



Joint Press Statement

Civil Society Call for the National Budget to Address Service Delivery Needs in Karamoja Sub-Region

Issued by ACODE, KHH, MUCOBADI, RiamiRiam, and KAWUO

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1. Introduction

As Uganda prepares the National and District Budgets for FY2026/27, civil society organisations working in Karamoja stand together to call for urgent and targeted investments in service delivery for the sub-region. Karamoja remains Uganda's most marginalised area, with poverty levels rising sharply to 74.2% as per the 2023/24 Uganda National Household Survey, three times higher than the national average. The region also records the lowest literacy rate in the country, at 25.4%, as well as persistent food insecurity and chronic underfunding in health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure.

Despite these glaring disparities, Karamoja receives 17% less per capita budget allocation than the national average, and only 19% of its district budgets are directed to development spending. The result is weak service delivery systems, under-staffed facilities, and limited opportunities for youth and women to thrive. This press statement outlines our joint demands to the government and Parliament to prioritise Karamoja in the FY2026/27 budget.

2. Education and Health: Closing the Service Gaps

The education sector in Karamoja faces a staffing crisis, with some schools operating with as few as five teachers for more than 1,000 pupils. Over 60% of primary schools lack teacher accommodation, contributing to absenteeism and low retention. Many community-founded schools remain uncoded, preventing them from receiving government support. Dropout rates are among the highest in Uganda, with more than 50% of learners leaving school before completing Primary Seven. (P.7).

In health, Karamoja has the highest number of un-upgraded Health Centre IIs in Uganda, forcing expectant mothers to travel long distances for deliveries. At Kalemungole HCIII, only 12 of the 53 required staff are in place, a stark example of chronic understaffing. Facilities often lack electricity and water, and chronic drug stock-outs, making it impossible to provide safe maternal care.

We call on the government to:

- a) Recruit more teachers and construct teacher housing.
- b) Fast-track the coding of community schools.
- c) Fully integrate school feeding into the national budget, as malnutrition exceeds 35% in some districts
- d) The government should fund marketable skills based on region-specific opportunities like mining, construction and ICT.
- e) Upgrade all remaining Health Centre IIs to IIIs.
- f) Recruit and retain health workers with hardship allowances.
- g) Ring-fence funds to provide water and solar power for all Health Centre IIIs.
- h) The Local and Central government should budget for an adequate supply of essential medicines and drugs in health centres and district hospitals in the sub-region.

3. Women and Girls: Investing in Equity

Women in Karamoja are disproportionately affected by poverty, gender-based violence (GBV), and poor maternal health. Over 60% of women in the region have experienced GBV, while maternal mortality remains nearly 50% above the national average. Yet, district budgets allocate less than 2% to women-focused interventions.

We emphasise that investing in women is not charity but smart economics. We therefore demand:

- Increased and ring-fenced funding for GBV prevention, maternal health, and women's livelihood support.
- Institutionalisation of gender-responsive budgeting at district and national levels.
- Active and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the budget cycle.

4. Youth: Unlocking Potential for Peace and Growth

Karamoja has the highest **NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate in Uganda, estimated at 60–68%**, with youth unemployment above 40%.

Many young people remain trapped in vulnerable employment, cattle rustling, or are drawn into inter-clan violence. Civil society partners call for creating Regional Youth Skills Hubs linked to existing TVET institutions, micro-grants for youth enterprises, and structured youth peace teams integrated into local government peace committees.

- The budget must allocate resources for youth-friendly health services, climate-smart livelihood programs, and infrastructure (roads, ICT, and safe recreation spaces) to reduce idleness and build social cohesion.
- Allocate resources in the budget for FY 2026/27 for reintegration support with robust accountability for financial and material aid.
- Allocate resources towards livelihood programs for the youth, including vocational training and business support, tailored to the skills and needs of reintegrated youth and the broader youth population

5. Agriculture, Livelihoods, and Climate Resilience

Agriculture and pastoralism remain the backbone of Karamoja; however, 75% of agricultural extension worker positions remain vacant, which undermines productivity. Climate shocks such as prolonged droughts and floods deepen food insecurity and poverty. Despite Karamoja's rich cultural heritage and tourism potential, poor road networks isolate communities and hinder growth.

