



CECORE

CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PREVENTING CONFLICT IN KARAMOJA. EARLY WARNING, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT



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The ideas, opinions, and comments made in this report are entirely the responsibility of the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE), and do not necessarily represent or reflect European Union policy, and Irish Aid policy

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Executive Summary

This study was commissioned through a Peace Building Partnership between Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) in Uganda and Minority Rights Group International (MRG) United Kingdom to:

- Explore the current conflict situation in Karamoja
- Identify potential sources of conflicts in Karamoja
- Provide action oriented recommendations

The research was launched under “*Preventing Inter Community Conflicts in East Africa* Project a CECORE/(MRG) project that looks at Preventing Inter Communal Violence and looking at four ethnic minorities in Uganda i.e. the Batwa; Basongora, Karamojong (IK) and the Iteso of Katakwi.

Of all the ethnic groups who live in the Karamoja region, the IK are the most marginalized and face many long term challenges. Because of their diminutive number– estimated at around 5,000, the IK are marginalized even within Karamoja. However this Early Warning Brief is not limited to the IK in particular but to Karamoja in general.

Findings of this report are meant to inform future peace building planning and programming in Karamoja. Its specific aim is to document early warning issues related to potential future conflict, related to: patterns of exclusion from natural resources, discrimination from other communities, and rising tensions between Karamoja and her neighbours.

A field work was conducted in Moroto and Kotido between March 10 and March 15, 2010. Additional information was collected from already documented information in reports, interviews and newspapers.¹

This report is not meant to provide an in-depth analysis of the conflict and security situation in Karamoja, rather to provide a brief on early warning issues and outbreaks of violence

¹ See the section on methodology used for details on how the information was collected.

List of Acronyms

APC	Anti Personal Carrier
CECORE	Center for Conflict Resolution
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Agency on Development
KADP	Karamoja Agro-Pastoral Development Programme
KIDDP	Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme
LC	Local Council
MRG	Minority Rights Group
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NUREP	Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programs
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
PRDP	Poverty Recovery and Development Plan
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
UPDF	Uganda Peoples Defense Forces

Cover picture: Karimojong Girls on their way from fetching water in Kotido District

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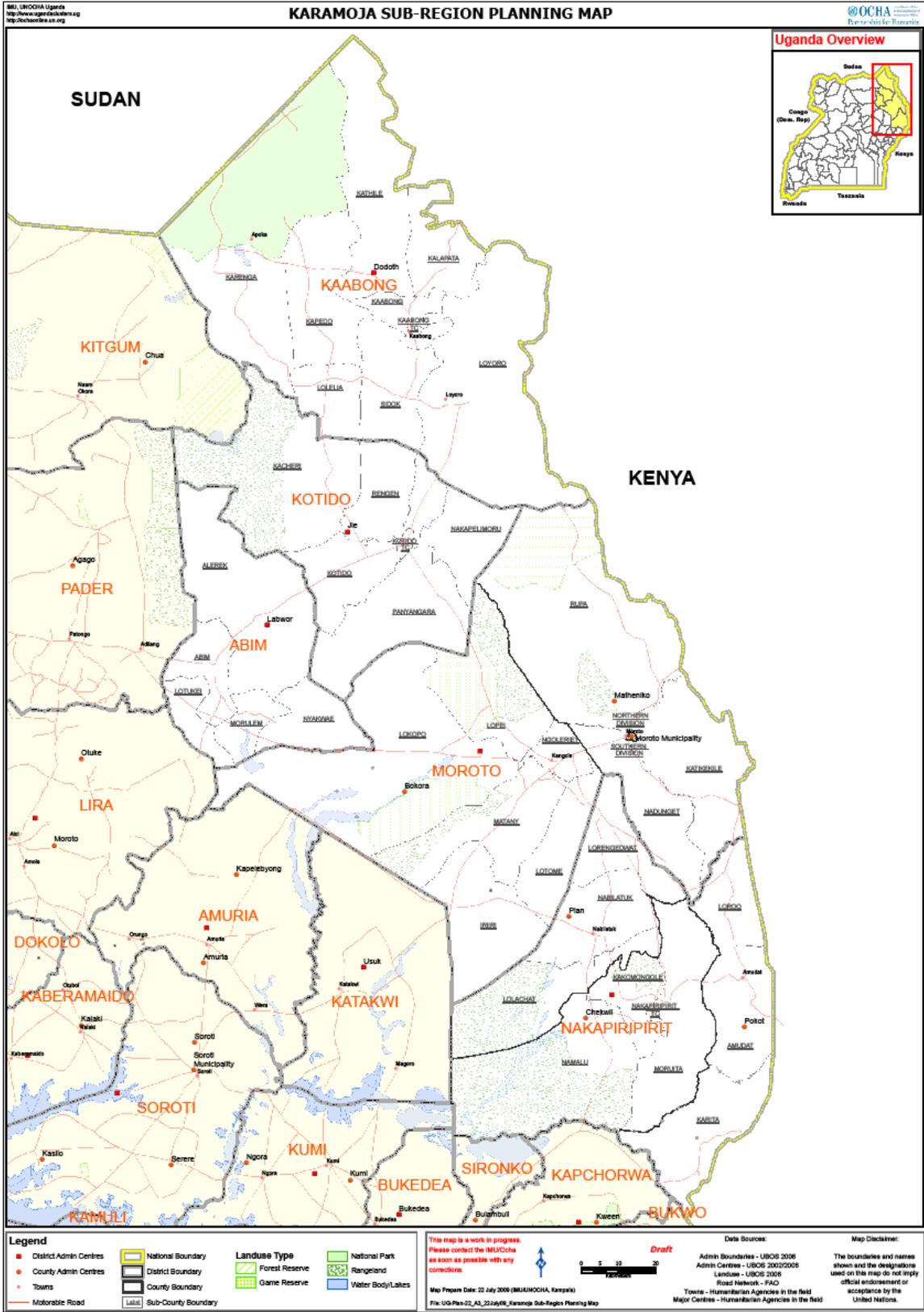
About the Organisations

Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE)

CECORE is a non-governmental organization working to seek alternative and creative means of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. Its main areas of focus are on; Advocacy, Research and Intervention in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building

Minority Rights Group (MRG)

Minority Rights Group is also a non-governmental organization working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and the indigenous people worldwide and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.



