women should get support to access land and interventions geared towards addressing the hindering barriers should be implemented.
- 7) Support Pastoralist communities access health services including HIV prevention, treatment and care services.
- 8) Support women pastoralist to embrace other types of farming such as crop farming and agroforestry as it has been proved that its possible, this will support the pastoralist increase

their household income but also contribute to environmental conservation.

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