Technical Report for the Karamoja Development Partners Group

THE RETURN OF CONFLICT IN KARAMOJA, UGANDA: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

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The Return of Conflict in Karamoja, Uganda: Community Perspectives

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After nearly 10 years of relative peace, conflict and insecurity returned to the Karamoja sub-region of northeastern Uganda starting in 2019. This assessment investigates this resumption of conflict and insecurity from the perspective of the communities most involved and affected. Using an approach adapted from participatory epidemiology (PE), participatory methods were used systematically to enable local people to review and analyze conflict and related factors. These methods were used in purposively selected locations in multiple sub-counties in the six districts of Abim, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, Moroto, and Napak. The assessment took place between March and June 2022, with approximately 15 days of field work in each district. Between 175 and 300 people participated in each of the six districts, with participants grouped into categories of male youth, women (mixed ages), and men (older than youth). A total of 1,269 people participated in this assessment. Findings are arranged as answers to the questions we investigated and are covered briefly below.

What are the impacts and outcomes of the return of conflict and insecurity? According to participants, impacts of the recent conflict include both immediate and longer-term effects. The primary immediate impacts are loss of livestock, negative impacts on farming, and loss of lives. Livestock losses are primarily loss of cattle, but are also loss of smaller ruminants. The loss of oxen makes cultivation difficult for those who use animal traction, and the threat of insecurity means that people are reluctant to access their fields. Young men are the group most likely to experience casualties due to their roles as both protectors and raiders. Boys working as herders may also be wounded or killed. The effects of raids on families are pronounced, as a family may lose their primary assets (livestock) and one or more able-bodied male(s) at the same time. For agro-pastoralists, the loss of both livestock and the ability to cultivate undermines the ability of households to cope with shocks, including insecurity, drought, and increased commodity prices. Returning to the three main impacts listed, at least two of these three main impacts were listed by participants in all six assessment districts. In all locations except Kaabong, the most pressing immediate impact was loss of livestock. The most critical longer-term outcome as reported by all participant groups was increased hunger, followed by increased poverty.

Where are conflict and insecurity occurring? Conflict and insecurity are most clearly manifest in the form of cattle raids. These take place in known, predictable, and understood locations in almost all instances and largely follow the administrative borders of the districts, which

themselves align with ethnic, tribal, or territorial group delineations. Using participatory mapping, participants ranked the intensity and likelihood of conflict occurring at each of these "hotspots" at the time of assessment and illustrated the directions that the raiders travel from.

How has insecurity changed over time? Participants used important events to demarcate specific periods in time and then scored the relative severity of different types of insecurity, such as raids, internal thefts, etc. in each time period. Focusing on the experience of livestock raids, participants in all six districts reported that raids were substantially and significantly more intense at present than at any point in the past twenty years.

What form does the conflict and insecurity take? Participants in each district weighted the severity of different types of conflict and insecurity. All participants in all locations felt that livestock raiding was the most severe form of insecurity at present, followed by livestock theft (in which fewer animals are taken and fewer people are involved than in livestock raids). Differences in perceptions by participant groups increased with other forms of insecurity after these first two forms of insecurity, but overall congruence in the rankings remained high, indicating broad commonality across both participant groups and assessment sites. Regardless of age and gender, participants ranked attacks on women at similar levels.

Who is involved in conflict and insecurity? Participants generated lists of all the different actors involved in the conflict and insecurity and then weighted the extent of the actors' involvement, with a focus on livestock raids. Actors are involved in livestock raids in diverse ways, including direct engagement, support, influence, benefit, orchestration, inaction, and profit, among others. All three categories of participants (male youth, men, and women) felt that male youth were the primary actors in the conflict but generated a list of 31 different categories of actors involved in raids. Types of actors who received the highest ranking include community members (youth, seers, and enemies within), security sector actors (Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and Local Defence Units (LDUs)), private sector animal traders, and unspecified outside visitors. In addition to agreeing with the list of the 31 types of actors involved in conflict, key informants in government positions added several more private sector and community actors. This list illustrates that local participants and government officials view the return of conflict as multifaceted, extensive in scope, and including an explicitly commercial element.

What are the root causes of raids? Broad agreement also existed by participant group on the root causes of raids. By far, hunger was scored as the primary root cause of conflict, though male youth ascribed more weight to hunger than did either men or women. Hunger has reportedly increased in recent years due, in part, to the COVID-19 market closures, prolonged droughts, and a rise in global food prices. Other important root causes included greed for livestock, youth idleness, and the conflict between the Jie and the Turkana and resulting spillover effects. Next in relevance were stress of needing school fees and greed for money. The differences in root causes were greater by location than by participant group. Hunger still scored high overall, though it was seen as much less important in Karenga and somewhat less important in Napak. Other root causes scored almost as high as hunger in specific districts, including greed for livestock in Karenga and the Jie-Turkana conflict in Karenga, Napak, and Kaabong.

What factors escalate conflict? Participants described different layers and types of factors that escalate conflict, including the actions of stakeholders, the weaknesses of interventions designed to promote peace and security, community-driven escalators, and access to and the availability of weapons in the region. There were four main categories of intervention weaknesses: weakness in military actions, problems with local peace processes, the role of local institutions, and poor implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Uganda and Kenya that was designed to promote peaceful coexistence. Of these four categories, participants in all categories and in all locations felt that weakness in military actions was by far the most significant escalating factor. This category included weaknesses in past disarmaments and in military actions as well as malevolent actions on the part of the security forces, such as the indiscriminate impounding of animals. We argue that these four categories of escalators reinforce and compound each other to contribute to the return of conflict.

Via the voices of community participants, this assessment effectively answers many of the questions that underly the return of conflict and insecurity as exemplified through livestock raiding. Conflict and raids are occurring in known and predictable locations, involve a multitude of actors from both within and outside the communities, and are driven by multifaceted but understood factors and causes. These aspects are also known by many of the key informants working in a government or civil society capacity interviewed for this assessment.

This assessment highlights the cyclical and self-reinforcing nature of raids and the resulting insecurity in Karamoja. Raids are driven by issues such as hunger, livestock poverty, greed, debt, and conflict with other groups. These aspects also *result* from raids, which creates a negative cycle

of raiding. Add to this cycle the phenomenon of revenge and retaliatory attacks, and a self-reinforcing negative cycle is established that is extremely difficult to break.

This assessment highlights both the challenges and opportunities for stakeholders to address the resumption of conflict in the sub-region. On the positive side, the relative peace that existed for almost a decade prior to 2019 indicates that stability is achievable, and that local lives and livelihoods benefit greatly from such stability. Efforts to reinvigorate and improve upon the local and external mechanisms that allowed this period of peace to exist are paramount. This assessment concludes with a list of immediate, intermediate, and longer-term interventions to address the factors contributing to the return of insecurity. These include:

- Immediate actions: a) address the chronic food insecurity in the region; b) disarm groups in Uganda and Kenya while protecting lives, property, and human rights; and c) implement local conflict resolution activities, building off alliances created during peaceful periods and seeking to reverse the losses to assets and relations that have taken place in recent years.

- Intermediate recovery phase: support communities to recover from the impacts of conflict and insecurity through support based on community-driven and sustainable models for livestock-based, crop-based, and diversified livelihood systems.

- Long-term actions: design and implement peace-building activities between and within communities and effective conflict early warning systems. Develop and implement a multi-stakeholder coordinated strategy on peace, justice, and conflict resolution that takes into account the conflict early warning systems and includes proactive responses to spikes in conflict.

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The Karamoja sub-region of northeastern Uganda is home to more than a million people who engage primarily in pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood systems. These long-standing livelihood systems are well-suited to the high variation in rainfall that characterizes this and other dryland regions, but these systems require mobility and negotiated access to natural resources to function properly. The sub-region has experienced marginalization from the central state since colonial times, and was long considered off-limits due to insecurity and presumed ungovernability.[1] This insecurity primarily took the form of cattle raiding, a practice common throughout pastoral areas of eastern Africa as a means to redistribute wealth, particularly following ecological shocks such as droughts.[2] Some authors consider raiding to also be an adaptive response to sociopolitical uncertainty faced by peripheral populations,[3] as well as an integral part of pastoral identity and regional culture.[4] However, the impact of decades of cattle raiding in Karamoja had numerous negative impacts that reached a peak in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These impacts included a collapse in markets, limited economic investment and underdevelopment, a breakdown in local governance, limited access to health care and education, and the absence of national and international humanitarian and development programming.

Violent cattle raids in Karamoja decreased starting in the mid to late 2000s. Research by Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University from 2013–2018 showed a marked decrease in security threats and incidents, leading to improvements in household livelihoods and mobility for both males and females.[5] Communities across the sub-region credited these improvements primarily to the government-led disarmament campaign that began in 2006, despite allegations in the initial years of heavy-handedness, human rights abuses, and negative impacts on livelihoods.[6] The local Nabilatuk Resolution and the Moruitit Resolution in southern and northern Karamoja respectively were extremely effective in both mitigating and resolving livestock theft. Enforced by a combination of customary and official mechanisms, these resolutions required culprits to return double the number of livestock stolen, plus one additional animal for the peace committee and tracking team.[7] Marked and far-reaching positive changes took place during this period of relative peace, including growth and expansion of markets, reopening of grazing areas that had long been inaccessible due to clashes between groups, cultivation of new areas, and economic development of larger towns.

Security in the sub-region began to deteriorate in approximately 2019, with variations depending on location. While initially hoped to be temporary setback, it soon became apparent that various forms of insecurity were on the rise, including livestock raids, small-scale thefts, road ambushes, killing in urban areas, disputes over land, and sexual violence against women and girls.

[1] J. Barber, *Imperial Frontier* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1968); M. Mirzeler and C. Young, "Pastoral Politics in the Northeast Periphery in Uganda: AK-47 as Change Agent," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 3 (2000): 407–29.

[2] D. Hendrickson, J. Armon, and R. Mearns, "The Changing Nature of Conflict and Famine Vulnerability: The Case of Livestock Raiding in Turkana District, Kenya," *Disasters* 22, no. 3 (1998): 185–99.

[3] S. Gray, B. Wiebusch, M. A. Little, P. W. Leslie, and I. L. Pike, "Cattle Raiding, Cultural Survival, and Adaptability of East African Pastoralists," *Current Anthropology* 44, no. S5 (2003): S3–S30.

[4] S. Gray, "A Memory of Loss: Ecological Politics, Local History, and the Evolution of Karimojong Violence," *Human Organization* 59, no. 4 (2000): 401–18.

[5] K. Howe, E. Stites, and D. Akabwai, "'We Now Have Relative Peace': Changing Conflict Dynamics in Northern Karamoja, Uganda" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2015); J. Burns, G. Bekele, and D. Akabwai, "Livelihood Dynamics in Northern Karamoja: A Participatory Baseline Study for the Growth Health and Governance Program" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2013); E. Stites, K. Howe, T. Redda, and D. Akabwai, "A Better Balance: Revitalized Pastoral Livelihoods in Karamoja, Uganda" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2016); E. Stites, K. Howe, and D. Akabwai, "Five Years On: Livelihood Advances, Innovations, and Continuing Challenges in Karamoja, Uganda" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2017); E. Stites and K. Howe, "From the Border to the Bedroom: Changing Conflict Dynamics in Karamoja, Uganda," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, no. 1 (2019): 137–59.

[6] Human Rights Watch, "'Get the Gun!' Human Rights Violations by Uganda's National Army in Law Enforcement Operations in Karamoja Region" (Human Rights Watch, New York, NY, 2007); E. Stites and D. Akabwai, "'We Are Now Reduced to Women': Impacts of Forced Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda," *Nomadic Peoples* 14, no. 2 (2010): 24–43.

[7] Howe et al., "'We Now Have Relative Peace;'" Stites and Howe, "From the Border to the Bedroom."

Communities were placing their animals back into protected kraals[8] near Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) barracks, women were reluctant to collect natural resources, and international actors were curtailing their project activities. While various theories exist about the return of conflict (see accompanying knowledge synthesis), there was a dearth of information from those most affected and involved. In an effort to fill this gap, Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU) worked with the peace actors to design this assessment to focus on the local perceptions and understandings of the resumption of conflict.

MOTIVATION FOR THE WORK AND OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment was a response to the widespread resumption of conflict in the Karamoja sub-region that began in around 2019. This return of violent insecurity came after five to ten years (depending on location and perspective) of relative peace following the forced disarmament program initiated by the Government of Uganda (GoU) and implemented by the UPDF that began in 2006. Unlike the occasional sporadic security incidents that had occurred in preceding years, the insecurity that started in 2019 was more widespread and quickly proved more disruptive to daily life, livelihoods, and commerce in the region. Research by a team from KRSU in 2020[9] and in 2021[10] into the impacts of COVID-19 in Karamoja confirmed the pervasiveness of conflict in the region: participants reported that conflict and insecurity were much more serious problems in their day-to-day lives than was COVID-19.

KRSU convenes monthly meetings of international donors in a Karamoja Development Partners Group (KDPG), and it was at one such meeting that the request for in-depth research into the return of conflict in the region arose. Additionally, peace actors working on the Karamoja region made a similar request to KRSU. There have been other analyses of the security situation in the region (see the accompanying knowledge synthesis), but there was no in-depth analysis of the situation from the perspective of local people. Building upon a track record of participatory approaches, the KRSU team designed methods to engage with local communities to understand the conflict from their perspective. The findings from these efforts are presented in this report.

METHODOLOGY
Assessment sites and participant selection

In selecting the assessment sites, the research team prioritized the north-central districts of Karamoja as areas thought to be experiencing the most consistent conflict and insecurity. These included Abim, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, Moroto, and Napak. Within these districts we purposively selected sub-counties and villages, again focusing on known conflict hotspots. We attempted to visit as many sub-counties in each district as possible to assess both the differences in conflict experiences and the potential spillover impacts from conflict in other areas. In each sub-county we worked in between one and five villages, with variations depending on the size of the sub-county.

This assessment used tools adapted from participatory epidemiology (PE). PE emerged as an approach used by veterinarians to study livestock diseases in Eastern Africa in the early 1990s and was based on the recognition that pastoralists generally possessed the greatest knowledge regarding the health of their animals.[11] Although many studies purport to be "participatory" in nature, many do not entail the systematic and in-depth community-level discussions, list making, and scoring exercises inherent in the PE approach. A KRSU team successfully adapted and applied PE methods to a study of women's knowledge of the root causes of malnutrition in Karamoja in 2018.[12] The

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[8] The protected kraals first emerged in 2006 as part of the active phase of the disarmament campaign at that time. Despite attempts to locate an official policy or directive, we have never been able to find one that established the protected kraals or gave guidance to military leaders or communities as to the ways in which the protected kraals were meant to function. Although the protected kraals did provide some protection to the animals of those communities who had surrendered their weapons, there were myriad complaints about the effectiveness of the system and the repercussions for animal health, community management of animals, and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) malfeasance and corruption. See E. Stites and D. Akabwai, "Changing Roles, Shifting Risks: Livelihood Impacts of Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2009); and Stites and Akabwai, "'We Are Now Reduced to Women.'"

[9] R. Lotira, A. Catley, and M. Ayele, "Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts in Karamoja, Uganda" (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU), Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Kampala, Uganda, 2020).