Source: UNOC 2010

Introduction

Karamoja is one of the poorest and remotest areas in Uganda. It is located in the north-eastern part of Uganda and it borders Kenya to the east and Sudan to the north. The terms *Karamajong* and *Karimojong* are often used interchangeably but *Karamoja* is used in reference to the name of the place, which is inhabited by *Karimojong*, the people who speak *Akarimojong*.²

Annual rainfall is lowest in the east central area, at about 600mm per annum, rising to 900mm in the south west.³ The region experiences only a single crop season throughout the year as opposed to double seasons in the rest of the country, although it has three livelihood zones which are based on climatic conditions.⁴ Changing patterns of climatic conditions have made natural disasters like floods more likely and deadly because vegetation cover has reduced, making soil erosion frequent. The rains in Karamoja are becoming less each year due to heavy deforestation caused by cutting of trees for firewood and need for fencing materials; soil erosion caused by floods, wind and animals; and pressure on land from increasing number of cattle and human beings.

Most Karimojong practice agro-pastoralism where animals especially cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys are kept while minimal agriculture is practiced with varieties of crops like sorghum, cassava, cow peas, pigeon peas, beans, groundnuts, cotton, tobacco and millet.⁵

Since the colonial period, different Ugandan governments have adopted anti-pastoralist policies, leading pastoralists to lose land vital for the survival of the herds on which they depend. Attempts to forcefully settle pastoralists have resulted in an unanticipated social crisis, setting the stage for an emerging conflict over the allocation and use of resources. All post-independence governments have pursued policies similar to those of their predecessors. It was only after the National Resistance

² Elaboration by community members who spoke to the researcher. In the report, *Changing Roles, Shifting Risks*, Elizabeth Sites and Darlington Akabwi suggest that 'Karamojong' refer to the inhabitants of Karamoja and 'Karimojong' is the unified collection of all the ethnic groups who share a language known as 'Ngakarimojong.'

³ Ben Knighton, 2005, *The Vitality of Karamojong Religion*, Dying Tradition or Living Faith, England, p.19.

⁴ The Office of the Prime Minister, March 2009, *Karamoja Action Plan for Food Security*, says "there are three key zones in Karamoja: i) Wet-Agricultural Zone, ii) Agro-Pastoral Zone and iii) the Arid-Pastoral Zone" See executive summary of the report.

⁵ Office of the Prime Minister, March 2009, *Karamoja Action Plan for Food Security*, p.4

Movement (NRM) came to power in 1986 that attempts were made to address the root causes of the crises in Uganda.⁶

The Karimojong have, for a long time, lived in isolation from the rest of the country; government programs in the region have been criticized as not effective. Famine and starvation are common and insecurity continues to make Karamoja less attractive to investment. There is high pressure on land due to increase in livestock population, and deforestation.

Infrastructure in Karamoja is not well developed, with roads being impassable when it rains heavily. Poorly facilitated schools and poorly trained teachers combined with low levels of enrollment in the region make it one of the highly illiterate communities in Uganda. The adult illiteracy rate is the highest in Uganda at 86.0% (UHRC, 2004:100-104; UBOS, 2003) while enrollment rate was reported at 32.7% (Karamoja Data Centre Development Atlas, 2004). Health services are not accessed by the majority of rural populations because of the long distance between, lack of doctors and medicine in health centers.

The conflict in Karamoja is characterized by pastoralist type of violence where cattle are at the center of inter-tribal violence. The most common occurrences of violence are attacks between different tribes, the army and warriors but sometimes there are attacks within members of the same community. The causes of violence are many and intertwined in a complicated and cyclical manner, but the major causes are the need to acquire cattle for food, meat, milk and above all bride wealth. A prospective groom could be charged anywhere between 100 to 200 head of cattle to marry a wife. The high premium, therefore, endears natives to livestock keeping, or stealing, at tender age”⁷

Whenever the dry season starts in Karamoja, tensions develop between and within the various Karimojong pastoral groups. As members of one ethnic group try to exercise their rights to exclude nonmembers (Karimojong or non-Karimojong), unannounced entry into a territory belonging to another group may end up in war.

⁶ Muhereza, Fank Emmanuel, “*Violence and the State in Karamoja: Causes of Conflict, Initiative for Peace*”, CSQ Issue 22.4 (Winter 1998) Uprooted: Dispossession in Africa

⁷ Tabu Butagira, The Daily Monitor, *A New Beginning for Karamoja as guns fall silent*, September 5 2010

Mobile grazing is usually accompanied by heavily armed warrior groups, initially, with homemade guns. Over the years, the majority of these warriors have acquired modern automatic and semi-automatic rifles as spoils from the civil wars that have engulfed the region for several decades. These guns have been used by herders to defend their animals from raiders both within and outside Karamoja, as they search for dry season grazing resources and also used to attack neighbouring communities for the same.

Occasionally they have been turned against the unarmed populations wherever they go to graze in the dry season. Highway robberies, cattle rustling in neighboring districts, raping of women, and sometimes senseless killing of innocent people are often committed by armed cattle herders. The Karimojong are blamed for food shortages as they steal food and other property and also raid cattle from communities.⁸ The impact of this is destabilization of their neighbours by creating an atmosphere where growth of food is almost impossible.

