



PEOPLE'S PEACEMAKING PERSPECTIVES MARCH 2012

Uganda

THE KARAMOJA REGION OF NORTH EASTERN UGANDA has long experienced serious conflict and insecurity, severe poverty and low levels of development. Communities have been involved in cycles of cattle raiding and counter-raiding, including with border communities in Kenya and South Sudan.

In recent years, important successes have been achieved in reducing small arms availability, addressing insecurity, resolving conflict and increasing development opportunities for the people of Karamoja. In late 2011, the Government of Uganda announced an end to its five-year military-led disarmament campaign in the region and de-emphasised disarmament within the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP), the main government security and development framework. The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) claim to have collected over 30,000 firearms, representing more than 80 percent of the estimated number of firearms illegally held by the Karamojong. The Government's assessment is that the security situation has improved dramatically throughout Karamoja, and that any remaining challenges of 'ordinary criminality' can be dealt with by the police. However this optimism is not shared by many communities, who continue to express deep concerns about their own insecurity and the lack of viable and appropriate livelihood options.

Successfully addressing these ongoing challenges will require renewed commitment from security and development actors, both within and outside the government. These efforts must respond to and build upon the priorities and capacities of the Karamojong themselves. With its existing engagement in Karamoja, the European Union (EU) is well placed to help address these concerns.

KEY OUTCOMES

- **Communities' perceptions of safety and security need to guide** decisions regarding civilian disarmament and security.
- **Joint planning and building trust with communities is essential for a successful transition from UPDF-led to police-led civilian disarmament.** Equipping and training the police will be crucial to ensure they can serve communities throughout Karamoja.
- **International co-operation and commitment can help to secure Karamoja's international borders** from the influx of firearms and cross-border conflict with communities in Kenya and South Sudan.
- **Engaging the Karamojong is crucial to ensuring that development is conflict-sensitive.**

The People's Peacemaking Perspectives project

The People's Peacemaking Perspectives project is a joint initiative implemented by Conciliation Resources and Saferworld and financed under the European Commission's Instrument for Stability. The project provides European Union institutions with analysis and recommendations based on the opinions and experiences of local people in a range of countries and regions affected by fragility and violent conflict.

"Due to the poor response and protection by UPDF, people are becoming more inclined towards re-arming themselves – and are studying the situation very closely."

Participant, Moroto District

Findings and Recommendations

1.

Communities' perceptions of safety and security need to guide decisions regarding civilian disarmament and security.

The optimism expressed by the Government of Uganda about the security situation in Karamoja is not shared by many community members consulted as part of this assessment process, who think that cattle raids and attacks by armed groups have increased in recent months. They complain that the UPDF has failed to protect them from attacks by communities that have not been disarmed as recently or comprehensively as they have been, including by groups from neighbouring Kenya and South Sudan. Several international and local civil society actors working on peace, security and human rights in Karamoja also view recent announcements as premature.

"Traumatised communities need to see the [UPDF] forces more in order to feel reassured and secure. This trauma will reduce as the fear in the public begins to reduce and people become more confident about their security. What is needed now is for the army to conduct 'psych-ops'."

UPDF spokesperson, Moroto District

The continued insecurity felt by many communities poses a significant threat to the region's long-term stability and development. The perceptions of unequal disarmament of communities, coupled with complaints of inadequate protection by the Ugandan army and police, threaten to increase incentives for Karamojong communities to re-arm themselves. Indeed, while the majority of community members consulted want to see guns removed from their communities, many remain reluctant to give up their weapons because they fear for their security. They argue that neither UPDF nor police deployment extends far enough into the villages and that they do

not respond effectively when people are attacked.

As the government considers how it will continue to manage its responsibility to protect the communities of Karamoja, it is important that major security decisions take into account public perceptions of safety and security. Ultimately, confidence in and compliance with disarmament, will be higher when communities feel secure.

"Response by the army to cattle raids is very slow. They are ineffective in the recovery of stolen cattle. They conduct biased security operations. They confiscate livestock belonging to innocent people."