[10] R. Lotira and M. Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment in Karamoja, Uganda: Key Trends One Year after the End of COVID-19 Restrictions" (KRSU, Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Kampala, Uganda, May 2022).

[11] A. Allepuz, A., K. de Balogh, R. Aguanno, M. Heilmann, and D. Beltran-Alcrudo, "Review of Participatory Epidemiology Practices in Animal Health (1980-2015) and Future Practice Directions," *PLoS ONE* 12, no. 1 (2017): e0169198.

[12] A. Catley, A., R. Lotira, and C. Hopkins, "Hidden Peaks: Women's Knowledge on the Seasonality and Root Causes of Child Malnutrition in Karamoja, Uganda and Their Programming Preferences" (KRSU, USAID/Uganda, UK aid, and Irish Aid, Kampala, 2018).

assessment for this report is the first that we know of to use the PE approach to investigate and document conflict.

In each village, we began with a general discussion with a combined group of men and women of different ages to introduce the assessment. In each district, we began with a general focus group discussion (FGD) to collect information on the existing forms of conflict and on locations where conflict (especially due to livestock raids) was occurring, i.e., the conflict hotspots. Using convenience sampling and the assistance of the local councilor (LCI)[13], we then convened three FGDs in each village, consisting of a group of men, a group of women of mixed ages, and a group of male youth. We intentionally separated male youth from other men in order to allow this age group to speak openly about their perceptions of and possible involvement in raiding activities. We conducted informed consent and explained that no compensation or incentives were to be provided for participation.

Table 1 lists the number of sub-counties and villages visited and the number of participants per district (see Annex 1 for a list of specific locations). The participatory assessment took 11 to 15 days per district. Fieldwork took place between March and June 2022.

We interviewed government officials and non-governmental organization (NGO) employees in addition to community members; these participants form the key informant category. This category included two LCVs, two District Intelligence and Security Officers (DISOs), and two Resident District Coordinators (RDCs). We interviewed eight staff members from NGOs, four[14] of whom were Ugandan and four[15] of whom were international. These participants are listed in Annex 2.

Participatory methods

We adapted PE methods for the assessment with local community members in the FGDs. These methods included the following specific tools:

Conflict causal diagrams with proportional piling: Used to gather information on the relative importance of the different forms of conflict and insecurity, the causes of raids, the perpetrators, the impacts, and the different interventions. The listed items were either written on pieces of paper or illustrated with diagrams or symbols. These were placed on the ground in a circle around the central issue of conflict/raids. Participants illustrated the relative contributions of these aspects by allocating 100 stones. This visualization and scoring enabled further questions and discussions on the most serious forms of conflict. Following this exercise, we discussed the causes, perpetrators, and impacts of the conflict and insecurity.

With regard to causes of conflict, the team began with an open and far-ranging discussion as to the different factors that underpinned the recent resumption of conflict and insecurity. Participants identified multiple layers of causes: the root causes, which were conceived of as "the match that lights a flame;" the drivers of conflict, which were

Table 1. Number of sub-counties and villages visited, and the number of participants interviewed in each district

District	No. of sub-counties visited	No. of villages/FGDs	Participants			
			Men	Women	Male youth	Total participants by location
Kotido	8	13	54	113	56	**223**
Napak	5	11	64	102	56	**222**
Moroto	5	22	79	101	102	**282**
Abim	7	15	49	77	50	**176**
Karenga	8	13	38	92	46	**176**
Kaabong	8	12	42	100	48	**190**
Total participants by gender			**326**	**585**	**358**	
			Total study participants			**1,269**

[13] Elected leadership in Uganda begins at village level with a local council, called the local council I (LCI). The chairperson of the LC I is known in shorthand as the LC1. Local councils exist at multiple levels, with the most active in Karamoja being the LCIII at the sub-county level and the LCV at the district level.

[14] Abim Women Together in Development (AWOTID), Riamriam, Karamoja Development Forum (KDF), and Justice and Peace Desk of Moroto Catholic Diocese.

[15] Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), Mercy Corps, Saferworld, and Whitaker.

explained as "the bits of paper that catch the flames;" and, lastly, the escalating factors, understood as "the wind or dry grass that drives the flames higher." Participants first listed the different layers of causes (root causes, drivers, escalating factors) and then weighted each category by relative importance in causing or escalating conflict and insecurity.

Particularly for perpetrators, we focused primarily on how the perceived actors are perpetrating the current conflict and insecurity, particularly raids. To understand this issue, the team posed the question, "Who in your view and experience is involved or perpetrating the current conflict/insecurity (raids)?" Results were compiled into a list of possible actors, and then focus group participants divided 100 stones accordingly to indicate the relative importance or the degree to which each category of actor bore the responsibility for perpetrating conflict and insecurity.

Mapping: Used to identify conflict hotspots, including corridors, border points, and raiding routes. Using local materials, a map was drawn on the ground, with prominent features such as community boundaries, hills/mountains, and rivers illustrated. Following the creation of the map, each hotspot was discussed in detail, including the characteristics of raiding routes, why raids were more concentrated in some areas than others, etc. For discussion purposes, the team focused on one corridor (or a stretch where two communities border each other) at a time, and participants identified conflict dynamics and patterns in this area. Participants used proportional piling with 100 stones to demonstrate the relative intensity of raiding occurring in each location. The visualization and scoring enabled further questions and discussions, for instance on the characteristics of raiding routes, why raids are more common on a certain corridor compared to the other, etc. (semi-structured interviews). Due to time constraints, the participatory assessment for this aspect took place in one site in each of the six assessment districts.

Timelines: Used to identify changes and trends over time in the different forms of conflict and insecurity. We asked participants to provide an account of the level of conflict and insecurity in different periods relative to the current time period by dividing up 100 stones. The visualization and scoring enabled further questions and discussions, for instance on why raids were more severe in a certain period compared to others. We create a timeline of eight to ten key periods in each assessment location. Due to time constraints, the participatory assessment for this aspect took place in one site in each of the six assessment districts.

Semi-structured interviews: Used a checklist of questions to further probe information arising from the participatory methods used above, including causes, perpetrators and impacts of conflict, mapping, and timelines.

Key informant interviews (KIIs)*:* Used to gather information on the resurging conflict from government officials and employees of national and international NGOs. We asked questions about the key informant's understanding of the current conflict since the return of insecurity in 2019. Following this initial discussion, we asked probing or follow-up questions about the causes, perpetrators, impacts, locations, and interventions.

This assessment focuses on the perceptions and experiences of local people in communities affected by the resumption of conflict and insecurity in the Karamoja region. As such, we prioritize their voices and understanding of the situation around them. Although we do not assume that these voices are accurate, objective, or forthright in all cases, the repetition of standardized methods across independent groups enabled areas of agreement between groups to be identified rapidly. The participatory methods used provided scope for in-method triangulation and, to some extent, across-method triangulation. The findings were compared with secondary literature where possible. We sought to gather a range of experiences along lines of age, gender, location, and ethnicity, including across "enemy" lines.

Discussion of sensitive topics

The topics of raiding and conflict are by nature sensitive, especially when gathering information from those who are likely to be directly participating in or benefitting from illicit activity. The way in which a question is posed can greatly influence the information received. If asked directly about conflict between two groups, the participants are more likely to portray themselves as victims than aggressors, in part because they are fearful of government retaliation. To counter this bias, we used a form of reverse psychology whereby we asked community members why others were raiding them. This approach allowed participants to see that we were not accusing them of criminality and allowed us to gather information on hotspots, external perpetrators, and causes of conflict. We were then able to ask more directly about impacts of conflict and possible interventions. Once trust had been established, many participants opened up and provided additional information, often including revealing their own participation in conflict and insecurity.

ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The main constraint to this assessment was time. This constraint was due both to the extensive time required to thoroughly utilize the in-depth nature of the participatory methods and the desire for rapid results on the return of conflict in the sub-region.

While we had hoped to cover multiple forms of conflict and insecurity throughout the assessment, doing so was not possible due to the extensive amount of time required for the in-depth participatory approach. The initial FGD in each district demonstrated that livestock raids were the most pressing and frequent form of conflict for most people, and hence our discussion and analysis prioritized raids. That said, throughout this report we intentionally use the phrase "conflict and insecurity" in recognition that not all communities or all participants experienced raids in the same manner and that some participants might be envisioning different forms of conflict or insecurity in their responses.

Due to the time burden of the participatory assessment techniques, we were not able to do each activity in every village and sub-county. The team therefore sought to ensure that all the topics were covered in each district. In other words, the causes of raids were discussed in one village or sub-county while the impacts of raids were discussed in another, and so on. In each site, the team asked if these experiences were thought to be similar to those in neighboring villages or sub-counties and why differences, if any, existed. That said, we recognize the incomplete nature of this approach and the likely existence of gaps in our knowledge. We hope that future participatory analysis with communities will be able to fill in these gaps.[16]

Another limitation was a local suspicion that the team members were government informants or spies; this suspicion was more pronounced in Kaabong and Kotido Districts. Our assessment overlapped with some "silent" (intelligence-led) disarmament activities in these same areas, which likely contributed to this impression. When we became aware of these suspicions, efforts were made to provide further explanations on the type of institution (i.e., an academic university with objective researchers) conducting the assessment and the objectives of the assessment (i.e., to gather information to help mitigate the conflict).

The assessment overlapped with preparations for cultivation in some of the farming areas. This overlap made it difficult to gather all targeted participants (men, women, and male youth) in the villages. When overlap occurred, the team sought to locate similar participants in nearby villages, meaning that one "site" could consist of more than one village.

We intentionally did not mobilize participants in advance in order to avoid selection of elites and relatives by local officials, to decrease expectations of compensation, and to prevent large numbers of people congregating out of curiosity or in hopes of receiving incentives to participate. In addition, due to continued insecurity across much of the region, we did not want to give advance notice of the team's movements. While we feel that this spontaneous approach has many benefits, it also means that there can be delays in finding participants and that communities may view unannounced visitors with suspicion.

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[16] Knowledge gaps for additional investigation include, inter alia: i) other forms of conflict that are resurging or persisting over time, with attention to hotspots, causes, perpetrators, impacts, and interventions; ii) trends and changes over time in these different forms of insecurity.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized according to broad questions that framed the assessment.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE RETURN OF CONFLICT AND INSECURITY?

The research team investigated the different types and forms of impacts and outcomes of the return of conflict and insecurity. Participants distinguished between what we classified as outcomes and impacts. Outcomes are the real-time effects of the experience of conflict and insecurity. For instance, "When raids are happening, lives and livestock are lost. Houses are burned" (Lokaal village, Rupa Sub-County, Moroto District, March 9, 2022). These outcomes are relatively immediate and (at times) short term. Other examples of outcomes include not being able to access gardens or mining sites during increased periods of insecurity, not being able to attend school or go to markets, the absence of social gatherings, and the growth of resentment between groups. We can imagine a situation in which a once-off raid or episode of insecurity would have outcomes, but communities and households would (at times) be able to recover from such outcomes. Recovery is much more difficult if and when conflict and insecurity become systemic. As such, participants

described the impacts as the longer-term results that emerge from the process of repeated and regular conflict and insecurity.

Participants came up with a list of 23[17] outcomes arising from conflict and insecurity. The table below lists the top three outcomes by location, with numbers showing how they were ranked.

In all locations except Kaabong, the primary outcome was the loss of livestock; in Kaabong loss of livestock was a very close second to the inability to farm. Huge numbers of cattle were reported raided in recent years in many districts, dealing a major blow to pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood systems. Small ruminants—especially goats—are also a popular target of raiders.

Loss of lives was a bigger problem in some areas than others; loss of lives registered in the top three outcomes in Karenga, Moroto, and Napak but not in Abim, Kaabong, or Kotido. Although we do not have casualty numbers, we know that young men are the most likely to be killed and wounded in raids due to their roles as both perpetrators and defenders of livestock.[18] Boys acting as herders may also be killed or wounded. Women, children, and the elderly were once considered "off-limits" when

Table 2. Main outcomes listed by participants, ranked by location

Abim	Kaabong	Karenga	Kotido	Moroto	Napak
1. Loss of livestock	1. Inability to farm	1. Loss of livestock	1. Loss of livestock	1. Loss of livestock	1. Loss of livestock
2. Inability to farm	2. Loss of livestock	2. Loss of lives	2. Inability to farm	2. Loss of lives	2. Loss of lives
3. Psychological stress/fear	3. Limited transportation	3. Psychological stress/fear	3. Growth of interethnic hatred	3. Inability to farm	3. Inability to farm

[17] These included, in no particular order: 1-loss of livestock; 2-loss of lives; 3-impact on farming; 4-impact on mining; 5-growing interethnic hatred; 6-psychological stress/fear; 7-impact on local construction; 8-impact on socialization (social gatherings); 9-loss of household items; 10-burning of houses; 11-impact on learning (education); 12-widows/widowers/orphans; 13-impact on access to health centers; 14-impact on internal markets and business operations (e.g., shops) within a district and within Karamoja sub-region; 15-impact on internal transport (including road ambushes and movement of *boda bodas* (motorbikes)); 16-impact on visits (interdistrict/intercommunity); 17-impact on procreation; 18-attacks on women; 19-impact on gathering forest products (wild fruits, wild vegetables, charcoal production, firewood); 20-impact on non-governmental organization (NGO)/government service delivery (including stalled infrastructure); 21-impact on external marketing and trade (outside Karamoja sub-region; within and outside Uganda); 22-impact on external transport and movement (outside Karamoja sub-region; within and outside Uganda); 23-displacement.

[18] Gray et al., "Cattle Raiding, Cultural Survival, and Adaptability."

raids took place, but these norms eroded during earlier periods of intense violence.[19] Casualty patterns by demographic group for the past three years of insecurity are not yet known.

Participants in all locations ranked inability to farm as an important outcome of raids, whereby people could not cultivate either because they had lost oxen in raids or because insecurity made accessing fields very risky. (Inability to farm did not rank in the top three in Karenga but was number four.) Women do much of the cultivation (especially planting, weeding, and harvesting) in Karamoja and are often accompanied by infants and young children as they perform these tasks. Women are normally in the fields without protection and may struggle to flee rapidly in the event of an attack due to the presence of their children. These factors make women less willing to farm in periods of heightened insecurity. Importantly, when livestock losses are coupled with the inability to cultivate, the built-in adaptability of agro-pastoral livelihood systems is undermined. Households are no longer able to balance animal production with cultivation, thereby weakening coping systems and potentially increasing economic vulnerability.

Kaabong participants felt that conflict and insecurity negatively affected transportation: in Kaabong transportation referred mostly to motorbike (*boda boda*) transport. Motorbike drivers were reportedly targets of theft because they are believed to carry cash and are at times suspected of providing information to the military about people who own weapons. Due to this suspicion, warriors have killed several motorbike drivers in Kaabong. Road ambushes—a common occurrence during earlier periods of violence—are also on the rise, although not yet at high levels. These transportation outcomes influence trade, market prices, and availability of and access to food. Students rely on transportation to access schools, women rely on transportation to take goods to market, and traders from outside the region are dependent on safe road networks to import goods and to partake in what had been dynamic livestock markets prior to the resumption of insecurity.