Finally Karamoja suffers significantly from effects of higher levels of Small Arms and Light Weapons incidence i.e. (death and injury by fire arms) than any other region of Uganda (Bevan, 2008, p.16). The rise in violence, and in particular gun crime in Karamoja, has been driven by a number of factors. The desertion of Idi Amin's forces in 1979 from Moroto Barracks allowed tribes such as the Matheniko to access large supplies of arms including AK-47's. This initiated a cycle of armament within the region.

At the same time the civil war in the North of Uganda diverted economic and military resources from Karamoja, therefore weakening government security and severely restricting capital investment. The lax security situation and easy access to small arms only compounded the strong warrior culture already embedded within the local communities. Attacks and killings in neighbouring tribal lands as well as cattle raiding and destroying crops/property increased. A long history of disarmament campaigns have been unsuccessful in reducing weapons from the region and have bred distrust and resentment toward the government.⁹

⁸ Muhereza, Fank Emmanuel, *"Violence and the State in Karamoja: Causes of Conflict, Initiative for Peace"*, CSQ Issue 22.4 (Winter 1998) Uprooted: Dispossession in Africa

⁹ Marco Ferloni, Mark O'Keefe, Dr.Phil Okeefe, Dr. Geoff O'Brien; *"Could guns and rain spell the end for Karamoja?"*, Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) Online Exchange, Monday January 25, 2010.

Current Situation

Recent research conducted in Karamoja has attempted to understand the complex typology of the conflict and some authors assert that the conflict in Karamoja is evolving, from ‘traditional raiding practices to new form of economically motivated crime and general lawlessness.’ (Bevan, 2008, p.24). On the onset, it is easy to determine that at the core of the conflict in Karamoja, is solely based on the factor of the animal therefore another case of pastoral conflict. However, it has been observed that the conflict in Karamoja is complex and one needs to be cautious in not labeling it as another case of violent conflict or, “a product of pastoral system, but rather the result of malfunctions that have been induced by external shocks, such as access to diminished rangeland, commensurate breakdowns in resource-sharing agreements” (Bevan, 2008, p. 24).

Take for instance a *Karachuna* interviewed in Kotido

When I have a gun, I cannot fear to attack or be attacked because I know I will use my gun to defend myself. If I use it well, I will even gain more animals and if I don't then I can be killed by the enemy. But, in the past we never used to kill each other like it happens these days. These days, things are very different because of disarmament and some people are so desperate that they can kill their community members because they are completely left unable to survive or fear to go to other areas to work. We live in a lot of fear because most of us do not have enough to feed our children and our enemies still have guns.¹⁰

Some Karimojong community members think that access to small arms, and disarmament has contributed to the present state in which the community is and the nature of the conflict because Karimojong rhetoric is describing the conflict tends to begin with events which involved disarmament or raiding. Seldom, do community members emphasise resources (cattle, land and water) as a possible source of insecurity and conflict driver.

Whereas disarmament has been perceived by some people as having created a balance of power, some community members’ view the present situation as even a more dangerous situation than it

¹⁰ Conversation with a reformed *Karachuna* (Youth Warrior) in Kotido, May 11, 2010

was before. This is because of the transition from village based system of protection to state enforced systems of protection which is ongoing through disarmament and law enforcement. If this transition is not carefully managed, grieved community members like the *Karachuna* interviewed above will be tempted to acquire more weapons and use violence as a strategy to ensure their protection, or even out rightly resort to violence. Recently there has been an escalation of violence in some parts of the region involving attacks on aid workers and the army.¹¹

While change is occurring in Karamoja, it is external actors that drive that change. A government official once stated: “*To change the people and become partners we first have to change the existing set-up and create another set-up*”¹². Within this framework of change, cultural and participatory issues become central.

The Karimojong culture, regardless of its tribal differences, is based on a strong patriarchal structure; women are relegated to the levels of children and where children are involved in domestic chores rather than attending formal education. In traditional roles, Karimojong elders are regarded as the custodians of cultural authority and have a huge influence in the society. Men and young boys play a role in grazing cattle and providing community security while women and young girls perform domestic roles like cooking, collecting firewood & water etc. The youth are among the most affected groups because of the social-economic pressure and they need to acquire bride wealth, and are prime actors in influencing many community activities.

The security situation in Karamoja by the time the researcher was in the field was calm especially in the central parts of Kotido and Moroto. However there were reported cattle rustling cases and killings in the more remote areas. Many areas within the municipality and neighboring villages were accessible, although within certain times as it was not recommended to travel in the dark

The Army advises people not to move beyond 7:00pm to or from villages for safety purposes. The impression one finds in Karamoja is that insecurity seems to have been contained by government but

¹¹ On February 10 2010, aid workers from the International Rescue Committee were shot by Pokot Warriors at Nakoyit where three people were killed, and there has been wide accusations that the army killed civilians during disarmament exercises. (See: *Army draws fire in Karamoja*, Tabu Butagira, Monitor Publications, August 17 2010 and Tabu Butagira, Monitor Publications, *UPDF admits killing Karimojong*, August 18 2010).

¹² Local Council official at Moroto Town Hall-March 2010

attacks still remain within local communities, and they feel that they do not have adequate protection from cattle raiders who have not completely been stamped out by disarmament.¹

1. State of Response vis-à-vis Early Warning Indicators

Relationships among the Karimojong are dynamic and change quite rapidly although the Karimojong remain a highly communal society. Dynamism among the community is affected by various forces but factors related to the changing nature of livelihoods and small arms exert the most pressure.

The Karamajong believe that the gun is part of their life and livelihood poses a threat of continued resistance to disarmament

Some natives even fear that the definition of Karamoja is changing because of disarmament. The gun is largely perceived as assurance to protection upon which survival has come to depend; hence the livelihood is shaped by a sense of ethnic rivalry and dependence on livestock. The indigenous Karimojong therefore feels that disarmament takes away what has come to be part of the definition of their society and is breeding resentment

One danger this presents is that some of the Karimojong community members feel that disarmament is changing their identity and therefore, it has to be resisted. This may help explain why many disarmament initiatives have not been so successful.