Elder, Nadunget Sub-County, Moroto District

RECOMMENDATION

- The EU and other external actors should support the Ugandan authorities to undertake regular critical security reviews that involve communities and address their perceptions and priorities.

2.

Joint planning and building trust with communities is essential for a successful transition from UPDF-led to police-led civilian disarmament.

"Put police at the forefront of disarmament and security in Karamoja."

Participant, thematic meeting, Moroto District

Despite the disarmament process, many community members believe that people in Karamoja would re-arm if given the opportunity. There is therefore a continued need for long-term small arms control measures, but their success will be contingent upon communities feeling secure and trusting those responsible for protecting them and their assets. Community opinions on the UPDF and the police and their respective roles are very mixed.

In relation to civilian disarmament, the transition from a military-led to a police-led process has been broadly welcomed by communities. Indeed, the majority of community members consulted welcome the deployment of the police in their communities and indicated their willingness to work with police on disarmament activities because of the humane manner with which they treat civilians. This for them is in contrast to their previous experiences of forced civilian disarmament, which was characterised by human rights abuses and violence against civilians by the UPDF. Community members consulted regularly expressed their resentment at the treatment they received from the UPDF particularly during the cordon and search operations that formed part of previous disarmament exercises. This undermined trust in the UPDF and prevented a more collaborative relationship from developing. However, since the tactics changed to intelligence-led operations with a greater role for the police, abuses have declined dramatically.

Children play in a manyatta, the traditional semi-permanent homesteads of the Karamajong people in Moroto District during Saferworld's Karamoja conflict and security assessment in 2010.

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This transition presents the opportunity to develop community-based weapons collection initiatives that engage effectively with communities, build trust between them and the police and increase communities' willingness to give up their guns voluntarily. But it remains important that both the UPDF and police behave in a way that respects human rights in order to avoid repeating the experiences of the past.

"We were told the UPDF came to remove guns from the Karamojong. Now that they have got them, what are they [UPDF] still doing around? Their presence is to us to mean we still have guns, yet that is not true, we no longer have guns."

Elder, Nadunget Sub-County, Moroto District

In terms of security provision, communities remain concerned about the threats they face and how these will be countered. Despite the deployment of the police's Anti-Stock Theft Unit, which operates jointly with the UPDF to deal with cattle raids, given the continued low numbers of police, their lack of presence across the entire region, and their inadequate resources, communities express considerable scepticism about the ability of the police to prevent or to react to incidents, or to recover stolen cattle. As a result, many community members said that they would prefer a continued strong military presence to ensure security from external and cross-border attacks.

"Animal recoveries are not taking place now in our communities, and we doubt this role being handled by the police officers. So many animals have got lost and we have not been able to get our animals back since the nearby army detach [base] was removed. The police are slow and should not stop at arresting criminals, but should also follow criminals who have stolen our animals."

Community member, Nadunget Sub-County, Moroto District

International and local civil society groups working on peace and security in Karamoja welcome plans for the police to assume greater responsibility for security provision and civilian disarmament in Karamoja. But they are equally concerned that the transition should be gradual and well managed in order to protect the gains secured to date. The UPDF have said that they will continue tracking cattle raids, which seems to indicate a continued role for the army in maintaining security in Karamoja.

Community perceptions clearly point to a continued fear of insecurity and doubts about the ability of the state to provide the necessary protection. Given the mixed community views on the UPDF and the police, lack of clarity on the respective roles of the security services in the region could well exacerbate these fears and motivate communities to re-arm. It will be crucial for the police to build relationships with communities and obtain a good understanding of the problems they face if they are to take more of a lead role in security provision in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The transition from UPDF to police responsibility for civilian disarmament and security in Karamoja needs to be planned, joined-up, transparent and well-communicated to communities. It should also involve civilian authorities and other government and non-state security and development actors to ensure effective security provision and small arms control while remaining responsive to community needs and priorities.
- Continued support to the police is crucial to enable them to deploy in sufficient numbers and with the necessary resources to respond to communities' needs across Karamoja.
- Community-based and civil society initiatives on small arms control and civilian disarmament should be supported – enabling people to understand different perspectives and motivations regarding gun ownership and disarmament options. Special efforts should be made to engage the youth, as well as those who currently encourage raiding and arms possession, including women, who can hold traditional attitudes regarding masculinity and local councillors, who have information on who has arms and can facilitate consultation with communities.
- Undertaking a review of the civilian disarmament process to date would be a useful step towards setting out best practice that can be institutionalised and applied to ensure accountable and lawful conduct of civilian disarmament activities in future.