Participants in three districts listed two types of non-tangible outcomes: psychological stress/fear and the growth of interethnic hatred. Psychological stress and fear affect many other aspects of livelihood systems, including willingness to venture to fields to farm, to use public transport (such as *boda bodas* and buses), to send children to school, and to move animals to market. Each of these outcomes in turn has additional ripple effects. The growth of interethnic hatred is particularly problematic, as it can be both an outcome of and driver for conflict and insecurity. One of the major benefits realized during the period of relative stability that existed prior to 2019 was cooperation and peace between the different ethnic, tribal, and territorial groups.[20] This cooperation and peace meant, for instance, that a Dodoth individual from Kaabong could safely move his animals through Jie territory to reach the large livestock market outside of Kotido town. Women from Moroto described passing freely through Napak and Abim to access markets in Teso, Lango, and Acholi sub-regions. Numerous groups were able to enjoy shared access to resources, including the critical natural resources of pasture and water points required for livestock production. The rise in interethnic hatred undermines all of these gains and has potentially severe consequences upon broader livelihood systems.

The extent and variation of the list of outcomes offered by respondents illustrates the many ways in which conflict and insecurity upend the lives and well-being of people and communities in the short term. Turning to the longer-term impacts, we can see how the direct and indirect processes above—such as the erosion of the livestock asset base, rise in food prices, limitations on market access, and the resulting undermining of diversified coping systems—ultimately bring impacts such as increased poverty. Figure 1 shows the relative weight given to these impacts by group.

Figure 1 illustrates remarkable similarities in perceptions regarding impacts by group. All participant groups weighted increased hunger as the most severe impact of the resumption of insecurity. When asked to explain the links between insecurity and hunger, participants explained that hunger had increased because of precipitous livelihood losses due to raids, disease, and drought as well as the impacts on farming. Insecurity limited access to forest products, including wild fruits and vegetables (for consumption) and firewood and charcoal (for income), which also contributed to hunger.

[19] K. Mkutu, *Guns & Governance in the Rift Valley: Pastoralist Conflict & Small Arms, African Issues* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2008); D. Akabwai and P. Ateyo, "The Scramble for Cattle, Power and Guns in Karamoja" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, 2007); J. Lamphear, "Brothers in Arms: Military Aspects of East African Age-Class Systems in Historical Perspective," in *Conflict, Age and Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition*, ed. E. Kurimoto and S. Simonse (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998); K. Mkutu, "Small Arms and Light Weapons among Pastoral Groups in the Kenya-Uganda Area," *African Affairs* 106, no. 102 (2007):47–70.

[20] Howe et al., "'We Now Have Relative Peace.'"

Figure 1. Longer-term impacts of conflict by participant group, median score.
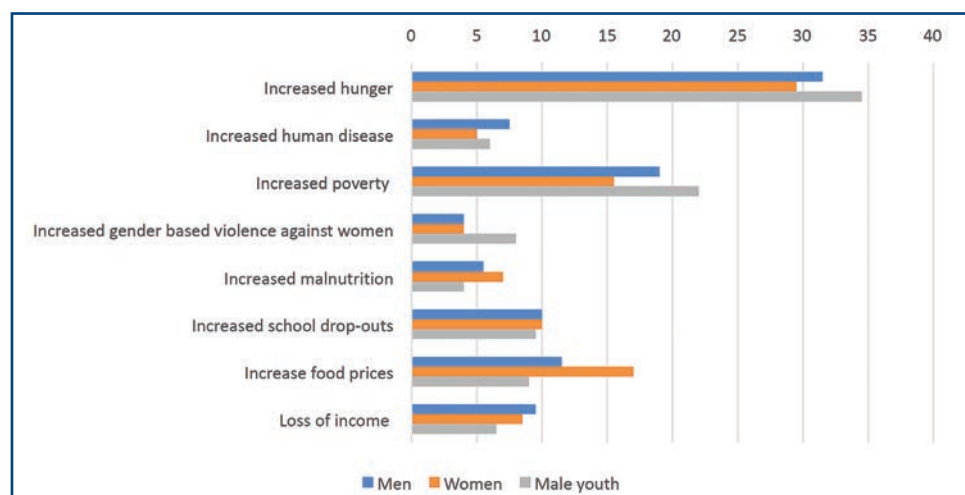
In Abim, Karenga, Kaabong, and Kotido, destruction of crops by wildlife (especially elephants and buffaloes) was another cause of hunger. Hunger also resulted from the cumulative effects of other phenomena that happened simultaneously with the resumption of insecurity, including COVID-19, the desert locust invasion, droughts, and the foot and mouth disease (FMD) livestock quarantines. Continual food price increases were also a major problem. Participants explained that sharing of food, a traditional practice among the Karimojong, was affected by food shortages. In the view of participants, hunger was a root cause, an escalating factor, and an impact of conflict. This view shows that conflict is not only complex and multifaceted, but circular, with causes and impacts reinforcing each other. This circularity could be one of the reasons why conflict in Karamoja is so difficult to address. It means that, once conflict is triggered, various feedback loops maintain it, and it is fed by "escalating factors."

The second-most heavily weighted impact is increased poverty—participants explained that this increase was due specifically to the loss of livestock. Food prices are increasing, in the views of the participants, because of high demand for purchased food items due to rising hunger and loss of livestock. Similar factors were said to drive loss of income and increased malnutrition. The number of school drop-outs was increasing because of lack of income and few options to generate capital. In the past, the sale of livestock was a source of income. Participants reported that human disease was on the rise due to both hunger and decreased access to health centers. Rising gender-based violence (GBV) against women was allegedly due both to an absence of adequate food within households and men coming home earlier

because of insecurity and limited livelihood activities, creating more tension in the home. Women in Abim District reiterated that "we are not happy that men come home early. This leads to a lot of quarrels, even over small mistakes."[21]

WHERE ARE CONFLICT AND INSECURITY OCCURRING?

The current incidents of conflict and insecurity—most prevalent and visible in the form of livestock raids—in the Karamoja sub-region are not, contrary to many depictions, ubiquitous in either space or time. In each location, we asked participants to indicate the specific areas where conflict and insecurity were most likely to occur or to identify the external groups that conduct raids and at what scale. As illustrated in the hotspot map, these locations largely follow the administrative borders of the districts, which themselves align with ethnic, tribal, or territorial group or sub-county delineations. These locations, which we refer to as conflict "hotspots," are well known, and assessment participants were able to rank the intensity and likelihood of conflict occurring at these sites at the time of the assessment. Of note, participants on opposite sides of a hotspot location did not necessarily view the likelihood or intensity of conflict in the same manner. Much of the conflict and insecurity occurred along corridors that align with certain routes, some of which have existed for multiple generations. All communities provided a similar physical description of these routes where conflict occurred: bushy, along isolated or unsettled areas, near water points, and in areas without military establishments. In addition, and as illustrated in the map below, participants were also very clear about the direction that raids were coming from.

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[21] Focus group discussion with women, Agweng West village, Morulem Sub-County, Abim District, March 31, 2022.

Raiding Trends in Karamoja as Reported by Participants, March-June 2022

Point of reported origin of attacks,
by sub-county of participants

Alerek
1 = 24% of raids
2 = 22% of raids
3 = 47% of raids
4 = 7% of raids

Nadunget
1 = 27% of raids
2 = 45% of raids
3 = 4% of raids
4 = 18% of raids
5 = 6% of raids

North Division
1 = 50% of raids
2 = 26% of raids
3 = 20% of raids
4 = 4% of raids

Sangar
1 = 49% of raids
2 = 23% of raids
3 = 6% of raids
4 = 15% of raids
5 = 4% of raids
6 = 3% of raids

Lopeei
1 = 6% of raids
2 = 14% of raids
3 = 80% of raids

Loyoro
1 = 9% of raids
2 = 6% of raids
3 = 36% of raids
4 = 35% of raids
5 = 14% of raids

→ Direction of raids

Major Road

Karamoja Boundary

District Boundary

Sub County Boundary

This area was not included in assessment group

HOW HAS INSECURITY CHANGED OVER TIME?

Much has been written about conflict in Karamoja over the years, and the accompanying knowledge synthesis provides updates from recent studies and literature. For the purpose of this assessment, we sought to understand local perspectives on insecurity over time. To understand these perspectives, we the created timelines. The four most recent time periods were consistent across all sites—i.e., from most recent: current conflict, period of relative peace, second disarmament (forceful, 2006–2010), and first disarmament (voluntary, 2001–2002).[22] These four periods cover the timeframe from 2001 up to the present, although exact dates in which the different periods began and ended varied depending on when disarmament, peace, or conflict began in each area. The earlier time periods follow local events of importance, such as the drought of 1984 (*Lorengepelu*) in Kaabong, Karenga, Napak, and Kotido Districts or, as mentioned by the Abim community, the killing of Okurdoi (a Bokora kraal leader) and Apanyangnyang (a Bokora chief) in 1957 in Apeitolim in Napak District. In each location, participants established reference points based on the furthest back period that they could remember.

Following the establishment of the timeline with clearly demarcated periods, participants proportioned counters to score which periods were the most insecure. When time allowed, the team repeated this exercise based on different types of insecurity—i.e., raids over time, external thefts over time, etc.

Figure 2 shows trends over time in raiding over the four most recent periods that were consistent across all sites, with higher numbers indicating greater intensity of raids as per the proportional piling exercise.

To note, the totals in each district only account for the number of stones that show raids in the four periods listed here. The remaining stones (out of 100 total) account for raids in the periods before voluntary disarmament (2001–2002), which differed in each location and hence are not illustrated here.

The scorings differ across the assessment sites and illustrate relative experiences over time. Abim, for example, is the only district to list raids as occurring during the time of relative peace. In every assessment location, participants consistently scored the current period of insecurity as the worst that they had experienced. As illustrated above, this scoring was by a factor of 100% in some locations—e.g., in Abim the current insecurity was scored as being twice as bad as the next worst (the second disarmament period). In Napak the current period was scored as more than twice as bad as the two next worst (*Ekaru a Moru-Ariwon* in approximately 1999/2000 and *Natheperwae* in approximately 1989). The current time period was seen as the worst in every assessment site, with the most striking being Kotido, where livestock raids in the current period were seen as almost five times as severe as the next-worst period (the second disarmament). Importantly, these results are almost certainly affected by bias, including the fading of memories over time, the fact that some of the participants were not alive or adults in the previous time

Figure 2. Trends in raiding over the past four time periods.

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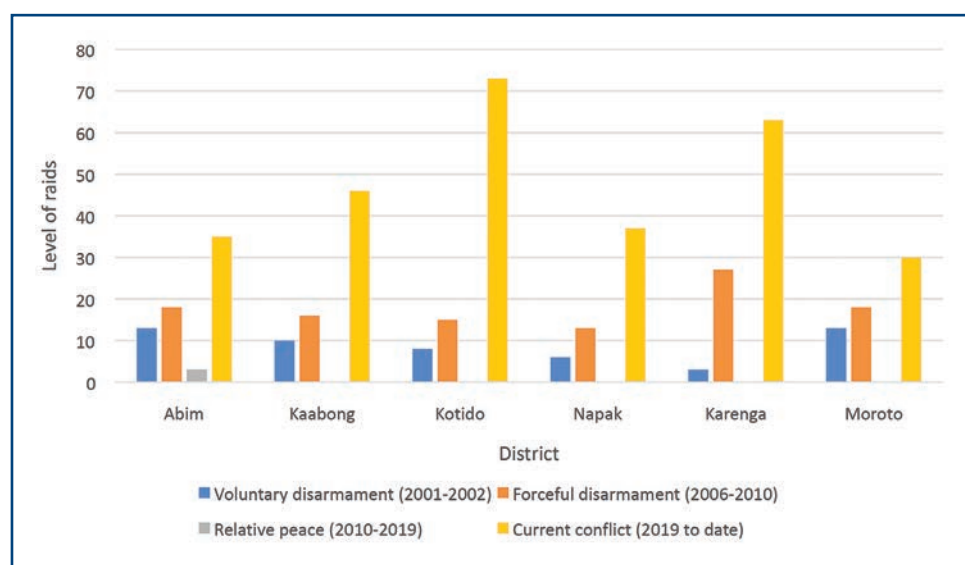
[22] Karamoja has been home to many multiple disarmaments over the past 100 years (see J. Bevan, "Crisis in Karamoja: Armed Violence and the Failure of Disarmament in Uganda's Most Deprived Region" (Small Arms Survey, Geneva, 2008). The disarmaments referred to here are the 2001–2002 disarmament (of which only the first phase was voluntary) and the 2006 to 2009/2010 (most intense period) disarmament, which was forceful in its entirety. For more information on these disarmaments, see Human Rights Watch, "'Get the Gun!';" Stites and Akabwai, "Changing Roles, Shifting Risks" and "'We Are Now Reduced to Women.'"

periods, and the possible desire to emphasize to external actors (i.e., the assessment team) that current conditions were extremely dire. Despite these biases, it is clear that participants feel that the current state of insecurity is severe.

WHAT FORM DOES THE CONFLICT AND INSECURITY TAKE?

Numerous narratives point to the resumption of conflict in Karamoja, but experiences and perceptions of conflict vary by a number of factors, including age, gender, and location. As introduced earlier, participants highlighted livestock raids as the most pronounced form of conflict and insecurity, but it is not the only one being experienced. This section examines the relative experiences of these different forms of conflict and insecurity. The results of the participatory scoring of types of conflict are presented in Figures 3 and 4, by location and participant group.

In the Figures 3 and 4 we see that while there are differences in perceptions, the congruence of responses is striking, particularly in Figure 4 illustrating responses by participant group. All participants across all assessment sites felt that livestock raids were the most severe form of insecurity at present. Young men weighted livestock raids more highly in severity than the other two groups, most likely because of their role as animal herders and/or executors of raids, meaning they have the most exposure to and threat from this form of insecurity. After livestock raids, all participant groups across the locations felt that livestock theft (distinguished from raids by the fewer number of people involved and the fewer animals taken) by external actors was the second-most intense form of insecurity. Differences in weightings by demographic

group increase slightly following these first two, but overall congruence remains high. These findings indicate broad commonality in perceptions across the assessment sites in the sub-region.

Somewhat surprisingly, participants ranked attacks on women at similar levels regardless of gender and age; we had expected women to rank it more highly than the male groups. This similarity may indicate that these attacks are often not of a sexual nature (as we would expect sexual violence to be kept quiet due to stigma) or that such encounters are occurring in situations where secrecy is not possible. Participants explained that most attacks on women occurred in concert with raids or external thefts. If raiders/thieves came across women working in the gardens, collecting bush products, burning charcoal, or collecting materials for homestead construction, they might capture the women and force them to lead them to animals and to indicate safer entry and exit points from a village or kraal. Once this information is provided and the raid/theft has occurred, the raiders often release the women. Nonetheless, there were some cases of sexual assault reported, but generally women were most traumatized by fear of being killed.