3. Karamajong traditions further aggravate the acquisition of guns in the region

The Karimojong youth believe that when they raid animals from a rival tribe, they are only taking away what belongs to them. The youth believe that the most practical way to get back what was taken is application of some excess force which in its performative act is considered a rite of passage; to raid means coming of age.

Some youth interviewed acknowledged that recent acquisition of guns by different tribes has increased the number of gun-related deaths and aggravated the number of armed raids. They agree that though it has negative consequences, it is inevitable and a sign of manhood. Elders interviewed in Kotido said,

Before disarmament started, some people within the community had acquired big guns like the APCs, because they could raid more for animals and get rich. But raiding is not meant for getting riches, it is meant for a young person to demonstrate manhood.¹³

When asked what will happen after successful disarmament, where the youth will no longer raid, they said:

“That is good but if the government does not help us to create wealth and fight poverty, raiding will never stop.”

The comments suggest that there is a complex set of causes for raiding, and for each individual the reasons might be different

4. Negative Perceptions towards Government

In Karamoja, different community members have variant perceptions of the government of the day. Many Karimojong who occupy less accessible areas consider the government hostile while those in areas that have been receiving relief food and social amenities feel adequately protected by the army. In an interview with elders in Kotido, they said,

¹³ Focus Group Discussion in Kotido, 11th May, 2010

All governments have neglected Karamoja and we have been living without much help from the government. Many children don't go to school, and the hospitals are few and far. The government started disarmament and took all the guns in Jie¹⁴, but they have not disarmed everyone and the enemies come whenever they want to take away our animals. Now animals are few and the remaining ones are dying of diseases. The rains are less and harvests have been poor.¹⁵

There is a feeling that the government should bring more development programs and punish corrupt government officers because they do not promote of people's welfare and yet the people have lots of needs. However, this study found out that community members have little knowledge of the existing government programs.¹⁶The danger this if it continues is that it will not help the government to effectively implement its programs because of the negative perception prevalent and many of its officials perceived to be untrustworthy beget hostility towards government.

5. Resisted Law Enforcement

Law enforcement in the region is a recent phenomenon and is still resisted by sections of some communities. Some Karimojong think that government officials and local leaders are corrupt. They are not strong enough and effective in resolving conflicts. The Police are perceived as more effective in providing justice and protection within the community than the army that is instead preferred for protection of the local community against other tribes. The army is perceived as not effective enough in recovery of animals although it is perceived to be more effective in protecting the communities from inter tribal attacks than the police.

¹⁴ The Karimojong ethnic group, consists of sub groups: Matheniko, Bokora, Pian, Tepeth. Pokot, Jie, Dodoth, Ik, Ethur. There is not always agreement over whether these are sub groups or ethnic groups in their own right

¹⁵ Focus Group Discussion in Kotido 11th May 2010

¹⁶ Most people interviewed in Focus Group Discussions in Kotido and Moroto, were not aware of some of the programs that government is undertaking to intervene in Karamoja. For those programs that they were aware of like NAADS, NUSAF and NUREP, many member said that they have heard about them, seen sign posts or project cars but they did not know what they were doing.

In one study *Changing roles and Shifting Risks*, “young men have little faith in the soldiers to effectively protect people or property, and that young men remain willing to take measures into their own hands in difficult circumstances”¹⁷

6. Youth Disenfranchisement

Most communities feel that for improvement in protection of animals and communities, the government should employ some youth to work with the security agencies because they understand the terrain and language better. They are more committed and prefer to protect their animals.

Community leaders also made overwhelming emphasis that the youth have a stake in the security and well-being of the community, because they can be strategic members to the security agencies. However, some security personnel who were interviewed revealed that, the government once trained and armed local youth militia but the challenge was that some of them did not return the guns¹⁸.

Suffice to say, there seems to be less trust between the government and community members because the latter blames the former for neglecting the region and of disrupting their livelihood.

7. Biased Military Units

There is fear that, some army units have been posted and stayed here for so long that they may have unconsciously and unknowingly been sucked into, and become part of, the problem by taking sides in what has historically been an extremely violent internecine vicious cycle of raiding and counter-raiding.”¹⁹ The danger with this situation is that, it has slowed progress because there is dragging of the feet in the actions each is taking. This encourages insecurity.

8. Army Brutality during Disarmament

¹⁷ Elizabeth Sites and Darlington Akabwai, *Changing Roles, Shifting Risks*, Tufts University, p. 29.

¹⁸ The youth militia has since been disbanded because it did not stop raids, instead some of the guns were stolen and used in raiding other communities. This system worked in such a way that, a limited number of youth are trained and supported by the army to provide protection to the community and the army oversees their operation. This model of community protection has also been used in other areas affected by violence like the Acholi sub-region and western Uganda successfully?.

¹⁹ Monitor Publications, February 21 2010, *Good thing Karamoja has caught our attention*.

Attempts to disarm the Karimojong have been launched by different governments as there has been many initiatives to that effect but the 2006 disarmament initiative was the most disruptive to the communities.²⁰ Community members have questioned the motive of disarmament initiatives and believe that the current methodology of disarmament is oppressive and do not work in favor of Karamoja's development.

Recently, the army has been accused of killing warriors and abusing civilians during the process of disarmament something that has led to an escalation of violence. "The disarmament however is going on well except for some soldiers who have ghastly behaviour of torturing innocent people," said Ms Christine Nachap, the vice chairperson of Amudat District. She said the military recently detained an unspecified number of young boys at Komoret detach and scalded them using hot blades.²¹ Such actions are dangerous because they are likely to breed more resentment and violence between the army and civilian population.

