

# THE TRAGEDY OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEPENDENT PASTORAL COMMUNITIES

## A case of Teso-Karamoja Border Land Conflict



**Arthur Bainomugisha  
Julius Okello  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy research paper presents the findings of the study on the border conflict between the Itesots and the Karimojong living in Katakwi and Moroto Districts located in North- Eastern Uganda. Karamoja and Teso regions have historically been experiencing violent conflicts revolving around cattle rustling and competition for access to water and pasture resources. The research is intended to provide a deeper understanding of the conflict and make proposals for its resolution and peacebuilding.

The research work is premised on the realization that the land question among pastoralists and their livelihood issues have not been given sufficient attention by policy makers. Consequently, pastoralists as an interest group in Uganda have been generally marginalized in development and this has resulted into an escalation of natural resource based conflicts especially revolving around the struggle to access and control of land, pasture and water resources which are the basis of their survival. In this research, we point out that unless quick and relevant conflict resolution and peacebuilding measures are put into place this conflict could escalate and lead to more violence and destruction.

ACODE would like to acknowledge the financial support and intellectual contribution of Dan Church Aid (DCA) which made it possible for us to undertake this research work. We hope this research will inform and influence Government policy and decision making over this border conflict.

The draft of this paper was presented at a high level dialogue meeting held in Kampala and Mbale respectively and we wish to acknowledge the input from the participants. Particular recognition is also made of the entire team at ACODE that read the draft report and provided useful intuitive comments. The intellectual input and objective critiques from the research team greatly contributed to the quality and outlook of this research work.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACODE</b>	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ASTU</b>	Anti Stock Theft Unit
<b>UPDF</b>	Uganda Peoples Defence Forces
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NGOs</b>	Non Governmental Organizations
<b>LCs</b>	Local Councils
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>MoLH &amp; UD</b>	Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development
<b>LRA</b>	Lords Resistance Army

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The regions of Teso and Karamoja located in North-Eastern Uganda have endured decades of inter-ethnic violent conflicts revolving around cattle rustling and competition for access and control of natural resources especially water and pasture. This historical conflict involves Karimojong pastoralists forcefully grazing their cattle and sheep in Teso region during the dry season and returning to their traditional grazing areas with their own as well as stolen animals whenever it rains and pasture sprouts. The current conflict which is a subject of this research pits two ethnically related groups – the Itesots and Karimojong over the Katakwi- Moroto districts border line. Both ethnic groups claim large chunks of land on either side of the border and accuse each other of land grabbing. This border conflict has already resulted into misery as hundreds of people have been displaced, mostly in Katakwi district, Teso region. Many people in Katakwi district live in internally displaced peoples' camps which are characterized by appalling and dehumanizing conditions. The situation is made worse and complicated by the availability of small arms and light weapons in the hands of the Karimojong which gives them power and undue advantage over their neighbors.

Increased violence between the Karimojong and Itesot could worsen environmental degradation and accelerate underdevelopment in all the neighboring regions. It also threatens to trigger a proliferation of small arms in the region as the Itesot seek to protect themselves or avenge themselves with attendant negative consequences. The impact of insecurity on development was underscored by the Poverty Eradication Action (PEAP) 2004/2008; Uganda's main policy and planning framework for development. The PEAP identified violent conflicts as one of the main causes of poverty in the country and an obstacle to the realization of fruits arising from poverty reduction strategies.

This research sought to establish the linkages between land scarcity, security and ethnic conflict among the Itesot and the Karimojong in Katakwi- Moroto districts and identify options on how to resolve the conflict. Katakwi district is occupied by the Itesot while Moroto is occupied by the Karimojong. The main objective of the study was to provide a deep analysis of the border land conflict between Katakwi - Moroto districts and establish its implications on peace and security in the region and the country as a whole. The research is premised on the realization that the land question among pastoralists and their livelihood issues have not been given sufficient attention by policy makers. Consequently, pastoralists as an interest group in Uganda have been generally marginalized in development and this has resulted into an escalation of natural resource based conflicts.