As shown in Figure 3, an analysis of perceptions by location also shows overall consistency in scores, with some variations based on location-specific dynamics. For example, insecurity as a result of human-wildlife contact is greatest in Karenga because of its proximity to Kidepo National Park. Similarly, participants in Moroto scored killings in towns higher than those in other locations; this higher score is due to Moroto being the largest town in the sub-region and the site of most such incidents to date. Interestingly, the median value across groups for internal

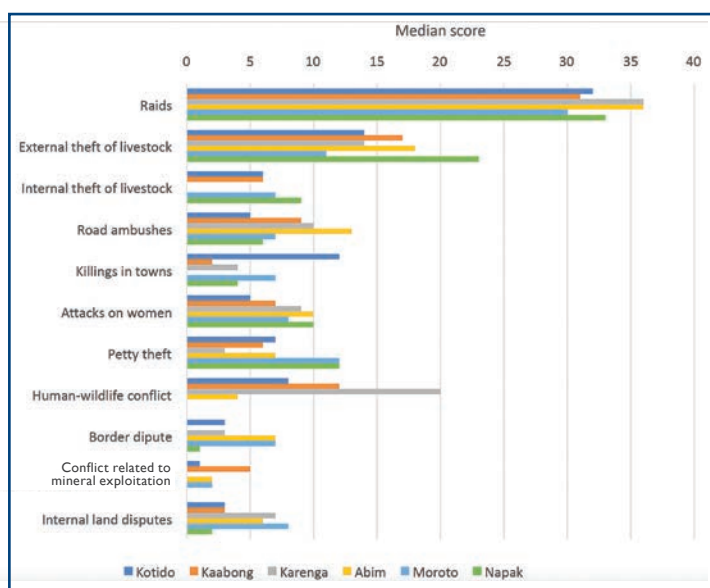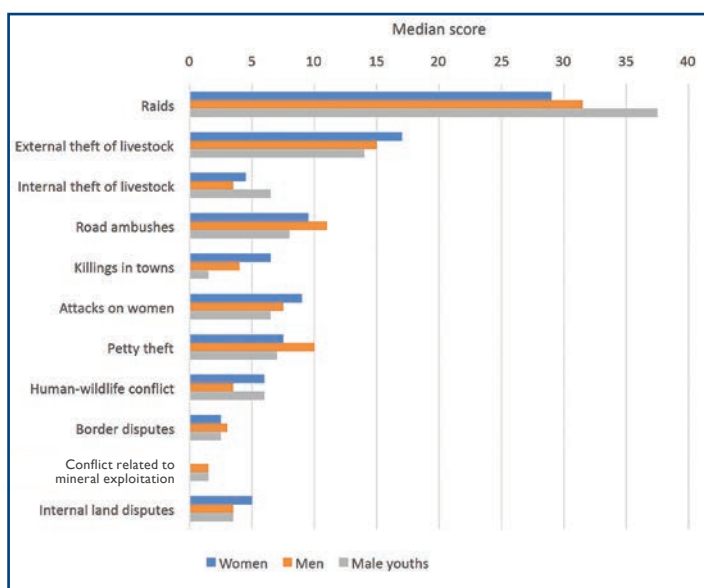*Figure 3. Types and severity of insecurity by location.*

Figure 4. Types and severity of insecurity by participant group.

livestock theft[23] in both Abim and Karenga was zero. While our sample is small, this finding indicates that few participants perceive internal livestock theft to be a problem. This perception is likely due firstly to the fact that few animals are lost due to this form of insecurity (there is maybe only an occasional theft, usually for slaughter or sale in the bush). Secondly, communities in Abim and Karenga reportedly have effective local mechanisms of dealing with internal livestock thieves; for instance, beating by peers sanctioned by elders followed by full compensation that is accompanied by a penalty such as an additional bull for elders.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN CONFLICT AND INSECURITY?

We turn next to a discussion of the perpetrators of conflict from the perspective of the assessment population. Interesting to note is that participants did not only view the actors discussed here as purely "perpetrators," but also as one category of "escalators" of conflict in the form of livestock raids. Overall, we see that actors are involved in raids in diverse ways, including direct engagement, support, influence, benefit, orchestration, inaction, and profit, among others. The Figures 5, 6 and 7 show how the different participant groups envision conflict actors, with the size of the circles corresponding to the ranking of the most involved actors (showing only the seven highest ranked). In other words, male youth participants (Figure 5) ranked "LDUs" to be least involved and "youth" to be the most involved.

Figures 5 to 7 show actors to the conflict by participant group, illustrating median scores of the top seven actors.

Several points stand out regarding the results shown in the figures. First, participants do not blame one set of actors for perpetrating raids; rather, the involvement is diverse and highly varied. The full list of actors generated by participants across all locations consisted of 31 categories of actors; the figures below show only the seven that received the highest scores in the proportional piling exercises.[24] The varied list covers diverse *types* of actors, even within just the top seven responses: community members (youth, seers, enemies within), security sector actors (UPDF and LDUs), private sector actors (animal traders), and unspecified outsiders (visitors). This diversity of types of actors indicates that local participants view the perpetration of conflict in the form of livestock raids as multifaceted and far-reaching, with important implications for considerations of how to address the problem. Interestingly, in a way, all these seven broad groups of actors are responsible for the emerging trend of conflict, especially the commercialization of raids, as explained below.

Second, there are some unexpected (for the research team) findings in the varied data on perpetrators: the starkest is the involvement of seers (*emuron*) or local diviners. While earlier studies indicate an important role for seers in both orchestrating and blessing raids,[25] the team believed that this role of seers had largely diminished as raids became more individualistic and had less involvement by wider

Figure 5. Male youth's responses.

(Youth, Visitors, Seers, Enemy within, Army, Traders, LDU)
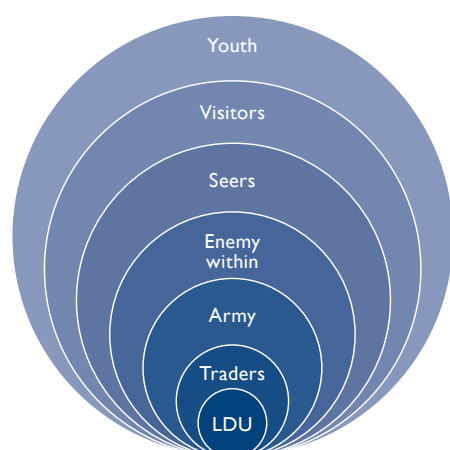
Figure 6. Women's responses.

(Youth, Traders, Seers, Army, LDU, Visitors, Enemy within)

Figure 7. Men's responses.
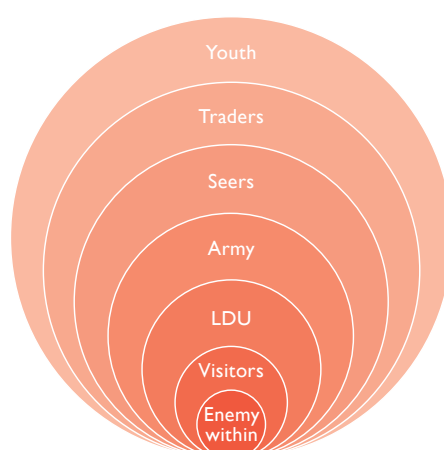
(Youth, Traders, Army, LDU, Enemy within, Seers, Visitors)

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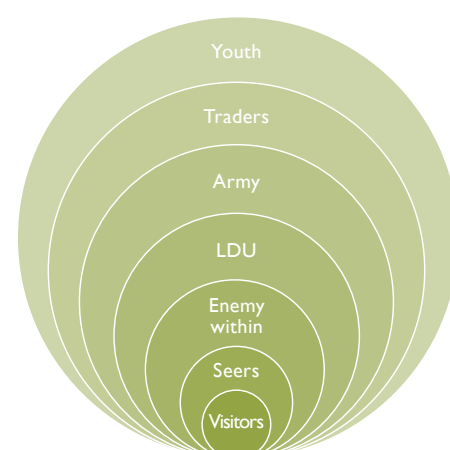
23 Internal livestock theft referred to cattle or goat thieves. Those who stole chickens were categorized under petty thieves (*Ta Lonetia*).

24 The remaining 24 categories are captured under "other," all of which had median scores between 1 and 2.5 across both location and group. The "other" category included (in no particular order): elders, mothers, butchers, local council leaders (LCs), Members of Parliament (MPs), *boda-boda* drivers, charcoal burners, peace committees, fraudsters/imposters, traders, hunters, shop keepers, school boys, media (radio and TV), human rights advocates, former soldiers (retired, deserters, and fired), wives (especially of the youth), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), government intelligence officers, police at road blocks, small-scale traders or business people in towns (especially women), market clerks or agents (who issue market receipts for stolen animals), scrap metal buyers, and Karamoja returnees (who had left the area around the time of the 2001–2002 disarmament).

25 Akabwai and Ateyo, "The Scramble for Cattle."

community members.[26] This reduced role of seers is clearly not the view of local participants, who ranked seers high across both gender and age of participant. Besides blessing the youth through the performance of rituals, seers also provide hope by revealing their dreams about the impending successful raid, as illustrated by these statements:

> "Cows are mowing or roaring in my head (*erwosi ngatuk anakou*), and you have to go for them."

> "I dreamt of some nice bulls somewhere, and they do not have a herder; please go for them."

According to the youth, the dreams of the seers are often accurate. In return for performing blessings or sharing their visions, the seers are paid in form of animals, money, and alcohol. By location, seers were scored more highly by participants in Kaabong, Karenga, and Kotido when compared with Abim, Moroto, and Napak. The exact reasons for this difference are unknown and require more investigation.

Third, all participant groups in all assessment locations were clear regarding the involvement of male youth in conflict and insecurity, including male youth participants themselves. While the role of male youth in this regard is not surprising and has been documented elsewhere,[27] it is notable that all participants for this assessment—including male youth themselves—identified male youth as primary actors. Interestingly, the group allegedly most involved in the current raids are very young males aged between 14 and 17 years. Their actions are reportedly unsanctioned by parents and elders. Some participants described these young males as idle, undisciplined, and not heeding the advice of parents or community (male) elders.[28] These male elders themselves may be experiencing a demise in their authority.[29] Furthermore, elders and parents reportedly do not know how youth use the proceeds gained from livestock raids or theft. Participants speculated that the young men might be using the cash to purchase luxury items like phones or spending it on alcohol (or settling alcohol debts), pork, or entertaining girlfriends. However, some community members revealed that these young males also use proceeds

to bribe local leaders so that they are not exposed. Participants were confident that raided animals are sold primarily to butchers and live animal traders.

Male youth scored "visitors" as the second-highest category of actor involvement (men and women scored visitors much lower). Visitors refers to people who come into an area from outside. According to male youth, the visitor category includes "friends" made during periods of peace who then use information gleaned during this time to plan raids. Participants explained that nefarious visitors might stay for up to a month and participate in herding animals to gain trust. In reality, such individuals are strategizing raids and passing information to colleagues on the type and number of animals that could be stolen. When animals are taken, these trusted visitors remain behind to monitor the reaction of victims and to offer false information on the direction taken by raiders/thieves. In addition, because these visitors stay within communities for extended periods, they may use this time to recruit internal thieves.

The category "enemy within" received low to medium scores but merits discussion. The enemy within are allegedly most often young men and/or former soldiers who collaborate with friends from neighboring communities to carry out raids. Using phones, they coordinate from within their villages and provide details on the location of animals, including at times opening livestock enclosures to enable easy access by their allies. They reportedly often target relatives who disagreed with them on the ownership or sale of an animal. After the attack, the enemies within allegedly guide allies to the safest escape routes, even while they remain at home to monitor reactions and "mourn" with the victims. In return, these internal enemies receive a share of the loot, normally via mobile money transfers. Some have been caught by their communities; severe physical punishment by community members was allegedly avoided due to police involvement. Perpetrators have reportedly been arrested but were able to bribe their way out of prison and continue with their criminal activities.[30]

[26] Stites and Howe, "From the Border to the Bedroom."

[27] E. Stites and A. Marshak, "Who Are the Lonetia? Findings from Southern Karamoja, Uganda," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 54 (May 2016): 237–52.

[28] Several factors were said to contribute to the youth not listening to the advice of elders. These include pressure from hunger, livestock poverty, idleness, need for animals for bridewealth, modernization, and luxurious lifestyles. Other factors include: a) youth believing more in the power of the gun than the power of elders' advice; b) motivation from weaknesses in military actions; c) breakdown in traditional disciplinary mechanisms; d) alcoholism; and e) the belief that curses used by elders today are ineffective.

[29] The weakening elders' authority was attributed to several factors: a) the impact of livestock poverty on traditional institutions such as the authority of and respect for elders; b) alcohol consumption; c) extinction of a generation with divine powers; d) elders who give advice are targeted and beaten or killed by the youth, and so elders are now fearing for their life; e) interference from the contemporary judicial system—elders pronouncing a punishment are reported by youth to police and arrested under violation of human rights; and f) the belief that today's elders have been cursed by ancestors for changing the order and direction of initiation to adulthood and for changing the sitting arrangement at *akiriket* (during a ritual or a feast).

[30] Also, refer to Lotira and Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment."

Fourth, livestock traders ranked high in the views of men and women (but lower for male youth) as well as in four of the six districts (location differences not shown in figures). The involvement of livestock traders in raiding networks in Karamoja (and other East African pastoral societies) is not new and has been documented elsewhere.[31] Participants explained that livestock traders encourage raids, purchase stolen animals, and/or orchestrate raids from which they then benefit. These traders (both local and external) plan with raiders via mobile phones, and coordination is done through intermediaries (nicknamed "bosses" in Kotido District). Transactions occur in the bush at night, with animals loaded onto trucks and moved outside Karamoja (both within and outside Uganda); removing animals from the region makes tracking difficult. Livestock traders allegedly at times provide advance payments to raiders to support raiding expeditions; in turn, raiders may turn over stolen animals on credit and allow the traders to send money later via mobile transfers. Livestock traders reportedly bribe traffic police at roadblocks to allow animals to be moved without the necessary documents (such as purchase receipts and movement permits), or they bribe those responsible for issuing such documents. Overall, raiders are motivated by the ready market provided by the livestock traders, and traders are motivated by the high profit margin they can realize by buying stolen animals at a low price and selling them elsewhere at normal rates.

The commercial element of raiding in Karamoja has been discussed for many years but remains difficult to quantify or to prove.[32] Participants for this study highlighted this commercial element without hesitation and, in addition to livestock traders, pointed to a number of actors with commercial interests and involvement. These include butchers, *boda boda* drivers, shop traders, and firewood sellers.

Fifth, all participant groups scored both the UPDF and LDUs as among the top seven categories of actors. If combined, the single category of security actors would be the highest or close to the highest across all participant groups. When examined by location (not shown), however, we see greater discrepancy in the extent of involvement of these actors. Participants in Kaabong, Karenga, and Kotido perceive the UPDF to be more involved in raids than did those in Napak, Moroto, and Abim. Differences in perceptions on LDU involvement are starker: participants in Karenga viewed LDUs as the most heavily involved actors, whereas participants in Abim, Kotido, and Napak felt that LDUs were only minimally involved. Participants explained that LDUs were initially effective in protecting lives and livestock following the 2006

disarmament but became frustrated when they saw their own animals raided without redress. In response, some LDUs reportedly abandoned their posts either to protect their animals or to seek revenge. Some of those who remained on duty reportedly connived with relatives and friends to raid the protected kraals (some of which they were meant to be guarding) to replace their lost animals or for monetary gain. Besides direct participation in raids, participants listed LDUs as a source of weapons, ammunition, and military uniforms.