Karimojong perceive disarmament as fine but only if it is carried out objectively among all tribes. They agree that if everyone is disarmed, then fatal inter-tribal clashes will reduce. It is widely believed among the Jie community that the Bokora and Matheniko communities have not been disarmed like the Jie and therefore feel more vulnerable to attacks. However, this belief by some communities contradicts what the army asserts that they have done all it takes to disarm all the clans equally and they are not favoring any. The army argues that some areas are difficult to access especially in the hilly terrain and it is in those areas that the communities have not been thoroughly disarmed; however efforts are being made to reach them.

One challenge the army faces however is that there are alliances that have been created among the Karimojong clans themselves, so as to carry out joint raids, intelligence information and provide safe haven. "When a raid is carried out, by the Matheniko, they can hide the loot and guns with their allies in Pokot. This makes recovery and tracking of weapons and animals difficult."²² Alliances have also been created across the border between clans in Uganda and Kenya. This makes

²⁰ Bevan 2008, p.54, indicates that disarmament in Karamoja has been launched a number of times since the '50s. According to Bevan, the years are, 1945, 1953, 1954, 1960, 1964, 1984, 1987, 2001. The government energized the 2001 initiative in 2006 and is still ongoing by the time this report was written. It is important to note the 2001 initiative was voluntary but the 2006 was forceful. The army has reported that the forceful disarmament has resulted in more guns recovered than voluntary disarmament, while community members feel that forceful disarmament is disliked because it is torturous and that the approach should be changed.

²¹ Tabu Butagira and Stephen Ariong, Monitor Publications, *Karimojong rustlers killing us-Muhoozi*, August 17 2010

²² Conversation with Local Government Official in Moroto, 12th May, 2010

monitoring and tracking of cattle rustlers difficult because it allows them to hide their loot and weapons in other neighboring territory.

In a focus group meeting involving Kraal leaders and individuals who deal in cattle business, it was suggested that,

When animals are raided, sometimes the army recovers those which have brands from different clans. So they distribute the animals to different people in the community. The problem is that when they take the animals to the market to sell, it is the same army and police that will take away the very animals they earlier distributed and sometimes will arrest a person. This is a major problem and it has caused a lot of confusion and intrigue among community members.²³

This situation is dangerous because it does not enhance co-operation between the army and the community which is necessary for the disarmament process and peace building. It exacerbates conflict because it causes more tensions from the pre-existing grievances. However, the army expressed the dilemma they go through when recovering animals. It says that many times they operate on wrong information because of exaggeration by community members. A military officer, interviewed said:

We are given wrong information sometimes. There is a serious issue of exaggeration among the community members. When animals are stolen, community members report an inflated figure. For example, when fifty animals are stolen, the aggrieved will say one hundred. So when the army tries to recover the animals, we are looking for one hundred which is not true. So we operate on wrong information and end up collecting animals that should not have been. In fact, this means we are raiding for them.²⁴

The lack of transparency and calculated provision of wrong information by community members to the army might also point to the level of mistrust and lack of confidence they have in army, but is also problematic because tensions between the army and the community does not work to the community's advantage in terms of safety and provision of protection from attacks.

The Karimojong believe that the methods used by the army to protect and recover animals are not effective and accuse the army for not being committed during the recovery program. Members dismiss the army as ineffective, and threaten that if it does not change its conduct and administration of Kraal system strategies, cattle raiding will not stop.

²³ Conversation with cattle traders and retailers in Moroto, 13th May 2010

²⁴ Conversation with a UPDF officer, 13th May 2010

*They [soldiers] intend to neglect you in helping to protect the animals. They sit under trees in the shades---you are alone with the animals and when the enemies come, they even abduct the Sheppards. These soldiers have no value as protectors.*²⁵

The army must be seen as improving its protection of animals and civilians otherwise the danger of this perception may fuel cattle raids by young people.

If this kind of relationship is not checked, insecurity in the region will prevent investments from taking root. The strategy of protected Kraals is perceived not to have worked effectively because community members do not support the initiative and when the youth raid animals, the army claims that, they bring the stolen animals to the Kraals for them to protect.

9. Protected Kraals /Protection Strategy

Protected Kraals have become sources of insecurity in that they are attacked frequently by desperate warriors and hard-core criminals.²⁶ “We know that where there is a cow that is where a problem is, and therefore UPDF strategy to create protection Kraals. The army is constantly changing its strategy as the situation demands, so one of those strategies is to phase out protected kraals.”²⁷ This seemed to concur with what Monitor Publications reported

*The UPDF is to withdraw the majority of its soldiers who have been guarding cattle at communal kraals in Karamoja. The army says the move is aimed at ensuring that Karimojong cattle keepers take direct responsibility of protecting their animals.*²⁸

²⁵ Elizabeth Sites and Darlington Akabwai, July 2009, *Changing Roles Shifting Risks*, Livelihood Impacts of Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda, p.28

²⁶ “The army leadership is concerned that wrong tactics have left the soldiers exposed to the enemy, resulting in unwarranted casualties.

For instance, the soldiers have been protecting kraals where the communities bring their animals to be guarded from the marauding warriors, but the Division Commander says this puts the soldiers at risk. Brig. Kankiriho cites two examples in the 503rd Brigade where soldiers guarding kraals were killed” See: Simon Musasizi, *UPDF Under Fire in Karamoja*, The Observer, September 28, 2009

²⁷ Conversation with a UPDF officer in Kotido, 11th May, 2010

²⁸ David Mafabi, *Army To Stop Guarding Karamojong Kraals*, The Monitor, June 22, 2009

While the intention of empowering the local communities with regard to security issues is a good one, if it is done without proper consultation with the communities, or if the communities do not have the resources to take on this responsibility, it may only encourage cattle rustlers to apply more violence and raids as evident in the recent attacks and killings in Rengen.²⁹

During the field interviews, Karamoja, seemed to witness relative peace and stability.³⁰ However, the continually changing protection strategies operated by the army combined with poor outreach and sensitization of new changes to protection backfired. These efforts were condemned by some sections of the civil society and community members who warned that it would leave people who have been disarmed, vulnerable to enemy attacks.