3.

International co-operation and commitment can help to secure Karamoja's international borders

from the influx of firearms and cross-border conflict with communities in Kenya and South Sudan.

The porous borders between Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan make it easier for some communities to re-arm, as well as to evade disarmament processes. They also place communities in Karamoja at risk of attack. Community members in Rupa and Nadunget sub-counties reported continued raids on the Matheniko by their neighbours, the Jie, Pokot and Tepeth, whom they believe have access to guns from across the border with Kenya and South Sudan. South Sudan in particular seems to be a major source of cheap firearms and ammunition.

Communities also reported an increase in cross-border attacks, citing the July 2011 attack when the Matheniko (Uganda) in alliance with the Turkana (Kenya) attacked the Tepeth (Uganda), raiding over 2,000 head of cattle and other livestock. Hundreds of warriors were believed to have taken part and community members consulted feared that the Tepeth and the Pokot (Uganda) would undertake revenge attacks on the Matheniko. These cycles of violence are fuelled by small arms availability and inter-ethnic animosity, and remain a strong threat to people's lives and livelihoods in Karamoja.

While some peace efforts have been made between communities – including across the borders – communities feel that many of the agreements and resolutions have not been sufficiently followed up, and so relationships have deteriorated again. Civil society working on peace and security issues in Karamoja have called for bilateral or co-ordinated regional action to address cross-border insecurity and the proliferation of small arms.

UPDF officers acknowledged that some ethnic groups living in the border areas enjoy strong links with groups across the borders, and thereby greater access to illegal weapons, or a place to store or hide arms during disarmament exercises. The UPDF plans to further strengthen its presence along the international borders with Kenya and South Sudan to deal more strongly with cross-border threats and to control the flow of arms across the borders. They aim to enhance the existing military liaison with Kenya and to forge a similar relationship with the military in South Sudan, to agree border protection strategies and address cross-border insecurity. They also called for increased efforts to promote cross-border inter-ethnic peace dialogue and reconciliation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renewed commitment is needed from the governments of Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan to implement the existing agreements designed to address cross-border small arms trafficking and insecurity. Of particular relevance are:
 - The provisions on joint planning and operations to reduce arms trafficking, demand for arms and criminal activities in the border areas set out in the 'Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms'.
 - The 'Conflict Early Warning (CEWARN) Protocol' which provides a framework for addressing cross-border pastoralist conflicts in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region through incident and situation monitoring and analysis to inform responses by the authorities and other stakeholders.
- Supporting local-level collaboration between police, military and customs officials and local governments – in complement to the national programmes mentioned above – can also significantly contribute to improving security on the ground and reducing the flow of arms across the borders.
- Continued support for cross-border inter-community dialogue and follow-up mechanisms is necessary to address the negative relationships currently in play between ethnic groups.

4. Engaging the Karamojong is crucial to ensuring that development is conflict-sensitive.

"We hear a lot on radios about goats, pigs and other good things being given out but we do not see any of these in our villages. When we are in town people show us big goats, sometimes referred to as NAADS goats, but these belong to the leaders. Ordinary people in our villages don't have them."

Community member, Rupa Sub-County, Moroto District

Communities consulted as part of this assessment hope that security will improve so that development can take place in their region. However, community feedback on existing development projects such as the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS) and the KIDDP demonstrate the risk that such projects can inadvertently fuel conflict. Community members complained that they have not seen the benefits from these projects and believe that many government projects have been hijacked by the elite. Communities clearly expressed high expectations that they will benefit from the increased government focus on the region, but they also explained that who receives such benefits is often a factor in conflicts between and within communities.