In contrast to direct involvement in raiding ascribed to the LDUs, participants were more likely to blame the UPDF for weaknesses that raiders took advantage of. These <u>weaknesses</u> included:

- Benefiting from raids by facilitating the "disappearance" of impounded animals;

- Collaborating with raiders and LDUs to allow attacks on protected kraals;

- Minimal effort to pursue or return raided animals;

- Minimal effort by some non-local personnel to adapt to or understand the local environment or security dynamics;

- Unprofessional behavior, including heavy consumption of alcohol, which contributed to climate of easy raiding;

- Selling military equipment (weapons, ammunition, and uniforms) used by raiders.

In addition to these weaknesses, participants listed a number of other behaviors and offenses allegedly committed by UPDF soldiers that undermined their ability to engage in effective peace keeping in the region. Offenses included extortion, bribery, sexual assault, and human rights abuses. Deleterious behaviors included lack of effort to involve communities in disarmament operations and usurping the role of police by arresting petty offenders.

WHAT ARE THE ROOT CAUSES OF RAIDS?

As explained in the methodology section, participants differentiated root causes, drivers, and escalators of conflict, with a focus on raids. Here we discuss the root causes and (briefly) the drivers; the next section covers escalating factors.

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[31] D. Eaton, "The Rise of the 'Trader': The Commercialization of Raiding in Karamoja," *Nomadic Peoples* 14, no. 2 (2010): 106–122.

[32] See accompanying knowledge synthesis for a discussion of the literature on commercial raiding in Karamoja. E. Stites, 2022, "Conflict in Karamoja: A synthesis of historical and current perspectives, 1920-2022", Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU), Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Kampala, Uganda.
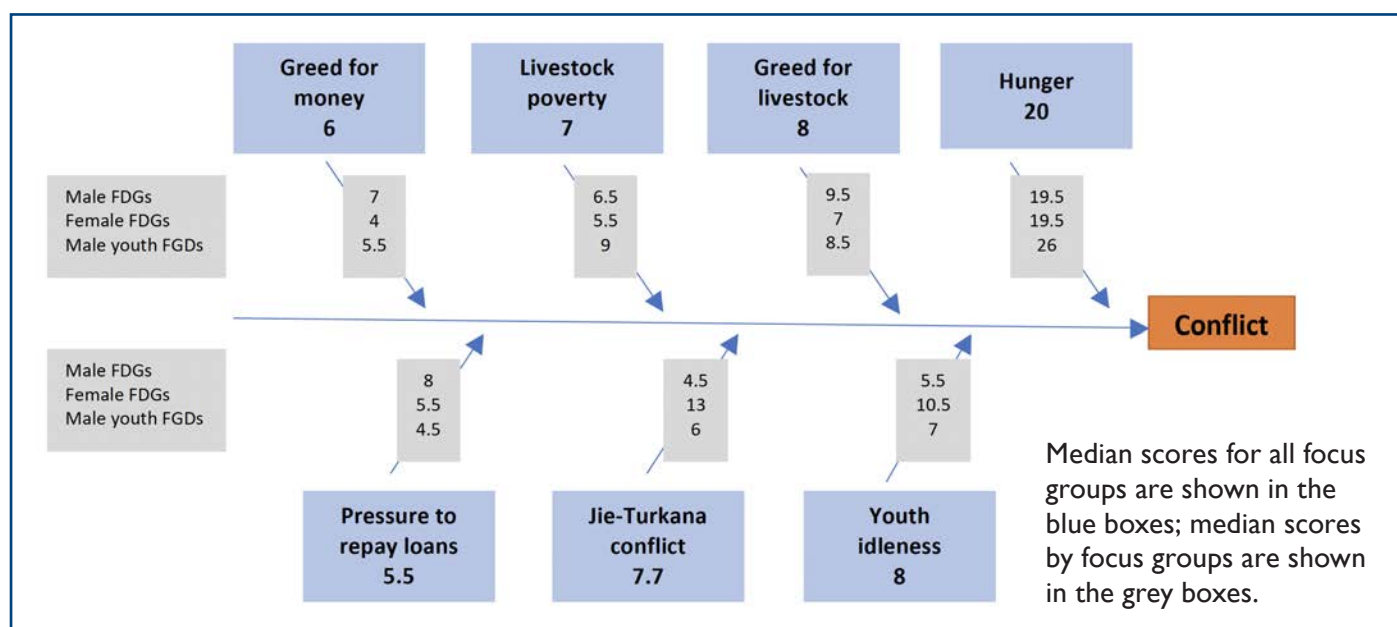
Figure 8 illustrates participants' scoring of root causes of conflict and insecurity in the form of raids, showing the top seven categories of response.[33] Each box shows the total median score (from all participant groups) as well as the median scores specific to each participant group.

As with the earlier discussions, there was broad congruence among the three different participant groups as to the scoring of the different root causes of conflict and insecurity. "Hunger" as a root cause scores the highest by a wide margin, with a median score across all participants at more than twice the next-highest root cause. This finding is an important but not unexpected one. A number of factors contribute to the ongoing poor situation of food insecurity and nutrition in the region,[34] including changing patterns of livestock ownership and stresses on pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood systems, such as repeated and prolonged droughts and policies to limit mobility. Earlier work in Karamoja indicates that we should not be surprised to see a correlation in theft by male youth and periods of food insecurity.[35] Although the harvest in 2019 was good, we know there was an increase in economic stress, with impacts on hunger at the household level in 2020 and 2021, due to the combined effects of the desert locust invasion and the market closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic regulations.[36] If hunger was the primary root cause of the resumption of insecurity in 2019, factors in 2020 and 2021 served to worsen hunger and further entrench patterns of raiding.

Differences in perceptions of the root causes of conflict are much greater when analyzed by assessment location (not shown). Hunger still scored high overall, though much lower in Karenga and somewhat lower in Napak. Other root causes score as high or nearly as high as hunger in specific districts, including "greed for livestock" and "Jie-Turkana as main source of conflict"—both in Karenga. These relatively skewed scores in Karenga may reflect the fact that Karenga participants, who were primarily of the Napore and Nyangia ethnic groups, are more likely to be the victims of raids than the perpetrators, at least when compared to their immediate neighbors the Jie (in Kotido) and Dodoth (in Kaabong). The Nyangia and Napore of Karenga generally have less livestock and engage more heavily in cultivation due to microclimates that are conducive to crop and vegetable production. If primarily the victims of livestock raids and associated insecurity, the participants in Karenga likely view the root causes through such lenses. They see attacks by outsiders as

Figure 8. Root causes of raids

Median scores for all focus groups are shown in the blue boxes; median scores by focus groups are shown in the grey boxes.

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[33] These were the seven categories that received the highest participant scores by median for all participants (regardless of participant group). The additional categories that received scores and the associated total median scores are: lack of alternative livelihoods (4); long-standing interethnic hatred (4); good-quality bulls in neighboring communities (4); stress of school fees (3.5); pressure to pay alcohol debts (2.5); raiding to pay bridewealth (2.5); raiding to maintain prestige and status (2); pastoral mobility—associated with thefts en route (2); animals disappearing at shared watering and grazing points (1); and the demand to return animals stolen/raided before or during peace negotiations (0.5).

[34] Government of Uganda, UNICEF, UK aid, and World Food Programme, "Food Security and Nutrition Assessment of the Karamoja Sub-region" (2017), **https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000022487/download/?iframe**.

[35] Stites and Marshak, "Who Are the Lonetia?"; E. Stites, A. Marshak, E. Nohner, S. Richards, and D. Akabwai, "Engaging Male Youth in Karamoja, Uganda: An Examination of the Factors Driving the Perpetration of Violence and Crime by Young Men in Karamoja and the Applicability of Communications and Relationships Program to Address Related Behavior" (World Bank LOGiCA Study Series No. 2 and Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, June 2014).

[36] Lotira et al., "Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts;" Lotira and Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment."

motivated by greed (for livestock and money [37]), youth idleness, and as related to the external conflict between the Jie and Turkana. Similarly, participants in both Napak and Kaabong—two other areas that border Jie populations in Kotido—ascribed high levels of importance to the Jie-Turkana conflict as a root cause. Interestingly, although the need to pay school fees often arises anecdotally as a root cause of conflict, this cause was weighted lowest of the primary factors.

Turning briefly to drivers of conflict, participants understood drivers to be what allowed the root causes to evolve into actual conflict and insecurity ("the bits of paper that catch the flames.") Participants created a list of drivers, which included the ability to be thieves (i.e., as an option to cope with hunger, greed, etc.), others not sharing food (which would have mitigated hunger and thereby staved off theft to cope with hunger), lack of immediate conflict mitigation (which allowed smaller problems to escalate into wider conflicts), having phones and flashlights (allowing thieves to organize and facilitate raids), and receiving courage from alcohol consumption (i.e., drinking immediately before embarking on a raid or theft). In all sites and with all groups, the option to be thieves scored the highest, followed by lack of immediate conflict resolution. In some locations, having phones also scored high (Kaabong assessment sites), and receiving courage from alcohol consumption scored high with male youth in many (but not all) locations.

WHAT FACTORS ESCALATE CONFLICT?

This section discusses the escalating factors of conflict as understood and described by the assessment participants. As explained above, the assessment team and participants discussed different layers of factors that contributed to conflict. The previous section covers the root causes ("matches that create the flames") and briefly mentions the

drivers ("rubbish that lights on fire") of the conflict. Participants explained that the escalating factors are like the wind that causes the flames to spread or the dry grass that provides fodder for the fire.

Local participants' perceptions of these contributing factors differ in several ways from how they are usually conceived by most external stakeholders (national and international). First, as mentioned in the section on actors to the conflict, participants described such actors both as perpetrators and as escalating factors. Second, although we had envisioned discussing the various interventions as responses to conflict, local participants instead explained that the *weaknesses* of these interventions in fact served to *escalate* conflict and insecurity. Both external interventions and those attempted by communities themselves were included in the explanation. These interventions and participants' views on them are covered in the first part of this section. Third, local participants categorized another set of escalating factors as "community-driven escalators;" the factors in this category are often overlooked or only mentioned in passing by external stakeholders. We cover these community-driven escalators in the second half of this section. Fourth, raids are executed using weapons, and participants view these small arms (and ready access to them) as a conflict escalator; this conflict escalator is discussed in brief at the end of this section. Importantly, this multi-faceted understanding of conflict both demonstrates the complexity of the resurgence of conflict as understood by local participants and illustrates that communities themselves have given a great deal of thought to why conflict and insecurity have resumed. This report aims to add these voices and perspectives to the wider debate.

How do weaknesses in external and community intervention efforts escalate conflict and insecurity?

Table 3 illustrates the lists and the weighting of factors by

Table 3. Intervention weaknesses by participant group (median scores)

	Weakness in military actions*	Problems with local peace processes**	Local institutions***	Poor implementation of MoU between Uganda and Kenya
Men	45	18	23	9
Women	42	17	27	9
Male youth	44	19	26	6

* "Military actions" category includes weakness in military actions, weakness in previous disarmaments, and indiscriminate impounding of animals by the military.
** "Problems with local peace processes" category includes weaknesses/lack of peace committees, deceptive peace committees, and failure/interference with peace committee resolutions.
*** "Local institutions" category includes protected kraals being a target of raids and livestock markets readily selling raided animals.

[37] Greed for money is partly associated with commercialization of raids (or "raiding to sell").

participant group. Participants listed nine different intervention weaknesses; for discussion purposes, we have combined these by broad type. These types include those associated with the military, those associated with local peace committees and peace actions, and those associated with local institutions such as markets and protected kraals. A last stand-alone intervention is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kenya and Uganda.

The Figure 9 illustrates how these different categories were perceived by location.

Military action weaknesses
Issues raised relating to military[38] actions include weaknesses in previous disarmaments, weaknesses in military actions and malevolent actions, and indiscriminate impounding of animals by the military. Regarding the first of these, many participants felt that the previous disarmaments[39] had not gone far enough or had not been maintained long enough to effectively remove guns from the local communities.[40] Participants explained that some people had hidden guns at the time of previous disarmaments instead of handing them over, including in

remote areas such as the Abim Hills and with allies across international borders. Corroborating these accounts, participants said that some of the guns in the possession of the UPDF that were recently recovered showed signs of having been buried for an extended period.

Secondly, participants attributed various weaknesses in current military actions as resulting in escalating insecurity. These weaknesses included inadequate preparation for or response to attacks, including the tracking of stolen animals and apprehension of thieves and raiders. Participants reported that a common refrain by UPDF soldiers was that they "would not die for the sake of Karamojong animals;" this attitude was taken to show poor commitment to their duties. In addition to these failures to act, communities also listed multiple malevolent actions taken by the military that caused anger and contributed to retaliatory thefts/raids by the victim community in the absence of resolutions and peace. Participants explained that they felt that the UPDF was engaged in diversionary tactics instead of tracking animals; this belief contributed to the view that the UPDF was directly involved in raids. Specific complaints against the

Figure 9. Intervention weaknesses by location (median score).

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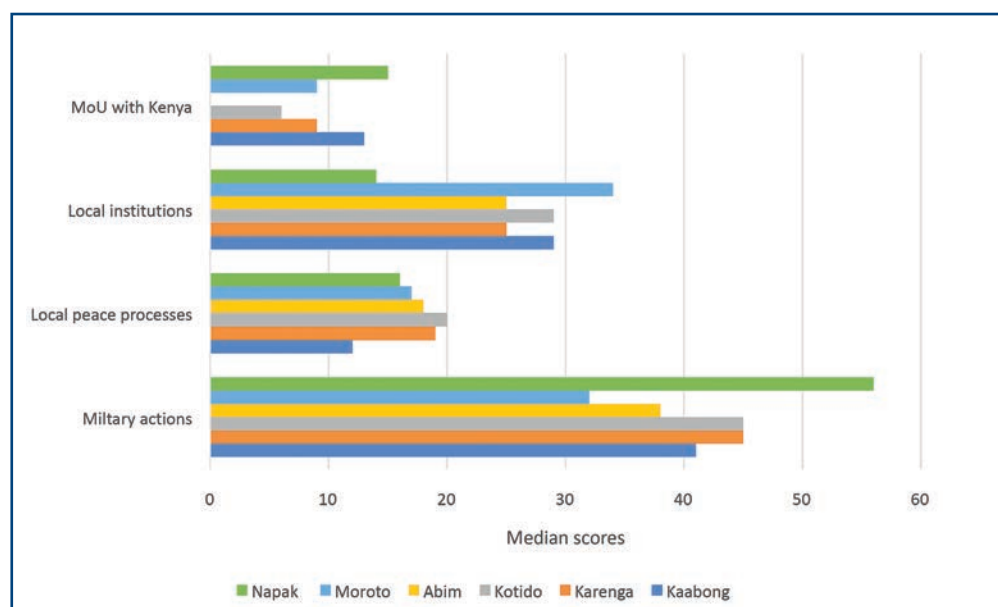
[38] Participants sometimes grouped the UPDF and LDUs together and sometimes did not. Mostly, however, when they spoke of the UPDF they were referring to the UPDF alone. Hence most of our discussion regarding the military should be taken to mean the UPDF, and we add the LDUs as relevant.

[39] The most recent previous disarmaments include those from 2001–2002 and from 2006–2010 (most active period of the latter). For more information, see Bevan, "Crisis in Karamoja: Armed Violence"; Human Rights Watch, "'Get the Gun!;" Stites and Akabwai, "'We Are Now Reduced to Women.'"