Eventually, insecurity suddenly hiked and more animals and lives lost. For instance, cattle rustlers killed UPDF soldiers, prompting a quick revision of protection tactics and army leadership in the areas affected by attacks.ⁱⁱ It was expected that attacks by warriors would stop after the command reshuffle. The consequence indeed was the attacks generally reduced.

Generally, although there has been significant improvement in security and safety, the strategies have not responded to the underlying causes of the insecurity in Karamoja---the endemic underlying poverty in the region. Community members emphatically suggested that they needed to help the army but the soldiers have turned against them and so they have lost trust in the army. In one of the interview sessions in Kotido, elders said.

The army comes and asks people the where-about of guns and when someone says that they don't know or don't have a gun, he can be tortured. That is why when they come to the Manyatta, all the youth run away because they fear to be beaten by the army. Instead of working with us, they beat us. So people don't feel that they can work with the army.³¹

²⁹ It emerged last night the army over the past couple of days arrested 167 suspected rustlers in Kotido and Moroto districts and recovered more than 100 stolen cattle in a renewed disarmament operation. See: Tabu Butagira, Monitor Publications, *Army admits killing Karimojong*, August 18 2010

³⁰ Tabu Butagira, Monitor Publications, *A new beginning for Karamoja as guns fall silent*, September 5 2010

³¹ Focus Group interview in Kotido, 11th May, 2010

The UPDF also says under the renewed disarmament, the soldiers acting on intelligence, encircle Manyattas (large kraals) at dawn and break the morning silence with the commander loudly announcing their presence and requiring occupants to present themselves for search. Some do, others do not.”³² It is under such circumstances and events which propel the community to engage in violence against the army. It is important that the UPDF consolidates its civil-military relations office as sometime the community may misjudge the intentions of their actions since there is a lot of mistrust between them.

The number of animals in Karamoja is steadily dwindling due to a number of factors, including diseases, poor pasture and lack of clean water, and this is forcing cattle owners to adapt to new ways of livelihood like farming and business. If the number of animals in future reduces significantly, inter-tribal clashes are likely to increase as the demand for animals is not likely to fall. Cattle Traders who participated in the interviews in Moroto said that animals were few and keeping them in the village was becoming dangerous to community safety, because, when they come to raid, rustlers are capable of committing many atrocities during that period of raiding.

³² Tabu Butagira, Monitor Publications, *A new beginning for Karamoja as guns fall silent*, September 5 2010

The Kraal system is no longer the safest place to keep animals because the increase in insecurity and lawlessness has given rise to criminal activities in and around villages.

A cattle trader in Moroto interviewed said.

*I cannot keep animals in the village because they [thieves] will come and steal them. These days having animals at home is like inviting thieves to come. Animals are stolen by people from other areas who have collaborators within the villages.*³³

The community perception that disarmament has caused more insecurity in Karamoja is strong. This is particularly dangerous because it does not help endear the population towards government efforts as it is seen as part of the problem in the community. “People think that government only wants to control them but does not offer them services.”³⁴ According to the local leaders in Moroto, there are fewer gun related death in the last two years. This is because people are no longer using their guns to raid, but may also be that the guns have been confiscated. Most recent reports on Karamoja capture the views that people feel very vulnerable to attacks after being disarmed and that more animals are at risk of being raided by enemies which has instead, increased the demand for guns.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, the degree of fear varies from one area to another; for instance, Matheniko respondents confirmed that they were unable to protect their animals after disarmament. Kraals in western Moroto were disbanded because of inadequate security and continuous raids. Animals in Kotido have moved into Kraals in the barracks due to continued insecurity.³⁵

While moving animals into Kraals was a tactical protection strategy to stop raids and counter raids, the danger is that the proximity of animals cramped together makes the spread of diseases very easy. The danger of diseases spreading easily within the Kraal system, compelled some cattle owners not to take their animals to protected Kraals and it is those who sometimes were raided.

³³ Focus Group Discussion in Moroto 13th May 2010

³⁴ Telephone interview with Community member in Kotido, 15th September 2010

³⁵ Elizabeth Sites and Darlington Akabwai, July 2009, *Changing Roles Shifting Risks*, Livelihood Impacts of Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda, p.16

Community members interviewed have blamed the general security restrictions for the calamities that have befallen the villages like long droughts, many deaths and hunger. They say this is because they no longer perform sacrifices, because the army has restricted the movement of people. Even if people went to shrines, the army would be suspicious, thinking they were planning a raid.

10. Banned Rituals and Sacrifices

The army claims that some elders carry out rituals to bless the youth so that they can go and raid, so to prevent such events, the army has banned camping in groups at particular locations like the Karimojong do when they are carrying out rituals and sacrifices. This has made the elders who are charged with guiding traditional activities redundant.

In some cases, rituals are carried out in undisclosed location although the number of people involved has to be very restricted. If they are unable to perform these rituals, the Karimojong believe that disasters will continue to strike them and cause more death. When asked how often they perform traditional rituals, elders in Kotido said,

Not often. It depends on the urgency of the occasion. It is difficult because even if we send the UPDF requests, they don't respond. And when we go ahead to carry out the ritual, we are forcibly stopped. The army say that they are not interested in the cultural practices, all they want is to take away the guns, and that nothing can stop their operations. So the elders resort to, making small rituals but in hiding. We can perform about three times in a month. The attitude towards the elders by the UPDF has been harsh because of the disarmament. And that is why there is a lot of drought and famine because elders can no longer pray for the rains and other misfortunes affecting the society.³⁶

11. Education and Business

Many villages are located far from the schools and so walking to and from school is extremely difficult during periods of famine and also times of insecurity. When children do not go to school, they end up being recruited in criminal groups and spend a lot of time engaged in unproductive activities like learning how to raid, gambling and excessive alcohol consumption which contribute to the cyclical patterns of insecurity.