The research established that the causes of the Katakwi-Moroto border conflict revolve around environmental scarcity and stress, colonial marginalization



and the post-colonial containment policy towards the Karimojong people, lack of a clear border demarcation along the Katakwi and Moroto districts and the transhumant nature of the Karimojong. Other causes were identified as politicization of the border issues by politicians seeking political capital during elections; general political instability in Uganda; lack of a national land policy with a clear land conflict management mechanism and the availability of arms in the region which makes people opt for the use of force than peaceful resolution of the conflict. On the basis of these findings, the research makes a number of recommendations for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

## **General Recommendations and Way Forward**

The conflict between the Karimojong-Itesots over Katakwi and Moroto boarder has negatively impacted on both parties, although it has profoundly affected the settled farming communities in Katakwi, who are currently internally displaced. The border land conflict has escalated cattle rustling which has resulted into internal displacement of hundreds of people. Internal displacement has resulted in loss of livelihoods in the affected sub-counties especially cattle stocks and food. We therefore recommend actions and interventions to resolve the conflict targeting various actors.

### **1. The Government**

- **Government should persue a policy of confidence building in Karamoja**  
Successive governments in Uganda have pursued negative policies of containment rather than engagement with the Karimojong which made the latter resent government and plan to defend themselves against it and other hostile tribes. Government needs to invest in building confidence among the Karimojong by carrying out genuine and sustained development in Karamoja region. Development programmes should be supplemented by setting up security systems to ensure security for the people. Further, Government must involve the Karimojong in development programmes right from the design through the implementation stages. Government must avoid the top-down approach which assumes that the target people have nothing to contribute. The down-up approach enlists peoples input and support and creates ownership of the development programmes by the beneficiaries which in turn ensures success.

- **Government should review the Disarmament Programme**  
Government is currently carrying out the disarmament programme. This programme needs to involve the leadership and gain support of the communities in Karamoja since people are now tired of the gun with most of them identifying it as a source of their problems rather than security. Government also needs to manage the Disarmament Programme better to avoid excesses by security forces that cause resentment. Above all, Government needs to solicit support of neighboring countries including Kenya and Sudan which share the problem of small arms proliferation. This will ensure that disarmament in Uganda will not be followed by re-armament from these countries.

- **Quickly demarcate the Katakwi – Moroto Border**

Government also needs to urgently take a decisive step to resolve the looming violent border conflict between Katakwi and Moroto districts where the later is claiming large chunks of land inside Katakwi territory. All indications show that if the conflict is not urgently addressed and resolved peacefully, it could become more violent and destructive in the near future. This can be done by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development surveying and determining a permanent boarder between the two districts.

- **Government should Establish Rule of Law and Order in both Regions**

Government should also provide adequate judicial and law and order services in both regions especially in Karamoja. This requires recruitment and deployment of judicial officials at every sub county in Karamoja. Besides, adequate policing should be provided in both districts to apprehend and detain law breakers to stop the culture of impunity.

- **Empower the Ministry of Karamoja Affairs**

The Ministry of Karamoja Affairs should be empowered to deliver real development in Karamoja, including sensitization of people on key development initiatives. This ministry should be strengthened to wean off people from relief aid and other handouts to offer sustainable development which puts people in charge of their own destiny and survival. Efforts should be made to enlist support of neighbouring states especially Kenya and Sudan which face similar problems so as to address the regional dimensions of the problem.

- **Support Exchange Visits for Teso and Karamoja Leadership**

As noted earlier on, the problem of Karamoja and their neighbors partly stems from the containment policy by successive governments in Uganda. This created anger, resentment and hampered development within Karamoja region. There is an urgent need to facilitate exchange visits by the leadership in Karamoja to other peaceful areas. This will provide an opportunity for lesson learning and build a culture of tolerance and co-existence between the Karimojong and their neighbors. More importantly, opening up the region to the outside world would create job opportunities for the people from Karamoja and improve their livelihoods. This point is evidenced by the number of street kids and older people that have taken to begging on the streets of Kampala which is their first interaction with the outside world. In other words, this contact and interaction can be facilitated to be more honorable and meaningful.