[40] Of note, the initial phases of the active disarmament that started in 2006 were extremely brutal, and many communities objected strongly (and at times with counterforce) to the human rights abuses they felt they endured (Human Rights Watch 2007; Stites and Akabwai, "Changing Roles, Shifting Risks"). In addition, disarmament initially increased insecurity, and included theft and violence, for many residents of the sub-region (Stites and Marshak, "Who Are the Lonetia?"). Despite the brutality and initial increased insecurity, evidence from more recent years indicates that many people—including in the areas that bore the brunt of force and disproportional use of violence by the UPDF in the 2006–2010 period, such as Kotido—felt that the disarmament operation was both necessary and effective, at least at the time (Stites et al., "A Better Balance: Revitalized Pastoral Livelihoods").

UPDF included the following:

- Soldiers requesting payment (in cash, airtime, or transport) in exchange for pursing raided or stolen animals;

- Soldiers requesting that the community hand over their guns before they would pursue raiders or raided animals;

- Presumed direct involvement with raiders and criminals, as evidenced in soldiers' refusal to discuss how raiders have military-issue uniforms, weapons, and ammunition;

- Accepting bribes to release perpetrators of raids;

- Immunity for UPDF soldiers presumed to be involved in raids at the same time that LDU members are punished;

- Indiscriminate arrests and punitive actions against entire communities as opposed to pursuit and detention of individuals who committed the crime.

The third area of military weakness listed by participants relates to the charge of indiscriminate (and often nefarious) impounding of animals, including from animal owners and communities who were not involved in raids. This complaint has been voiced since at least the start of the 2006 disarmament.[41] Participants explained that the impounding of animals and refusal to return animals in a timely fashion leads to anger as well as a desire to acquire more animals through other means. This combination contributes to the rise in raiding and leads communities to view the UPDF as criminal and as an enemy. Specific complaints related to military impounding of animals included:

- Impounded animals disappearing from barracks, presumably sold or slaughtered for meat;

- Partial or non-return of impounded animals, even when owners had no involvement in raids;

- Arresting or beating of the owners when they enquire about impounded animals, which was seen as an effort to scare people into abandoning their animals;

- Being asked for a bribe or to hand over a weapon in order to have animals released, including when owners had no involvement in raids;

- Handing over animals to those who are not their owners but who pay the bribes for release;

- Indiscriminate impounding of animals from communities not associated with raiders, but that raiders passed through in an effort to throw off trackers.

In addition to the above, the continuation of protected kraals, first established by the UPDF in 2006, cuts across the categories of military failures, intervention weaknesses, and impounding of animals. We have opted to include the protected kraals under local institutions in light of their current pervasiveness in regional livelihoods and dynamics, but we recognize that the existence of protected kraals still creates mistrust and underlines many of the listed problems associated with the military actions.

When taken together, the military-related intervention weaknesses discussed here are by far the most substantial escalating factors to the conflict across both participant group and location. This point is a critical one: community-level participants are not anti-UPDF, but they see the UPDF's failure and actions as being the primary escalating factors—the wind that blows the flames of the fire—in regard to the current resumption of conflict and insecurity in the region.

Intervention weaknesses associated with local peace processes

The second category of intervention weaknesses are those associated with local peace processes. In this section we first discuss problems with peace committees and then the collapse of the local peace resolutions and agreements, though we note that there are numerous overlaps between these two topics.

The Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN[42]), in collaboration with humanitarian and development entities such as International Rescue Committee (IRC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established the first peace committees around 2001/2, at the beginning of the short-lived voluntary disarmament in the 2001–2002 disarmament operation. The committees were meant to function at the village and sub-county levels. The village committees were mainly composed of community members while committees at sub-county level were under leadership of political leaders such as LCIIIs. In 2013 when the Nabilatuk/Moruitit Resolutions were signed (see below), these committees, especially at the village level, were given an additional role: to implement the resolutions.

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41 Author observations, based on research starting in Karamoja in late 2006 and continuing to the present.

42 CEWARN is a cooperative intergovernmental body that seeks to assess and report situations that may lead to violence conflict in seven East African countries (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda).

These committees were a collaborative effort between government actors and local communities, and membership included male elders, male youth, and local political and security actors (the police and UPDF). They were responsible for tracking stolen animals and enforcing the local resolutions.

Around 2015 or 2016, a group of NGOs established similar but parallel structures (dubbed "community institutions" or "rangeland associations") with the purpose of mitigating conflict around access to natural resources. In other words, a range of community-level institutions performing similar and at times overlapping roles were in existence. The CEWARN peace committees (also responsible for implementation of the Nabilatuk/Moruitit Resolutions) were largely effective up to around 2015/16. At this time, according to participants, their activity level reduced due to old age or death of some members and limited external financial support.[43] According to a key informant, at the same time, the existence of the NGO committees began to have negative impacts on the functioning of the earlier peace committees.[44] As such, these various committees were having limited effectiveness prior to the 2019 return of conflict. As the illustrated in Figure 9, communities feel that weaknesses (also referred to as deception and "double standards") by these committees is an escalating factor in conflict today.

Relatedly, the weaknesses or lack of peace meetings between groups[45] is also leading to escalation of conflict and insecurity; the connection between peace meetings and escalation of conflict was felt to be most important in Abim, an area that bears the brunt of attacks by external actors. The factors around the failure of peace are interconnected: ineffectiveness, corruption, or weakness in one component has ripple effects upon the others. Although each of these components related to peace score relatively low on the community weighting of intervention weaknesses, when viewed cumulatively they form the basis of the broader peace architecture in the region. This system is clearly damaged and no longer able to effectively keep the peace, despite doing so for five or more years. In particular, participants faulted the peace committee system for the following reasons:

- Limited involvement of communities in the selection of peace committee members or criteria for selection, especially at sub-county level where political leaders such as LCIIIs were involved. Some participants reported that non-reformed raiders were active on

peace committees. External agencies were also faulted for less support to peace committees in the implementation of their peace activities.

- Duplication of efforts between CEWARN/community committees and those established by the NGOs. These were frequently operating in the same locations.

- Double-speak by some of the committee members, who were seen as preaching peace at the same time that they were collaborating with raiders. Evidence was seen in lack of implementation of agreed-upon resolutions from peace meetings and the arrest of some committee members for perpetrating raids.

- Committee members from neighboring communities who attended peace meetings allegedly fed information about herd locations to those back home. This suspicion arose from the timing of raids; some immediately followed peace meetings.

- Peace committee members allegedly received direct benefits from raids, including receiving bribes from raiders to not expose them, collaborating with internal and external raiders, coordinating raids using mobile phones, and working with the military and other officials to benefit from impounded animals.

When asked why the peace committee members had become corrupt or ineffective in their work, participants listed many of the systemic problems that contribute to raids overall. They explained that the integrity and commitment to duty by peace committee members was compromised by hunger, poverty, limited livelihood activities, and lack of incentives for their work. These economic factors made the receipt of bribes or loot from raiders attractive. In addition, participants felt that local peace committee members had difficulty maintaining their commitments to peace once their own communities were suffering due to raids. Lastly, participants explained that many peace committee members were scared of being targeted and killed by warriors for their work.

The work of the peace committees was integral to the local Nabilatuk and Moruitit Resolutions. Created by a range of stakeholders in 2013, these two similar resolutions established the "two-for-one" policies whereby a thief (or his community) had to return two times the number of

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43 Simon Longoli, KDF, personal communication.

44 Ibid.

45 Some of the weaknesses in peace meetings include dishonesty and mistrust of discussions and resolutions, opportunism, lack of or infrequent meetings, poor inclusion of the diverse perpetrators, poor attention to resolutions from meetings, lack of guidelines for organizing dialogue meetings, or the occurrence of a raid shortly after a peace meeting.

animals stolen, plus one animal that went to those who helped in the recovery (sometimes called "1x2+1").[46] The two Loyoro Agreements between the Jie and Dodoth[47] and between the Turkana and Dodoth[48] were additional important pacts that established shared grazing access. Peace committees were tasked with upholding and enforcing these resolutions and agreements. According to participants, a combination of factors contributed to collapse of these agreements. These include:

- The military allegedly introduced a punitive approach of indiscriminate impounding, rather than following the widely accepted 1x2+1 approach. The army reportedly justified impounding by saying the communities had stopped turning over criminals, but local participants saw the military's vested interests in accruing livestock as driving this shift.

- Abuse of the agreements by some peace committees, community leaders, and communities. Some peace committees were more focused on animal recovery than on promoting peace. Others reportedly accepted bribes from raiding communities to either not pursue stolen animals or not enforce the two-for-one return formula.

- Dangers posed to peace committees (implementers of the agreement), particularly once the military began arbitrary impoundment, which some participants blamed on collusion by members of the peace committees. This mistrust undermined the work of the peace committees who were assumed to be corrupt, and some members were targeted and killed as a result.

- The local agreements allowed for the recovering of animals at the two-for-one ratio from a raider's relatives if the raider was not apprehended. Some agencies[49] felt that the 1x2+1 penalty was overly harsh and that this form of collective punishment (punishing communities and not individual culprits) was a human rights violation; hence the agreements were legally challenged. However, the justice and legal critique disregarded the sociocultural fabric upon which the agreements were based and did not provide an alternative.

Perhaps most critically, there were reportedly no efforts to review or adjust the agreements once their weaknesses emerged. If such action had been done in a timely fashion, it might have been able to prevent the collapse of these agreements and the resumption of widespread conflict.

Intervention weaknesses related to local institutions
Local institutions—in the form of markets and protected kraals—form the third category of intervention weaknesses from the perspective of local communities. The existence of livestock markets as a place for ready sale of raided animals, including to large-scale traders from outside the region, was seen as an escalating factor in the conflict and insecurity. The discussion of livestock markets relates to the role of live animal traders discussed earlier and is closely associated with allegations about the commercialization of livestock raiding. A ready market for stolen animals is essential to any large-scale raiding operation, as raiders and thieves need to move stolen animals out of their hands (and preferably out of the region) to avoid tracking and detection. These markets are often in secret locations.[50] Participants explained that transactions took place in the bush, quickly, and through well-coordinated connections between raiders, livestock traders, security agencies, and intermediaries. Non-raiding-related factors helped to drive the growth of bush sales, including the closure of markets during COVID-19 and the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) quarantine. Although numerous participants identified markets as an escalating factor of conflict, they were also somewhat reluctant to discuss this issue due to fear that a clampdown on markets that are essential for basic needs could occur. As heard during proportional piling exercises, "Do not put many stones in the market category; they [the government] might close them" (Namukur Village, Kacheri Town Council, Kotido District, May 4, 2022).

Targeted attacks on so-called protected kraals receive approximately the same weight of importance as the role of livestock markets. These kraals (meaning simply cattle enclosures, in this instance) are generally adjacent to military barracks and emerged as part of the 2006 disarmament campaign in purported response to the lack of protection provided for livestock assets in the 2001–2002 operation.[51] Largely disbanded by the early 2010s

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46 This additional animal was both a penalty and an incentive to encourage engagement by trackers. See Howe et al., "'We Now Have Relative Peace.'"

47 This agreement was signed on February 8, 2019. It detailed bylaws on natural resource and conflict management between the Jie of Nakapelimoru Sub-County (Kotido District) and the Dodoth of Loyoro Sub-County (Kaabong District).

48 This agreement was signed on March 3, 2016 and entailed bylaws on resource (water) sharing between the Dodoth of Loyoro Sub-County (Kaabong District) and the Turkana of Kenya.

49 The justice, law, and order sector, including the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Uganda Human Rights Commission.

50 Another form of market transaction seen as an escalator was the sale of stolen animals to local butchers, highlighted earlier as one of the actors to the conflict.

51 There is no official UPDF or other government entity policy establishing the protected kraals, but they emerged in multiple locations in a short time period at the start of the active phase of disarmament in 2006 (Stites and Akabwai, "'We Are Now Reduced to Women'").

except for in border areas (such as Kalapata in Kaabong), they reappeared starting in mid-2020 when insecurity resumed and are again generally situated near military barracks. The large concentration of animals in one location makes the protected kraals an appealing target, and potential collaboration between thieves/raiders and security forces (as discussed above) may facilitate easy access to these animals. There were also reports of animals disappearing from protected kraals. These animals are allegedly sold or eaten by the army. The army reportedly impounded animals in the protected kraals on suspicion that they have been mixed with raided animals. Although doing so was risky, these happenings made some people remove their animals from protected kraals and keep them in their own homes. The weight given to this factor illustrates how the failure of an institution to function as expected can escalate conflict, particularly if thefts incite revenge or retaliatory attacks.[52]

Memorandum of Understanding between Kenya and Uganda

In addition to the above, participants also listed poor implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kenya and Uganda as a factor in escalating conflict and insecurity. The MoU was signed on September 13, 2019, in support of the Kenya (Turkana/West Pokot)-Uganda (Karamoja) cross-border program for sustainable peace and development. The overall objective of the MoU was to afford communities on the Kenya and Uganda sides of the border opportunities for better cooperation, close

coordination, and peaceful coexistence, as well as to improve livelihoods and socioeconomic conditions.[53]

However, communities complained that the MoU did not seem to prevent Turkana from entering Uganda with their weapons. Some local communities reportedly bought guns from the Turkana or formed alliances with the armed Turkana to raid other communities. In addition, community dialogues between the Turkana and local communities are meant to take place before the Turkana enter Uganda, but these do not appear to be taking place. Overall, people felt that both the Turkana herders and the Kenyan government were abusing the generosity offered by the local communities and government that allowed Turkana to graze animals in Uganda.

How do community-driven factors escalate conflict?

Participants also identified escalating factors that took place at the community level. These were described as factors that illustrated how communities themselves perpetrated the conflict and insecurity. Figure 10 illustrates views by participant group of the weighting of these various factors.

Participants listed 13 community-driven escalating factors. Of these, eight received consistently high scores in the proportional piling exercises as shown in Figure 10 (the five low-scoring factors are combined under the "other" category[54]). Interesting differences exist in these data. Men

Figure 10. Community-driven escalating factors by participant group (median scores).

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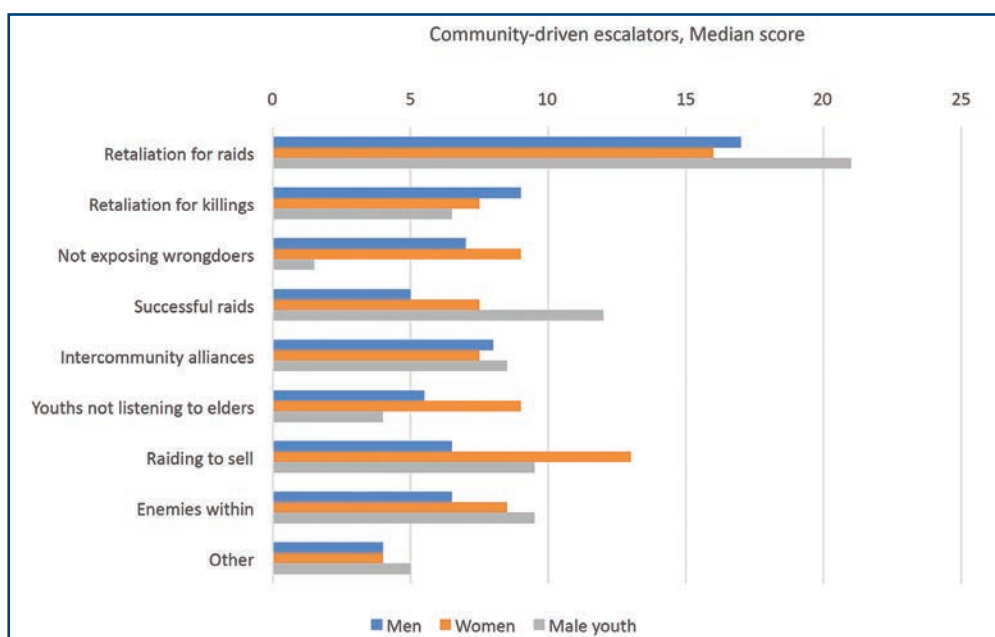
[52] For an in-depth look at retaliatory motives for cattle raiding, see D. Eaton, "The Business of Peace: Raiding and Peace Work along the Kenya–Uganda Border (Part I)," *African Affairs* 107 (2008): 89–110.