³⁶ Focus Group Interview, May 11, 2010

Raiding has not affected us very much because, raiders operate at night when children have gone home. The only problem we have had in the past is that when warriors fail to raid animals, they become very angry and very destructive. They destroy property and beat people on the way. When they find children on their way to and from school, they harass them. During disarmament exercise, some children may miss school. But it is even worse when a raid happens because raiders leave a lot of havoc and sense of vulnerability to children. Going to school at that point becomes secondary.³⁷

³⁷ Conversation with Local Government officer, 12th May, 2010

Insecurity is known to have negatively affected the business environment in the entire region. Cattle dealers, small business owners, retailers in markets complained that insecurity affects their business because they are not allowed to operate beyond certain times and cattle movement is restricted. Both raiders and army have been known to be hostile to business actors. In a random conversation with traders in Kotido Market, some traders said,

When there is a curfew because a raid has taken place, when the army is searching for guns, we cannot stay out long and cannot leave home early to attend to our business. We are also fearful to go to the gardens because when the raiders find you there, they will punish you and sometimes kill. So we have to operate within the time limits which the army instructs us to observe. Sometimes we are forced not to do business at all when the situation becomes very insecure.³⁸

The business people interviewed argued that there are a lot of stolen items sold in the market. Ironsmiths and metal dealers said that they receive a lot of stolen items from all over the region. They know this because they are labeled and sometimes painted in particular colors. “If you buy an old ox-plough in the market now, it is most likely that it was stolen from somewhere.”³⁹ Cattle dealers say that it is now very dangerous to move animals from one place to another because they risk either getting stolen by warriors or confiscated by the army, a circumstance that explains why cattle business has dramatically reduced. When asked why business in cattle trade is not profiting, they said:

After disarmament started, warriors have been threatened and now fear to move to the town. They mostly stay in the bushes and it takes time to communicate to them. This has affected the supply of animals. For some who send animals, they send them with young people who sometimes are slow. This makes delivery of animals slow. Some buyers who directly buy from warriors cannot pay for all the animals, and they threaten to report them to the army

³⁸ Conversation with business people in the main Kotido market, 11th May, 2010

³⁹ Conversation with Black Smith in Kotido, 11th May 2010

*which forces the warriors to go into hiding. It is such conduct that is making work with the warriors more difficult.*⁴⁰

Traders are not happy with the way the army redistributes animals after it has recovered or confiscated them.

Business people and community members in Kotido believe the warriors have decided to keep on raiding and that they will not hand over the remaining guns because they are apparently harassed even if they have handed over some guns. If people's business fail due to insecurity, the gains achieved in the community in the long run are likely to be forgotten or misconstrued.

⁴⁰ Conversation with traders in Kotido Market, 11th May 2010

12. Cross Border Skirmishes

The Karamoja conflict is also heavily influenced by cross border dimensions. The Karamoja cluster extends beyond the borders of Uganda. Many critics agree that a disarmament strategy targeting the entire region is the most effective approach to a successful disarmament. They further argue that if disarmament is not carried out across the entire pastoralist region, the future is still bleak in Karamoja.

*We are pushing for joint disarmament across the Ugandan and Kenyan border but authorities in Kenya appear to be making less progress in this front.*⁴¹

Even if a joint disarmament exercise is the most strategic approach to stop small arms transfer in the region, the countries affected don't seem to agree on a joint program. "Kenya and Uganda would successfully carry out disarmament only if Sudan and Ethiopia did so. We require a regional approach which will be helped by intensive community policing"⁴²

If there is no regional based approach to disarmament, it is going to make the work of the UPDF in Uganda extremely difficult as more guns will keep coming in from the other borders.

Some local communities seem to be more organized but collectively they have mixed perceptions of disarmament. Therefore, they cooperate and share resources between themselves and as long as these communities maintain this relationship across the borders, small arms will continuously proliferate in the region and more raiding will continue. Meanwhile attacks continue to be launched from neighbouring clans in Kenya into Uganda. "The warriors who killed aid workers on February 10, 2010, in Pokot are believed to have been on their way back from a failed raid in Kenya"⁴³

13. Gender Roles

Gender roles in Karamoja are changing and although men remain dominant in decision making, the conflict is increasingly contracting this space. This is because most men are the ones who own and

⁴¹ Conversation with Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP) officer, 28th May, 2010.

⁴² Olandason Wanyama, Newvision, *Kenya Not Ready To Disarm Warriors*, Tuesday, August 11 2009

⁴³ Telephone Interview with NGO worker in Moroto, 14th September 2010

use guns and are therefore targeted by the UPDF for disarmament. Men are also the ones who run away from the police and army and stay in the bush for fear of disarmament. In this situation, women find themselves having to make most of the decisions at home while taking care of the children as well. In the long run, this is going to give women more space to make decisions and with more civil society interventions, they will be able to address inter community conflict as they are not the primary orchestrators of violence.

Strengthening Early Warning Systems

- Early warning indicators for conflict in Karamoja are complex to read because the situation changes so fast. The army has been accused by the community members that its strategies in protection and recovery of animals are ineffective. They have angered a number of community members and the communities have questioned the commitment of the government in helping Karamoja. If these feelings of frustrations continue among the Karimojong, they will become more closed and resistant to efforts aimed at reducing the number of guns in their communities. Community members will re-arm through their links across the porous borders so as to manage their security and protect their animals.
- Peace meetings in Karamoja usually take place after raids have taken place instead of before and regularly. They are short-lived because their resolutions are easily violated by some community members. There is need for further facilitation and for frequent peace meetings so that all the communities involved in the peace agreement are aware of what is happening on a regular basis. The danger is that if frequent violations of peace meeting resolutions continue, they will reinforce the violent clashes and counter-attacks which will lead to more loss of property and lives culminating in escalation of insecurity and poverty.
- There is fear among the Karimojong that the number of livestock is reducing in the region due to animal theft, weak strategies of Kraal protection leading to mass raiding and fast spread of diseases among animals. Reduced number of animals will lead to more competition and intense raiding. Due to the reduction in livestock numbers and negative patterns of rainfall, local communities are trying other means of production like farming in wet zones and in the southern part of the region which receive higher levels of rainfall. However, this is causing land disputes between the host communities and new migrants. If not checked, it is likely to spark off another land conflict and cause violent clashes leading to death and loss of property.
- Cattle business traders have been grossly affected by the conflict and insecurity in the region. Warriors who are their principle suppliers have relocated to the bush for fear of being arrested by the army. This has affected household income and taxes for the local government

and may cause more tension in the community and increase conflict with local government for failure to provide services to the community.

