

BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

GULU. A row has erupted over the registration and validation process for beneficiaries of northern Uganda's multi-billion cattle restocking programme, with leaders warning of possible fraud.

In January, the government allocated Shs80 billion for cattle restocking in the Acholi, Lango and Teso sub-regions for the 2025/2026 financial year. The programme targets districts where livestock numbers were wiped out during two decades of insurgency.

However, the criteria and procedures used to register beneficiaries have come under scrutiny, with concerns that thousands could be misled or excluded.

Kilak County MP Gilbert Olanya has described the exercise as suspicious, accusing some officials of attempting to defraud the public.

"Forms were issued for people to fill and confirm they had received Shs5 million to buy cattle, yet no-one has received this money," Mr Olanya said last week.

He added that more than 10,000

Cattle restocking forms spark fraud concerns in north

people in Amuru District had already filled the forms, acknowledging receipt of funds they had not received.

"When I contacted the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), they clarified that the form should only be signed after payment. This raises serious concerns of fraud," he said.

Mr Olanya has since filed a fraud complaint against several Gulu City officials, including the Resident City Commissioner, Town Clerk, and other senior administrators.

"This appears to be a coordinated attempt to defraud our people. We demand a thorough investigation," he added.

Guidelines questioned

On March 22, OPM Permanent Secretary Alex Kakooza directed chief administrative officers in beneficiary areas to submit verified lists for payment processing.

Under the programme, each selected household is to receive Shs5 million to

purchase five animals. Funds will be shared equally among the three sub-regions, with district allocations based on the number of eligible households.

Priority is to be given to vulnerable

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Must not have benefited from: Naads, Emyooga, Parish Model (PDM) and previous restocking programmes

- Must have a National ID (NIN)

- Must sign a consent form after receiving funds

- Livestock package: 3 female animals, 2 male animals

- Priority groups: Elderly, former abductees, women, youth, persons with disabilities

groups, including the elderly, former abductees, female-headed households, unemployed youth, and persons with disabilities.

However, eligibility criteria have also drawn criticism. Beneficiaries must not have received support under previous government programmes such as Naads, Emyooga, or the Parish Development Model.

Applicants are also required to possess a National Identification Number and sign a consent form confirming receipt of funds—witnessed by local authorities.

It is this requirement that has sparked controversy, with reports that outdated forms are still being used in some areas.

Gulu City Town Clerk Innocent Ahimbisibwe acknowledged the irregularity but said it had been addressed.

"The initial forms had errors, but we corrected them and issued updated versions," he said.

However, by last week, old forms were

still reportedly being distributed in parts of Gulu, raising doubts about the effectiveness of the corrective measures.

The cattle restocking programme is part of government efforts to rebuild livelihoods in northern and eastern Uganda, where livestock was heavily depleted during years of conflict.

According to government directives, each household is expected to purchase three female animals for milk and breeding, and two male animals.

The initiative aims to boost household incomes, restore livestock populations, and support broader economic recovery.

Data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicates that the three sub-regions collectively have over 2.1 million cattle, with Teso accounting for the largest share.

Funding allocations show Lango receiving the largest portion at Shs28.4 billion, followed by Teso with Shs24.2 billion, and Acholi with Shs23.3 billion.