[53] Government of the Republic of Kenya and Government of the Republic of Uganda, 2019, "Memorandum of Understanding: The cross-border integrated programme for sustainable peace and socio-economic transformation for the Karamoja Cluster."

[54] The five categories included under "other" include: weak authority of elders, luxurious lifestyles, liquor consumption (weakens people and increases vulnerability to raids), not admitting to an offense, and raiding tactics.

and women both weighted retaliation (with a goal to replace stolen or lost animals) as the primary factor, followed by retaliations to avenge death (men's second-highest response) and raiding to sell animals (women's second-highest answer). Retaliation to replace lost animals happened because of weaknesses, mistrust, and biases (partiality) in military actions when recovering raided animals. Other actions that angered communities and led to retaliatory raids include: no compensation of raided animals; indiscriminate impounding of animals and some of those animals disappearing from the barracks; imposters falsely claiming impounded animals as their own; victims exaggerating the number of animals stolen/raided; and the army demanding bribes for impounded animals to be released.

While male youth rated retaliation to replace animals as the highest escalating factor, they weighted this factor much lower than men and women did and gave almost the same weight to the experience of successful raids. Carrying out successful raids is an important escalating factor because it brings bounty, prestige, and pride; as such, this experience can be self-reinforcing. Participants explained that other factors motivate young men to conduct raids until they were successful, such as limited recovery of raided animals by the army and the economic benefits

accrued from raided animals, including personal luxuries or investments that raiders at times keep for individual use.

Young men weighted raiding to sell as the third-highest escalating factor. Raiding to sell, the starkest example of commercialized raids, is encouraged by the ready market and the collaborations between the various actors, as discussed earlier. Both men and women felt that the culture of not exposing wrongdoers was escalating conflict—i.e., *Kimuk ekile*[55]—but male youth weighted this factor much lower than the other two groups. All participant groups claimed that they did not always know the identity of such wrongdoers, who were unsanctioned and operate from the bush. Similarly, while men weighted high the presence of enemies within (i.e., stealing internally or collaborating with outside thieves) and male youth gave this moderate weight, women felt that this factor was much less important. Considered together, raiding to sell, reaping the benefits of successful raids, and the emergence and motivation of enemies within help to explain what communities see as the growth of commercialized raids.

Although they received less weighting, it is worth listing some of the responses included in the "other" category and which group felt these were most important. Listing these

Table 4. Responses contained in the category of "other" in the discussion of community factors escalating conflict

Escalating factor	Weighted most heavily
Weak authority of elders	Men in Kotido
Having luxurious lifestyles	Male youth in Kaabong
	Women in Karenga
Liquor consumption[56]	Male youth in Kotido
	Men, women, and male youth in Abim
Not admitting having committed an offense	Men in Karenga
Multiple raiding tactics[57]	Men in Napak
	Men in Abim
	Men in Karenga

[55] This is a Karimojong phrase meaning "do not expose a man." It describes the unwillingness to expose the raider/thief, especially if they are one of your own community members. Also refer to Lotira and Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment." Relatedly, communities do not expose wrongdoers for the following internal reasons: blood relations; an act of betrayal; potential hatred and the fear of being targeted and killed by the exposed or their relatives; and the pain of losing animals to raids. External reasons include poor recovery of lost animals by the army; the fear of torture by the military; weaknesses in government prosecution and judicial system (wrongdoers bribe to be released); and government disregard for communities' internal judicial systems and mechanisms.

[56] "You consume alcohol, you sleep (*ngaju na ngagwe*), and you cannot respond to a raid/theft. Additionally, you cannot pursue raided/stolen animals because you have been weakened by alcohol. This is worsened by lack of defense/response tools such as a gun." Nawanatau village, Loputuk Sub-county, Moroto District, March 25, 2022.

[57] Some of the raiding tactics include:

    a. Immediately after a raid, raiders scatter in different directions or move in the direction of another community so as to confuse the military. Afterwards, they converge and distribute the raided animals.

    b. Rather than drive raided animals through the bush, they pass through villages so as to divert the attention of the military to the villages en route. The military end up impounding animals of communities that raided animals (or raiders) passed through.

helps to illustrate the range and diversity of factors taking place within their own communities that people perceive as escalating conflict and insecurity.

Which weapons are used most frequently in the current conflict and insecurity?

We asked participants to list the weapons or other tools they felt were used most frequently in perpetrating conflict and insecurity in recent years. They listed the following eight items: guns and ammunition (split into coming "from outside" Uganda[58] and coming "from inside" Uganda[59]), spears, arrows, use of motorbikes,[60] pangas, small axes, and metal bars for digging. The weighting was consistent in nearly all districts: 1) guns and ammunition from outside, 2) guns and ammunition from within, and 3) arrows. In Moroto, participants listed "use of motorbikes" ahead of arrows. Responses were also relatively similar across participant group, although male youth FGDs often diverged from men and women FGDs regarding whether the guns and ammunition were primarily from outside or from within. The direction of this trend (i.e., whether participants reported more weapons from inside or outside Uganda) was neither consistent nor readily explainable by the research team.

What external phenomena and events influence conflict and insecurity?

Assessment participants called attention to broader events and phenomena that affected the context in which they lived and in which conflict was occurring. These included the COVID-19 pandemic and related closures of markets and services, recent elections and campaigning, recent droughts, the desert locust invasion, creation of new districts, livestock quarantine regulations and accompanying closure of markets, and the Moroto Prison break. Table 5 shows the first- and second-most heavily weighted of these factors by district.

The effects of COVID-19 evidenced here confirm earlier Feinstein research that demonstrated the pronounced livelihood impacts of COVID-19 in Karamoja despite low reported rates of infection.[61] [62] The Moroto Prison break, in which more than 220 prisoners escaped from the prison in September 2020, was ranked highest in Abim and Napak (where it was a close third behind the desert locust invasion). Participants in the Abim and Napak assessment sites explained that a majority of the prisoners who escaped with guns were Jie, and those guns were subsequently used by Jie to raid Abim and Napak communities. Participants in Kaabong experienced the most impact of the livestock quarantine (e.g., FMD) and associated market restrictions. In the recent years, there has been growth and dynamism in the Kaabong livestock market; this growth has affected the livelihoods and the economy in the district and the Karamoja region. Importantly, the role of external factors and phenomena serve as a reminder that the challenges in the region are not due solely to internal issues but are influenced and shaped by broader and systemic factors.

Table 5. External events influencing conflict and insecurity, by district

District	1st most weighted response	2nd most weighted response
Abim	Moroto Prison break	COVID-19
Kaabong	COVID-19	Livestock quarantine
Karenga	COVID-19	Recent droughts
Kotido	COVID-19	Recent droughts
Moroto	COVID-19	Recent droughts
Napak	COVID-19	Desert locust invasion

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[58] These were mostly from South Sudan and Kenya.

[59] Internal sources included guns hidden during disarmament, guns and bullets suspected to be loaned or bought from UPDF and LDUs (including guns and bullets gotten from those killed), and guns and bullets from the Moroto Prison break.

[60] Motorbikes were used in different ways: to drop raiders close to the targeted kraal/village; pick up raiders injured in the raid; carry small stock raided such as goats; drop food and water for raiders; prior spying to locate the locations of animals.

[61] Lotira and Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment."

[62] Lotira et al., "Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts."

DISCUSSION

The above findings illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict and insecurity in Karamoja from the perspective of those most involved in and affected by the resumption of conflict. However, it is important to keep in mind that this assessment captures only a moment in time and that conflict is mutable, dynamic, and adaptive. In addition, although we sampled a range of voices, our sample is limited in size and geographic scope. As such, we can assume that there are alternate and evolving understandings and experiences of conflict and that these will continue to change. This section revisits the objectives of the assessment and provides additional analysis on the questions of where the return to conflict is taking place, who is involved, and why it is occurring. In this section we also work in the views of the key informants we interviewed, including representatives of local and district government and non-governmental officials.

Where?

By and large, conflict occurs in regular and predictable locations within each sub-county. Called hotspots in this assessment, these largely entail corridors along the borders between ethnic (such as Jie and Dodoth) or territorial (such as Bokora and Matheniko) groups. Conflict also occurs in areas of shared natural resources, such as grazing areas. However, as discussed further below, there is little evidence that the conflict occurs *because* of this competition, but rather because these different groups cohabit these areas for a period of time.

Not only did conflict occur in predictable and known corridors, but participants were also very clear on the variations in intensity at each of these areas. For example, participants in Karenga District listed six different corridors where conflict regularly occurred and then divided the 100 stones to indicate the relative intensity of raids across these six locations. One corridor area (along the Karenga-Kacheri border) received 49 of these stones, and the next two locations received a combined 38 stones. Of the six corridors where participants in Moroto listed conflict as occurring, three received 90 out of 100 stones. This pattern held across all districts: the top-three conflict corridors in each district received a combined 75–90% of stones. This finding illustrates that not only do participants know where conflict is occurring, they are also well aware of the extent and intensity of conflict in specific locations.

District officials[63] confirmed that the conflict hotspots and raiding routes are well known. Security representatives did not, however, provide explanations as to why insecurity was persisting in these areas despite this knowledge. Local leaders felt that the raiders were able to avoid and overwhelm security forces with sophisticated tactics. These include well-grounded intelligence and scattering in different directions after an attack to throw off trackers.[64]

Representatives from national and international NGOs working on peacebuilding in the region discussed some of the difficulties in tailoring conflict management programs to specific locations. The first difficulty was that most NGO activities are designed by district and sub-county without a strong alignment to conflict corridors. However, conflict cuts across communities and administrative divisions, making the location-specific model relatively cumbersome and ineffective. Second, conflict is dynamic on both temporal and spatial levels, and thus requires continuous gathering of information and flexible programming. Most NGOs (and particularly international NGOs) are not set up for speed of information gathering or nimble responses. Third, NGO staff explained that most of their conflict-related programming is reactive, as opposed to proactive and continuous in nature. Fourth, a variety of funding and contract modalities, as well as implementation weaknesses, limit the effectiveness with which NGO actors can address conflict. These include difficulties being open regarding program weaknesses, short-term funding models, top-down decision making, and poor coordination that leads to duplication of activities. Lastly, some staff felt that certain programs might cause more harm than good and lamented the lack of an overarching policy to promote peace.

Who?

The earlier discussion of actors to the conflict shows the relative role of different participants and different types of participants. Some of these responses—such as the high involvement of male youth—are in accordance with what most observers and stakeholders would likely have expected. Less expected, in our opinion, is the diversity and depth of involvement of the different actors, including those within a community and from outside, those from the public and private sector, and enemies and allies. This breadth of actors indicates the complexity of the dynamics of the current conflict and insecurity. We also believe that the extent and range of involvement indicates that this current phase of conflict is markedly different from the

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63 Resident District Coordinators (RDCs) and District Internal Security Officers (DISOs).

64 Lotira and Ayele, "Food Security, Nutrition, and Conflict Assessment."

low-level but persistent insecurity that started in approximately 2009 on the heels of the intensive period of disarmament. This earlier period was marked by widespread theft of household and productive assets, opportunistic but small-scale theft of livestock, and a reported lack of either sanction or involvement in these thefts by the wider community. The young men who participated in this theft were called *lonetia* (opportunistic thieves) in many places, and motivations included both household needs and personal materialistic desires.[65] In contrast, evidence from this assessment indicates that the recent resumption of conflict is much more deeply embedded within local community structures as well as exacerbated by participation of external actors such as military personnel.

The generation of the extensive list of 31 different actors and the careful weighting of the extent of the different actors' involvement illustrate the depth of *knowledge* of local communities as to who is involved—to varying degrees and in different ways—in the current conflict. It is worth noting, however, that information and perceptions of actors' involvement was not uniform by participant group and location. This lack of uniformity is to be expected but highlights that, as with the conflict itself, perceptions of it are complex, dynamic, and multifaceted.

Our discussions with key informants on actors to the conflict resulted in a much less diverse and detailed list than was generated by local communities. In each of the 14 key informant interviews, we asked participants to list the actors they felt were most central to the return and continuation of conflict and insecurity. All key informants listed male youth as the main actors, followed by other community members such as elders (cited by eight out of 14), women (cited by five out of 14), and local leaders (two out of 14). Only two key informants listed the UPDF as playing a role in the current conflict and insecurity. No key informants mentioned actors such as visitors, seers, or local collaborators, all of whom scored high on the community lists. DISOs mentioned two actors not listed by community participants: i) cross-border livestock and cereal traders, who were reported to transport small arms

hidden in cereal bags; and ii) firewood collectors, who allegedly transport weapons from border areas to communities hidden inside bundles of firewood.

Why?

The reasons behind the return of conflict in Karamoja may be multifaceted, but these various facets are not only relatively straightforward but are also predictable. Many of the long-standing causes of conflict have not changed from earlier periods of insecurity. The "relative peace"[66] that followed the most intense period of disarmament (2006 to 2010–2012, depending on location) was just that—relative in comparison to the many years of often violent conflict that had preceded it. In addition, the process of disarmament that was instrumental in establishing this peace was both forceful and external, leaving simmering resentments as well as widespread trauma across a swathe of the population.[67] Conditions of relative peace were created by the forceful removal of weapons, the continued presence of the UPDF in the region, and the adoption of and widespread adherence to the local resolutions (the Nabilatuk and Moruitit Resolutions) that set up the means of livestock recovery (via the peace committees) and a system of penalties and reparations that served to mitigate retaliatory attacks. Once peace was imposed, the fragile stability was held in place through community engagement and accountability, the continued presence of the security forces, and the accompanying growth of economic options as new trade routes opened, markets emerged, towns expanded, and roads were paved. This combination of factors meant that—although life was still extremely difficult for the majority of people in the region— households were able to get by through diversified labor activities and to engage in these activities in relative safety. Many of these activities took advantage of the growing demand for goods and services in the expanding towns.[68] As such, we can think of the relative peace as related to several pillars: removal of weapons, continued UPDF presence and reliability, effective and trusted local resolutions, and at least the possibility of economic improvement.[69] However, the peace required all of these pillars to remain stable; weakness in one of these areas

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[65] See Stites and Marshak, "Who Are the Lonetia?"