International and local civil society actors working in Karamoja confirm these challenges and point to the high public expectations about development projects, fuelled by a history of food aid due to the chronically food-insecure context. At the same time, they report a general lack of public understanding of these development initiatives and how they could participate in them. Lack of community input into development projects and the criteria used for determining who benefits from them,

is likely to aggravate intra-communal conflicts.

According to one of the participants in Moroto District, the karachunas (warrior youths) often ask him: "How do we survive after you've taken away the guns?" Community members called for initiatives that target the disarmed youths as a priority, so that they are not lured back to cattle raiding, while development actors in Karamoja acknowledge the lack of alternative livelihoods to cattle raiding.

Community members consulted in the assessment emphasised the importance of agro-pastoralism as the most viable form of livelihood for the Karamojong. They also have many suggestions for improving the quality and health of livestock and supporting pastoralist livelihoods. The government and many external actors working in Karamoja accept the need to diversify livelihoods in the region, but these ideas are not always based on community feedback and preferences.

The government's 'Karamoja Action Plan for Food Security' aims to address the region's chronic food insecurity, improve livelihoods opportunities and support sustainable food production. However, some community members as well as civil society groups have expressed concerns that disproportionate attention is being given to crop production at the expense of pastoralism or agro-pastoralism, and that this could become a driver of conflict. In particular, much of the agricultural development is targeted at the 'green belt' of Karamoja – the area with the best water resources and therefore valuable as dry-season grazing for cattle-keeping communities. This is likely to worsen

"All people must benefit from all government programmes. The idea of piloting projects will not work well with the Karamojong communities who feel some people are more favoured than others... these will automatically contribute to conflicts."

Peace mobiliser, Lokopo Sub-County, Napak District

inter-group conflict relating to access to water and grazing, which could in turn exacerbate food insecurity.

Communities in Karamoja experience a mix of conflict, security and development challenges. While there is strong enthusiasm for increased development to occur in the region, community concerns are clear that such development needs to be equitable and strongly informed by community views.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Influence and support the Ugandan authorities and civil society actors to plan and implement participatory and conflict-sensitive development initiatives. This includes:
 - Involving communities in the planning and implementation of development interventions, so that communities' conflict and security and development priorities are adequately addressed.
 - Paying particular attention to developing appropriate eligibility and selection criteria to ensure that targeting of interventions does not further fuel inter- or intra-community divisions.
 - Clearly explaining all programmes to communities in order to manage expectations.
- Support initiatives that provide youth who have been disarmed with alternative, appropriate livelihood options and training opportunities.
- Support the Government of Uganda to further explore options for simultaneously supporting viable pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and crop production in Karamoja, in close consultation with communities living there.

Case study

James (26 years) is a parish chief in Lokopo Sub-County, Napak District. Due to his position, James is perceived to be collaborating with the authorities and his home has been attacked a number of times. He lost his livestock to raids in 2009 and has now fled his village.

"Being a parish chief is a challenge. That is why I don't stay in my village. Some youths accuse the chiefs for bringing disarmament. They pretend to talk to us well only during

daytime. But at night they come for you and want to finish you off.

"The issue of insecurity in the villages has affected trade in my community. Rich cattle traders are no longer coming to buy cattle as they used to. Communities have been displaced from their original villages. HIV/AIDS has come to the villages and this is brought by those people who had fled to the towns and now have returned home. Local authorities stay with the people

and they know all what is happening but there is very little they can do. I encourage NGOs to increase their presence in the community by supporting meetings between communities and security forces. Let all villages have meetings with the security forces because villagers have certain concerns which cannot come out openly at one single meeting. The people need to be educated about the laws of the country and need hope."