- **Stop or Prevent the Militarization of the Region**

In order to prevent Karimojong cattle rustling and LRA infiltration into Teso, Government created the Anti-Stock Theft Unit and Arrow Group. While these groups have to some extent checked the incident of rustling, they have significantly militarized the region with many guns sometimes misused by criminal elements to rob and settle personal disputes. As part of the interventions to resolve the border conflict there is a need to increase Government presence

by providing security through the police and the army that are trained to handle weapons and respect human rights. This calls for demilitarization of the region through disarmament and providing holistic security which includes development.

- **Complete the Formulation of a Responsive National Land Policy**

Despite the existence of the constitutional and legal framework, a number of challenges including violent conflicts over land have emerged over the years, which must now be confronted. Land to most Ugandans is viewed as property and indeed a resource that is fundamental to their economic development and survival. Part of the explanation for these land based conflicts that have now engulfed the whole country is a complete lack of a consolidated policy framework that governs land access, control and ownership for citizens. The overall goal of land policy development as it emerges from existing documentation is to agree on a framework which will ensure the sustainable utilization of Uganda's land resources for poverty eradication. Eradication of poverty is directly related to elimination of the causes of violent conflicts. Unfortunately for Uganda, the process of formulating the National Land Policy has dragged on since 1993. To this end we recommend the speedy completion of the National Land Policy which must put at its core a mechanism for conflict resolution over land disputes.

## **2. Civil Society should invest in Peace building**

Civil society and other stakeholders involved in peacemaking should support initiatives that will enable the leaders and people of both regions re-establish contact, trust, confidence and engage in face to face dialogue. Peacebuilding can be done through facilitating reconciliation among the two ethnic groups, peace education and development initiatives. Development initiatives need to be integrated into livelihood activities for economic empowerment of the two ethnic communities starting with those living in the border area that are directly affected by the conflict. It is imperative that development projects are designed in a way that can attract Karimojong away from cattle rustling and cattle dependence. This calls for the need to diversify the economic livelihoods of the Karimojong.

## **3. Local Leaders should champion Social Economic Development**

Local Leadership should focus on mobilizing the population for social, economic development rather than inciting ethnic hatred.

## **4. Restore the Traditional Authority of Elders in Karamoja**

Traditional authority by elders and men in the kraals is important in maintaining law and order. This authority has been greatly undermined by gun power. It is recommended that it should be restored to provide a basis for restoring Government authority.

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.0. Overview of Land Conflicts in Uganda

#### 1.1. Introduction

*Land lies at the heart of social, economic and political life in most of Africa, but across much of the continent there is a lack of clarity regarding property rights and all over, land tenure is contested<sup>1</sup>*

Karamoja and Teso regions in North-Eastern Uganda have historically experienced violent conflicts revolving around cattle rustling and competition for access to water and pasture - two very important natural resources. This historical conflict involves Karamojong pastoralists forcefully grazing their cattle and sheep in Teso region during the dry season and returning to their traditional areas with stolen animals whenever it rains and pasture sprouts. The current conflict – the subject of this research pits two ethnically related groups – the Itesots and Karimojong over the Katakwi - Moroto districts border line. Both ethnic groups claim large chunks of land on either side of the border and accuse each other of land grabbing. This border conflict has already resulted into misery as hundreds of people in Katakwi have been displaced. Many people in Katakwi district live in internally displaced peoples' camps which are characterized by appalling and dehumanizing conditions. The situation is even made worse and complicated by the presence of large catches of small arms and light weapons in the hands of the Karimojong which gives them power and undue advantage over their neighbors.

The escalation in violence between the Karimojong and Itesot could worsen environmental degradation and accelerate underdevelopment in the neighboring regions. The conflict could also trigger small arms proliferation and its attendant consequences as the Itesot seek to protect or avenge themselves. The impact of insecurity on underdevelopment has generally been emphasized in the Poverty Eradication Action (PEAP) 2004/2008, Uganda's main policy and planning framework for development. The PEAP has identified violent conflicts as one of the main causes of poverty in the country and an obstacle to the realization of poverty reduction strategies.