We recommend that the government:

- Fill vacant extension worker positions.
- Increase funding for livestock water facilities and climate-resilient agriculture.
- Support youth and women-led green enterprises, such as renewable energy and agro-processing.
- Improve road networks to connect communities to markets and services.

6. Governance and Accountability

In Karamoja, the voices of women and youth remain significantly underrepresented in governance and budgeting processes, particularly at the district and sub-county levels. This exclusion limits meaningful resource allocation and accountability, resulting in budgets that do not fully address the urgent needs of young people. Finally, without strong accountability, increased resources will not translate into better services.

We emphasise the importance of transparency in budget implementation, enhanced procurement practices, and the timely disbursement of funds.

- Allocate dedicated funds to establish and strengthen Youth Governance and Accountability Platforms in Karamoja, such as women and youth-led community barazas, budget dialogues, and service delivery monitoring initiatives
- Local oversight mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure that resources reach communities.
- The Local Governments should adequately budget for meetings of Council, Local Government Public Accounts Committees, Public hearings at the community level.
- The Local Governments should plan for interventions that increase community participation in service delivery and governance of natural resources in the sub-region

7. Conclusion

The government has made significant investments in Karamoja. But the challenges still persist. We therefore demand justice and equity with in the FY2026/27 budget. Leaving the region behind undermines Uganda's vision for inclusive national development. We therefore call on government, Parliament, and development partners to make FY2026/27 the year of equity by:

- Increasing budget allocations to Karamoja in line with its disproportionate poverty and service delivery needs.
- Ring-fencing resources for tailored education, health, women, and youth programs for the Karamoja sub-region
- Institutionalising gender-responsive and youth-inclusive budgeting to ensure that issues of women and youth in service delivery are adequately addressed
- Strengthening accountability to ensure every shilling benefits the people.

The time to act is now. An equitable budget for Karamoja is an investment in peace, stability, and prosperity for Uganda as a whole.

Issued by:

ACODE: The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research, advocacy, and capacity building think tank based in Uganda and working across East and Southern Africa. Established 22 years ago, ACODE is recognized among the Top 100 global think tanks (2017) and works to bridge gaps between policy, outreach, and implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

KHH: Karamoja Herders of the Horn (formerly Karamoja Development Forum) is an independent, nonpartisan NGO registered in Uganda in 2014. It evolved from a 2010 social media group to a formal organization advocating for land rights, natural resource management, pastoralism, and governance in Karamoja, promoting inclusion and shaping the regional development agenda.

Restless Development (Uganda): Restless Development is a youth-led development agency committed to empowering young people to lead solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. Operating across Uganda, the organisation partners with youth to ensure equal access to decent work, essential public services, and a dignified life.

RiamiRiam: Established in 2003, the Riamiriam Civil Society Network-Karamoja serves as an umbrella organisation for civil society organisations in the Karamoja region, dedicated to coordinating efforts and enhancing the capacity of its members. Riamiriam is a Ngakarimojong word meaning “**coming together**” or “**let us meet**”, embodying the spirit of unity and collaboration.

KAWUO: Karamoja Women Umbrella Organisation (KAWUO) is a dynamic, grassroots-led nonprofit based in Karamoja, Uganda, working to empower women, uplift vulnerable children, and transform marginalised communities through locally-driven, sustainable solutions. Formed by resilient women who understand the unique hardships of Karamoja, KAWUO exists to restore dignity, opportunity, and voice to those most often left behind: widows, single mothers, orphans, and disadvantaged youth.

MUCOBADI: Multi-Community Based Development Initiative (MUCOBADI) is dedicated to addressing the root socio-economic challenges faced by the most vulnerable communities through community-based safeguards. The organisation also focuses on strengthening health sector accountability, particularly improving service delivery for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis across Eastern, Central, and Northern Uganda.