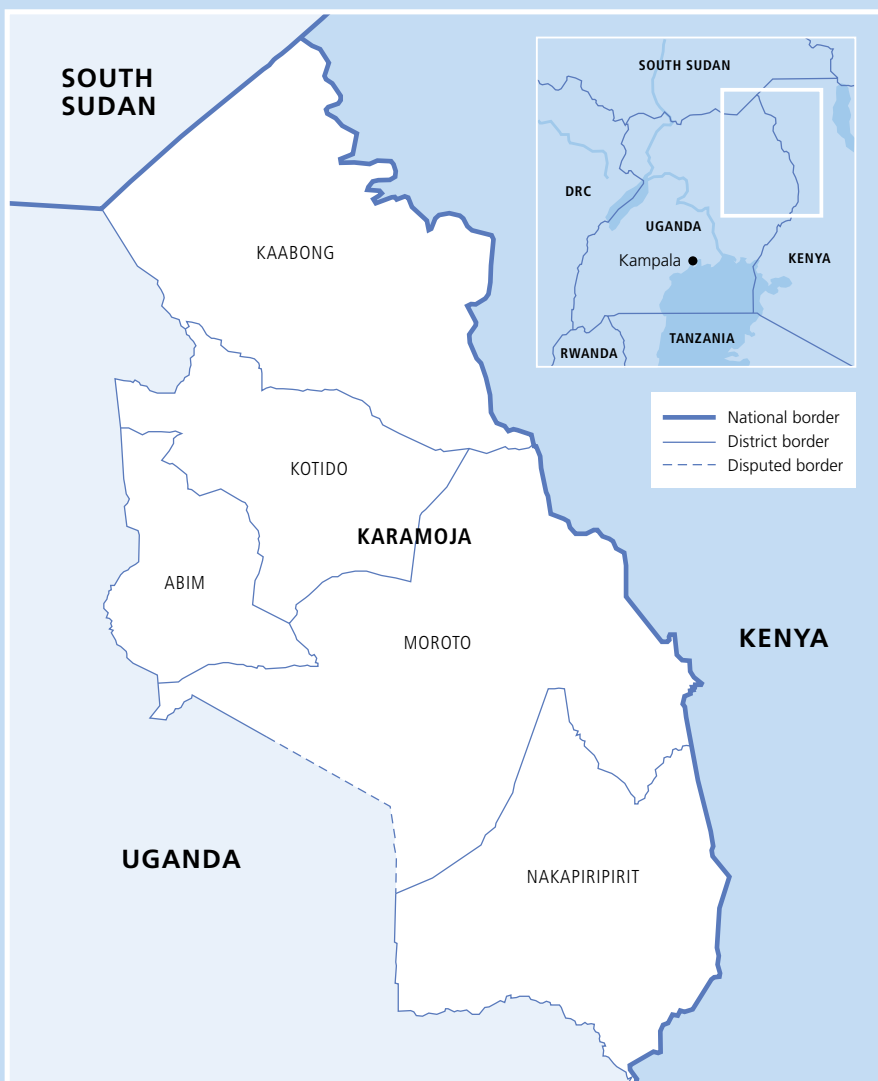
Methodology

The findings and recommendations in this Policy Brief were generated from analysis conducted by Saferworld in the districts of Moroto and Napak in Karamoja region. The analysis builds on Saferworld's *Karamoja Conflict and Security Assessment* which was an extensive participatory assessment conducted in 2010. That assessment investigated the underlying issues contributing to conflict and insecurity in Karamoja, in a way that allowed Karamojong respondents to steer the direction of the research.

The current analysis reviews and tracks some of the key dynamics that were identified by the assessment. During the course of 2011 and into 2012, Saferworld conducted a series of thematic meetings with relevant actors from local government, security and law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations and international partners. The meetings focused on a number of key themes emerging from the first assessment, and included: civilian disarmament; community relationships with the police; human rights issues; and conflict-sensitive

development. The purpose of these meetings was to test whether the findings from the baseline assessment still held true, how they might have changed or how issues might have been addressed since we completed the assessment, and whether new issues had arisen in the meantime.

Saferworld also facilitated dialogue meetings between communities and security, peacebuilding and development actors, with the added purpose of discussing what more could be done to address these issues.



REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The findings in this Policy Brief were drawn from a wider report entitled *Tracking key conflict and security dynamics in Karamoja – an update* conducted by Saferworld under the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project. For full details of the project and the research please visit:

www.saferworld.org.uk/PPP

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