This research sought to establish the linkage between land scarcity, security and ethnic conflict among the Itesot and the Karimajong in Katakwi and Moroto districts. Katakwi district is occupied by the the Itesot while Moroto is occupied by the Karimojong. Consequently, the main objective of the study was to provide a deep analysis of the border land conflict between Katakwi

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Huggins and Jenny Clover (2005) eds, *From the Ground UP: Land Rights, Conflict and Peace in sub-Saharan Africa*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies.

and Moroto districts and establish its implications on peace and security in the region and the country as a whole. The research is premised on the realization that the land question among pastoralists and their livelihood issues in Uganda have not been given sufficient attention by policy makers. Consequently, pastoralists as an interest group in Uganda have been generally marginalized in development. This has resulted into an escalation of natural resource based conflicts especially revolving around the struggle for access and control of land, pasture and water resources which are a basis for their survival. In this research, it is argued that unless quick and relevant conflict resolution and peace building measures are put in place, this conflict could escalate and lead to more violence and destruction.

This paper is organised into four chapters; Chapter one is the introduction and an overview of land conflicts in Uganda; Chapter two focuses on Katakwi - Moroto border conflict; Chapter three focuses on the general findings and analysis of the conflict; Chapter four is the Conclusion and Recommendations.

## **1.2. Background**

Uganda is a natural resource dependent country with land as the most strategic and contested of all the natural resources. As Uganda recovers from political and governance failure driven conflicts, new insights into future peace and security concerns point to the possibility of a new wave of protracted conflicts revolving around the struggle to access and control land by different ethnic communities, between government and communities as well as between Government and conservationists. Apparently, most of the conflict management and conflict prevention measures pursued by Government, the international community and other stakeholders have focused largely on the political dimensions of conflicts without looking at their ecological underpinnings and future implications. This research therefore sought to fill the information gap and help policy makers to respond with appropriate interventions.

The increasing population, poor agricultural practices, decreasing acreage of land, environmental degradation and declining food stocks are some of the leading factors causing ethnic clashes over land resources. Examples of such areas include Kigezi (Kabale, Kanungu, Rukungiri and Kisoro districts) where landlessness and declining food stocks as well as hunger are forcing people to migrate to other district such as Kibaale and Kyenjojo. These immigrants have ended up conflicting with Banyoro and Batooro over land. Similarly, environmental scarcities in the form of lack of water, pasture and food security partly explains the struggle between Katakwi and Moroto districts, pitting the Itesots against the Karimojong.

Land is key in a country's stability as it supports the most basic needs of rural communities as well as a strategic resources needed for national economic



development. Current statistics show that over 90% of Uganda's rural population depend on land for food and food security, employment and other forms of income generation as well as spiritual and cultural nourishment. Over the last decade, there has been a consistent escalation of land and natural resources related conflicts notably from the rangelands of Karamoja through the grasslands of Northern Uganda and the cattle corridor, cutting across the country to the highlands of Kigezi. Land and other natural resource related conflicts have been evolving and often coalescing into violent confrontations among communities and between communities and the state. The unending feud between the Karamjong and the Itesot over grazing and water rights, the displacement of the Benet, the Basongora and the Batwa from their ancestral lands and conflicts between the Banyoro and the Bakiga immigrants in Kibaale, and the threat by Acholi Members of Parliament to spear investors are but a few examples of land and other natural resource conflicts in the Uganda.

There is a general consensus in the array of existing literature from different parts of the world suggesting that land and resource scarcity is both a cause and a driver of conflicts (David Malone and Mats Bedal). Most of this literature however is quite generalized often focusing on particular resources such as range lands, fisheries, oil, water, etc. Secondly, there haven't been any comprehensive studies on land and natural resources conflicts that can give a complete picture of the situation in Uganda. A few of those that exist concentrate more on selected resources such as wildlife, forestry and generally armed conflicts and lack in theoretical and practical grounding. The resulting effect is that these conflicts have not been analyzed in a proper socio-economic, political and governance contexts that provide the appropriate framework for conflict mapping, prevention and mitigation.