[66] The term "relative peace" was in widespread use by both local community members and wider stakeholders in the period after the most intense part of the disarmament. See Howe et al., "'We Now Have Relative Peace.'"

[67] See P. Iyer and E. Stites, "Trauma, Loss and other Psychosocial Drivers of Excessive Alcohol Consumption in Karamoja, Uganda," *Pastoralism* 11, no. 30 (2021).

[68] See E. Stites, "'The Only Place to Do This Is in Town': Experiences of Rural-Urban Migration in Northern Karamoja, Uganda," *Nomadic Peoples* 24 (2020): 32–55.

[69] Abrahams' analysis lists two pillars as keeping the peace: the removal of weapons and the UPDF presence (D. Abrahams, "Land Is Now the Biggest Gun: Climate Change and Conflict in Karamoja, Uganda," *Climate and Development* 13, no. 8 (2021): 748–60, **https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2020.1862740**). In our opinion, this analysis overlooks the important role of the local peace resolutions. The role of economic opportunity—or the *potential* for economic opportunity—is more difficult to measure. However, we posit that the fact that very visible economic growth was occurring—in the form of markets, trade, transport, investment, technology, services, etc.—allowed young people in particular to be able to envision avenues to improve their lives in ways that had previously not been available. When combined with the other three pillars, this possibility went a good distance towards keeping the (relative) peace.

could unleash a cascade affect, with the potential for more serious damage to the peace.

Based on the narratives provided by participants, the event that set in motion the weakening of these four pillars was the spike in fighting between the Jie and Turkana that began in 2019. This spike created ripple effects across the region, with increased cycles of raiding and retaliation, mistrust in peace committees in areas where raids were on the rise, and the gradual unravelling of the community resolutions. These conditions might have been rectified were they not followed by a series of external shocks, including widespread hunger due to drought in 2020 and 2021, economic contraction and closure of markets due to COVID-19 and the FMD quarantine, the desert locust invasion, and the transfer of UPDF personnel to Somalia and to other duties in Uganda, including the enforcing of COVID-19 regulations. These events created a climate in which youth began to increase raiding activity with impunity, external involvement in commercial raiding intensified, and economic gains and potential for successful alternative livelihoods evaporated in the eyes of the male youth. The peace architecture eroded at the same time, and the stage was set for a widespread resumption of conflict.

Contrary to many theories, very few participants listed competition over natural resources as a root cause, driver, or escalating factor in the return of conflict in the region. Of the 18 different categories of interviews (groups of men, women, and male youth across six districts), only women in Moroto and male youth in Moroto assigned any weight to "fight over pasture and water" as a root cause of the conflict in recent years.[70] This finding does not mean that competition over resources plays no role in the recent conflict, as some factors may be indirectly related to such competition, such as "animals disappearing at watering and grazing points" or "raiding to displace" (both listed as root causes). However, it is notable that although this option was on the list used in all locations, participants found this causal factor to be of little-to-no relevance to the current conflict.

Stakeholders such as the NGOs, security agencies, and local leaders were broadly aware of many of the factors listed by participants as being behind the resurgence of conflict in the region. However, the key informants' responses and analysis generally lacked the diversity, depth, and detail displayed by local communities. Responses from 14 key informants gave prominence to the following factors:

- Commercialization of raids (listed by 10/14);

- Increase in availability of weapons (8/14);

- Increase in livestock poverty (6/14);

- Use of phones to facilitate raids (6/14);

- Weakness in military actions (5/14);

- Retaliation to replace raided/stolen animals (4/14).

The strong emphasis on commercialization of raids was interesting, as highlighted in the opinion of an LCV: "We do not see an end to the current conflict because it is a war of business just like what is happening in Somalia and Congo. The beneficiaries would not want it to stop. Almost all actors in this conflict benefit from it."

One of the most important takeaway messages from this assessment is the recognition of the cyclical nature of conflict in the form of raids (Figure 11). Many of the primary root causes of raids—such as hunger, livestock poverty, debt cycles, greed for livestock and money, and conflict among other groups—are also impacts and outcomes of these same root causes. Victims of raids experience these repercussions and may, in turn, engage in raids themselves to address these issues. Revenge attacks were not discussed by participants in this study, but other analyses show that cycles of retaliation and revenge are important elements in the perpetuation of raiding and resulting insecurity.[71] Once established, these feedback loops create a self-reinforcing negative cycle of root causes, escalating factors, and outcomes that is extremely difficult to disrupt.

While many of the drivers of conflict in Karamoja are internal, the discussion of external phenomena that influence conflict in the region—including COVID-19, recurrent and recent droughts, and the desert locust invasion, among others—serves as a reminder that neither Karamoja nor the conflict within the sub-region function in a vacuum. This reminder is particularly important given the history of poor relations between the Ugandan state and Karamoja and the intentional marginalization of the sub-region.[72] Rather, global and national events—including but not limited to public health responses, fluctuations in global commodities, foreign wars, and international trade (both licit and illicit)—affect local economies and decision making at the household and individual level. Such decisions include, at times, engaging

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[70] Of the 18 different root causes that women and male youth in Moroto weighted as relevant, "fight over pasture and water" was fifth from the bottom in relative weight assigned.

[71] Eaton, "The Business of Peace."

[72] See Howe et al., "'We Now Have Relative Peace.'"

Figure 11. Illustration of feedback loops in the conflict/raiding cycle.
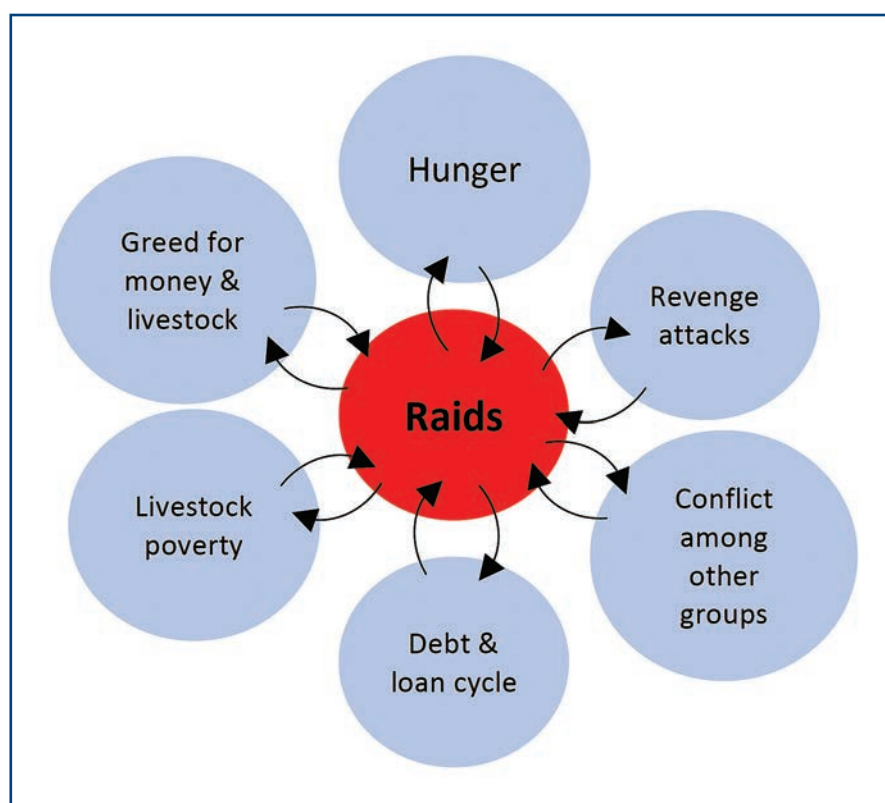
in criminal behavior in the pursuit of rewards, be these monetary or intangible.

The use of adapted participatory epidemiology methods in conflict analysis

This assessment used adapted participatory epidemiology methods to gather data on various facets related to conflict. Overall, we found these techniques to be practical and successful in creating an environment in which local community members discussed the topics and shared their views. We were able to discuss potentially sensitive issues, such as views on local perpetrators of raids, without a problem, due in large part to the tactful and innovative nature of the participatory methods. A downside was the level of detail that these in-depth discussions entailed, and hence the amount of time required for each participatory activity. Because of time constraints, activities in each location had to be limited, which decreased the comparability of information across multiple locations. A longer timeframe, fewer locations, and a more targeted set of queries would help to address these issues.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This assessment set out to understand the return of conflict and insecurity in Karamoja from the perspectives of those most involved as both perpetrators and victims. We feel strongly that our prioritization of the views and experiences of local people not only adds critical voices to the debate, but also presents key information that has the potential to inform the understanding of external actors and shape responses aimed at conflict mitigation. This section presents these points and then offers implications for policy makers and programmers.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- The critical dimensions around the return of conflict—including the where, who, and why—are *largely known and understood* by the local population. In other words, although the resumption of conflict and insecurity is multifaceted and complex, the drivers behind this phenomenon are neither mysterious nor opaque.

- The relatively predictable return of conflict raises questions about past actions to promote peace and security (appropriateness, consistency, impact, and sustainability) by stakeholders. The known and predicted elements of the collapse of the peace—and the relatively little effort that was dedicated to preventing this collapse from occurring—is an important point for external actors to take on board as they seek to mitigate conflict and build peace.

- Although male youth are the primary direct perpetrators of conflict and insecurity, the extent of involvement of others both within the communities (such as seers) and external to communities (including government and private sector actors) is a critical piece of the picture.

- While hunger is listed as the primary underlying motive for (as well as an outcome of) engagement in raids, participants detail a series of conditions that enabled the return of conflict and insecurity in the region. These included the collapse of the local peace resolutions, failures and weaknesses by the security sector, and a strong network and demand for the movement and sale of stolen animals.

- The increased commercialization of raids and engagement of external actors motivated by profit is an important characteristic of the resumption of conflict. This phenomenon exists because of unmet need for cash (for basic needs, school fees, and luxury goods) and the relative ease with which stolen animals can be sold.

- Contrary to the common understanding that most of the weapons used in raids originate from outside Uganda, this assessment reveals that a large portion comes from within the country.

- Community critique of interventions reveals that more attention should be paid to how such interventions are designed, especially with regard to local participation. A further and thorough review should be undertaken to tease out what works and what doesn't.

- The role of external factors and phenomena such as COVID-19 and ongoing drought in the resumed conflict serves as a reminder that the challenges in the region are not due solely to internal issues but are influenced and shaped by broader and systemic factors.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The findings and analysis of this assessment highlight both the opportunities and challenges for stakeholders to address the return of conflict in Karamoja. First and on the positive side, the past 16 years indicate that stability in the region is achievable and that local livelihoods benefit greatly when peace is realized. Second, although the conflict is multifaceted, members of local communities are very aware of the specific dynamics of conflict, from the root causes to the drivers to the escalating factors. This assessment aims to amplify these voices and experiences within the broader debate, and to highlight the importance of centering local perspectives in efforts to forge a solution to the conflict. Third, although members of local communities are active participants in the insecurity, they have also experienced a period of recent relative peace that they widely herald as being positive for lives and livelihoods. The positive economic and cultural gains made during this period may help local leaders to steer communities back to this more peaceful place.

Communities suggested a set of phased interventions to address the factors contributing to the return of insecurity. With text in italics to link to the causes of conflict, these included:

- *To address hunger, conflict between groups, the erosion of trust, and cycles of retaliation*, engage in the following <u>immediate actions:</u> a) address the chronic

food insecurity in the region; b) disarm groups in Uganda and Kenya while protecting lives, property, and human rights; and c) implement local conflict resolution activities, building off alliances created during peaceful periods and seeking to reverse the losses to assets and relations that have taken place in recent years.

- *To support resilient livelihood systems and to enable communities to rebuild asset bases without engaging in raiding*, support an <u>intermediate recovery phase:</u> support communities to recover from the impacts of conflict and insecurity through support based on community-driven and sustainable models for livestock-based, crop-based, and diversified livelihood systems.

- *To disrupt cycles of raiding, enable proactive responses, and support local processes for negotiation*, engage in <u>long-term actions:</u> design and implement peace-building activities between and within communities and effective conflict early warning systems. Develop and implement a multi-stakeholder coordinated strategy on peace, justice, and conflict resolution that takes into account the conflict early warning systems and includes proactive responses to spikes in conflict.

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Annex 1. Locations visited and the number of people interviewed

District	Sub-county	No. of villages /FGDs	Assessment participants		
			Men	Women	Male youth
Kotido	Kotido Municipality	3	17	26	17
	Rengen	2	7	10	7
	Napumpum	1	5	6	2
	Longaroe	2	7	26	5
	Kacheri Town Council	2	5	12	8
	Nakapelimoru	1	4	8	3
	Lokwakeal	1	5	10	10
	Panyangara	1	4	15	4
		13	54	113	56
Napak	Lopeei	4	29	28	21
	Lokopo	3	18	36	18
	Apeitolim	1	4	7	4
	Lotome	2	8	18	7
	Matany	1	5	13	6
		11	64	102	56
Moroto	Lotisan	5	22	25	25
	Nadunget	7	32	32	38
	Rupa	2	11	14	10
	Katikekile	1	1	4	8
	Loputuk	6	13	26	21
		21	79	101	102
Abim	Alerek	2	4	10	4
	Morulem	3	9	16	10
	Nyakwae	5	14	25	17
	Magamaga	2	6	8	7
	Abim	1	6	10	4
	Lotuke	1	6	4	4
	Awac	1	4	4	4
		15	49	77	50
Karenga	Sangar	2	4	15	8
	Lobalangit	1	3	5	9
	Kakwanga	1	3	7	2
	Kawalakol	3	9	18	10
	Lokori	1	3	10	3

Continued from previous page

District	Sub-county	No. of villages /FGDs	Assessment participants		
			Men	Women	Male youth
	Karenga	2	6	16	5
	Kapedo Town Council	2	6	17	5
	Kapedo	1	4	4	4
		13	38	92	46
Kaabong	Loyoro	1	2	4	4
	Sidok	2	7	14	6
	Kakamar	2	11	19	12
	Kalapata	2	8	21	10
	Lodiko	1	2	11	5
	Kathile Town Council	1	3	4	3
	Lolelia	2	6	12	5
	Kathile South	1	3	15	3
		12	42	100	48

Annex 2. List of key informants interviewed

Date	Name	Position and Organization	Location
May 31, 2022	John Bosco Okello	LCV (Acting)	Abim District
June 2, 2022	Achiyo Jennifer	Program Manager, AWOTID	Abim District
June 2, 2022	Sagal Henry	DISO	Abim District
June 21, 2022	Wopua George William	RDC	Moroto District
June 21, 2022	Innocent Lopor	GIZ	Moroto District
June 21, 2022	Mark Longole	Mercy Corps	Moroto District
June 22, 2022	Omoding Richard	Riamriam	Moroto District
June 22, 2022	John Bosco Nyanga	Saferworld	Moroto District
June 23, 2022		Justice and Peace Desk, Moroto Catholic Diocese	Moroto District
June 23, 2022	Simon Longoli	Karamoja Development Forum (KDF)	Moroto District
June 24, 2022	Patrick Lambert Achia	Whitaker	Moroto District
June 28, 2022		LCV	Napak District
June 28, 2022	Okori Dennis	RDC	Napak District
June 28, 2022	Odong Alfred	Deputy DISO	Napak District

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