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BY ROBERT ELEMA

Two weeks ago, residents of Yumbe District, awoke to empty kraals. This was after a raid where more than 200 heads of cattle were stolen during a coordinated attack in Kei and Kochi sub-counties.

The attackers, said to be armed men from South Sudan, struck under the cover of darkness, firing gunshots that forced residents to flee their homes.

For many families in Yumbe District, cattle are not just livestock, they are a symbol of wealth, pride, and survival. They provide milk for children, income for daily needs, and school fees.

In some of the affected families in Kei, farmers gathered around empty kraals the following morning, counting their losses. Some reportedly lost their entire heads, wiping out years of investment.

A night of fear

Residents said at around midnight, the sound of gunshots pierced the quiet night, sending panic through villages near the border.

"We heard gunshots and people shouting. We ran into the bush to hide," Mr Ali Buga, a resident of Kei Sub-county, recounted the painful night to *Daily Monitor* on Sunday.

He added: "Our family lost over 30 heads of cattle to the rustlers. We depend on cattle for milk, paying school fees and meeting family needs and losing them in one night is like losing everything."

None of the cattle had been recovered by the time of compiling the story.

Another victim, Mr Ismail Saidi, the deputy head teacher of Kena Valley Primary School, lost 12 heads of cattle.

"My uncle had been keeping my animals in Kei Sub-county. The months of March and April had been bad for me. Thieves also stole my motorcycle during the Ramadan period. I had planned to sell some of the animals to buy a new one only to receive news about the raid," he said.

Mr Saidi is doubtful that the animals will be recovered, pleading that securi-



A herdsman grazes cattle in Arua District recently. In neighbouring Yumbe District, farmers have lost over 200 heads of cattle in a raid allegedly carried out by thugs from South Sudan. PHOTO/FELIX WAROM OKELLO

Cattle raid empties kraals in Yumbe

CATTLE RUSTLING

A similar incident happened in Lamwo District where animals were stolen between January and March 2026. On April 9, 2026, Ugandan authorities in Lamwo received 24 herds of cattle recovered from Tereanya in South Sudan, months after they were stolen from Lamwaka B village, Potika Sub-county in Lamwo District.

house," she said.

In the neighbouring Kochi Sub-county, residents reported similar attacks, saying their animals were driven by the rustlers into South Sudan.

Local leaders said only a few of the stolen cattle have been recovered following operations by security forces, in-

cluding the Uganda People's Defence Forces. However, hopes of full recovery are fading.

Long-standing border insecurity

Authorities in Yumbe said the raid highlights ongoing security challenges along the Uganda-South Sudan border.

Leaders have called for increased security patrols and stronger collaboration between authorities in Uganda and South Sudan to prevent future attacks.

Mr Fadhil Lemeriga, the prime minister of Aringa Cultural Institution, said these incursions have been numerous, including at Goboro and Fitina-Mbaya last year in Kochi Sub-county.

He said the victims are still recovering from the devastation and havoc wrecked by the armed men from South Sudan.

"It becomes more disturbing when the magnanimity of the Aringa people is being repaid with bad currency hav-

ing offered free land at Bidibidi for the settlement of the South Sudanese refugees.

This hospitality has continued to be abused albeit the environmental damage to the land and its locals," he said.

He appealed for deployment of more UPDF soldiers along the border and immediate inter-boundary community dialogue between the Aringa and Kuku, Pojulu and other tribes in South Sudan to promote peaceful co-existence.

The UPDF Public Information Officer for West Nile, Lt Nasser Mene, said the security personnel followed up with their counterpart in South Sudan.

He said the security forces in South Sudan disowned the armed group who rustled the herds of cattle from Uganda.

"We have come to know that these attacks are made by an armed local community from South Sudan. What they normally do is get some animals from South Sudan and bring them to Uganda and as they return, they go with animals from Uganda," he said.

"They use the porous borders to attack people from Uganda, but we have adjusted our deployments where there are gaps to prevent further attacks. We encourage the local community to be vigilant and share information with security forces timely," he added.

The Commissioner of Ikotos County in South Sudan, Mr Timon Loboi, who led the South Sudanese team, said authorities in his country were committed to ensuring that all the missing animals are returned and that compensation would be considered for any that may have died or got lost.

Hope amid loss

Despite the heavy losses, some residents remain hopeful that more cattle will be recovered and that security measures will improve.

Mr Sulaiman Lubwama Bukya, the Yumbe Resident District Commissioner (RDC), said the security situation at the border is currently calm, adding that they have coordinated with their counterpart in South Sudan and recovered 130 herds of cattle.

"We want to ensure that there are no more cattle raids at the border. We have deployed security personnel at the border and are closely monitoring the borderline," he said.

He added: "We are currently engaging the community in the border sub-counties of Kei, Kerwa and Kochi for dialogue meetings and guiding them on security matters. This time we don't want the local community to graze their animals at the extreme ends of the border."