- There is wide spread concern that neighboring tribes across the borders of Kenya and Sudan are increasingly coming into Uganda to raid with the help of local contacts in the Ugandan villages^{iv}. This is dangerous because it threatens to trigger off international tensions between the IGAD countries. It also threatens to cause internal conflict amongst rivalry clans in Uganda.
- The lack of adequate infrastructure will and has had a direct negative bearing on quantity and quality schools. Minimal social amenities also will and have had an adverse effect on the lives of local communities who continuously suffer preventative diseases; poor school enrolment and low productivity of the communities have continued to hamper development as people suffer from extreme poverty.

Recommendations:

To Government of Uganda

- Train officers who should be sent to Karamoja on issues to do with Karamoja so that they are aware of the context in which they are going to operate. The civil-military department of the army needs to be facilitated better so that information is able to reach out to the people and sensitize the community on the benefit of disarmament and explain the role of the army. This will help government to build on the trust the community has with the police so as to help the local structures to respond to conflict.
- Closely consult with the communities in determining the correct locations for future infrastructure to be built so that the infrastructure built do not cause conflict but instead enhance positive contact between the communities.
- Increase in its efforts in sensitization of the existing programs so that the communities are able to appreciate government efforts. This will help in enhancing public accountability and transparency in managing programs and resources.
- Promote consultations between community elders, state security agencies and local representatives of the judiciary on security issues, in order to better define their respective roles in managing tensions and to strengthen the role of traditional peace building structures
- Monitor changes in patterns of settled farming by the Karimojong, in order to identify potential tensions with other settled communities at an early stage

To Civil Society

- Incorporate more conflict sensitive approaches to their work so that it does not negatively impact the conflict in the community.
- Empower community members with skills which will help them advocate for their rights and skills to enhance poverty alleviation through small income generating projects.

- Support community members in facilitating peace meetings and dialogues in the region because traditional peace building structures exist but with less resources to conduct inter tribal reconciliation initiatives.

To the Karimojong Community

- Local communities need to cooperate with government and civil society organization so as to inform programs that are being implemented in the region. Communities should ensure they maintain and keep their bargain met in peace agreements.

Conclusion

Conflicts over cattle, access to pasture and other resources, cross border incursions by groups from Kenya and Southern Sudan and a high level of small-arms proliferation and violence have all adversely affected Karamoja region. The lack of cross-border co-ordination on disarmament has also compounded the problem. Though a regional disarmament committee has been set up, it is not yet operational.

Community members in Karamoja want to see a gun-free and peaceful society. For this reason, they support disarmament in the region. They believe that when the community is disarmed, raids and killings will reduce and opportunities for peace initiatives will be explored on a more positive and consistent basis. However the community does not support the way it is carried out especially the cordon and search method.

Members suggest that disarmament should be impartial in all the areas so that some communities don't feel more vulnerable to attacks from other clans than others. Most people have a feeling that the government is not disarming every clan. Therefore it is in the interest of the government to ensure that all clans are disarmed at the same time.

Finally, the conflict and tension in Karamoja is complex. It should be viewed as a multi faceted conflict deeply fueled by lack of development projects and persistent natural disasters in the region. The Karamojong population is experiencing adverse pressure caused by climate change and economic shocks.

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Notes

ⁱ The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni issued a warning to change the command structure in the UPDF in Karamoja for failing to stop cattle raids in the region. “ if my commanders cannot end the disarmament exercise, then I will take over” See Olandason Wanyama, *Museveni Blasts Karamoja Army Commanders on Arms*, New Vision, May 17 2010, p.3

ⁱⁱ It is reported that about 26 UPDF soldiers died in the month of August after being attacked by warriors. It is believed that these fatal incidents occurred because of ‘operational weaknesses’. These events caused a reshuffle in the ground commanders by the Chief of Defense Forces. See: Simon Musasizi, *UPDF Under Fire in Karamoja*, The Observer, September 28, 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Monitor reported that, ‘Members under the Karamoja Parliamentary Group, said that they suspected that the warriors were getting guns from Southern Sudan and Kenya...if the Government did not improve on security on the borders, the disarmed Karimojong would be compelled to acquire more guns” See, Mary Karugaba, *Karimojong Getting More Guns*, Newvision, Thursday, July, 30, 2009. However, this is contested information that contradicts the Karamoja Parliamentary Group. The Military spokesman denied the information as not true, saying that the situation would be much worse if there were guns coming into the region. See: Olandason Wanyama, *No New Guns in Karamoja*, Newvision, Tuesday, August 4th 2009

^{iv} The security situation has been improving in Karamoja but in the past few months, the region has experienced an influx of raiders from Kenya and Sudan who work with their local contacts in Uganda to launch cattle raids. “...noted that cross-border rustling had taken a new twist with rustlers from Kenya conniving with those in Uganda to raid neighboring tribes. Those from across the border like Turkana ally with Jie to raid those neighboring them. The Pokot in Kenya ally with their counterparts in Uganda to raid Pian” See New Vision, *Disarm or Face Jail, Karimojong Warned*, Monday 1st March 2010