In areas that are already experiencing land driven conflicts, Government's response has in most cases been reactive and suppressive rather than proactive which simply postpones the problem. In Kibaale district for example, the inter-ethnic political confrontation between the indigenous Banyoro community and the immigrant Bakiga is a clear manifestation of the underlying conflicts over land ownership and access to land. In Northern Uganda, the almost one and half decade of population displacement has significantly altered the hitherto existing land relations. It looks plausible that research into possible alternative policy responses to the land question in the region must be at the heart of any post-conflict resettlement and stabilization programme. In Katakwi district, state responses to the continuing confrontation between the Karimajong and the Itesot has only focused on short-term solutions such as temporary travel authorizations for pastoralists and livestock without addressing the long-term dimensions of the conflict. In the meantime, the conflict has resulted into internal displacement of hundreds of people into Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps in Katakwi districts. For over six years, people in Katakwi have been

living in congested camps where susceptibility to diseases such as cholera is very high. Like in many other violent conflicts around the world, the worst affected are the rural and poor communities who are largely dependent on land based resources and often have limited social safeguards and technological capacity to cope with the resulting scarcities and the associated disenfranchisement.

### **1.3. Research Methodology**

This research used qualitative research methodology. It used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary method of data included indepth interviews with key informants, observation and focus group discussions organised both in Karamoja and Teso regions.

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized with key stakeholders on both sides of the conflict including MPs, Local Leaders, elders and youth leaders. The focus group discussion method was a very useful method since it employed problem solving techniques. Focus group discussions were attended by a targeted group of key informants who are also opinion leaders in both Teso and Karamoja regions. The design of focus group discussions ensured that participants identified the root causes of the conflict, negative effects and how it can be resolved peacefully.

The secondary data collection method used included literature review of key documents such as; books, reports, newspaper articles, government policy papers and Internet sources.

#### **1.3.1 Research Objectives**

This research is part of a bigger project titled, “Land Conflict Mapping and Environmental Security in Uganda” whose overall objective is to identify potential land conflicts that could threaten peace, stability and sustainable development and propose policy responses to manage and prevent such conflicts.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives for the Study**

1. Establish the traditional use of the borderland and root causes of the border land/ natural resource based conflicts between the Iteso and Karimojong;
2. To establish the social, economic and political consequences of the conflicts on the affected peoples’ livelihoods and propose appropriate interventions;
3. To influence the on-going national land policy making to address land conflicts in the country and promote sustainable development; and
4. To inform future programmatic and development agenda of DanChurch Aid on conflict resolution and peace building in the Teso and Karamoja regions.

## 1.4. A Historical Background of Katakwi-Moroto Border Land Conflict

The Iteso and Karimojong belong to the Nilo Hamitic group of tribes who are closely related to the Jie and Toposa of Sudan and Turkana of Kenya. The Iteso, Turkana, Toposa and Karimojong lived together in Abyssinia as one ethnic group about 500 years ago. They owned large herds of livestock and depended entirely on them. In time, both the people and the number of livestock increased necessitating further movement of groups of people away from their ancestral lands. This culminated into a large tribal movement southward. The Turkana moved and settled in northern Kenya. The second group also left Ethiopia around 1600 and attempted to join the Turkana but were repulsed by the Turkana who had earlier on settled around Lake Rudolf (now Lake Turkana).<sup>2</sup>

The second group then decided to move westwards and settled around Mount Moroto. Their situation was made worse with the setting in of drought and resultant famine. This state of affairs caused internal and external conflicts and the worst of all was the outbreak of human and cattle diseases.

Consequently, people began to discuss the possibility of moving out to new places. The young men were in favor of migrating to other places. The older men, urged them not to do so. They were worried that the young men would be killed by hostile tribes or be eaten by wild animals. In their arguments, the young men mocked their fathers (elders) "Akar Imojong" where the word "Akar" means stay behind and "Imojong" meaning oldman. In other words "The old men stay behind"

Akar imojong in turn called the young men "Atesia" meaning graves. The word "Atesia" also meant children. From that day the Akar imojong remained settled near Mt. Moroto in the region presently known as Karamoja sub region. Later, they acquired the name Karimojong (tired old men). The young men who were called Atesia moved southwards where they finally called themselves Iteso.<sup>3</sup>

Before British colonialists arrived on the scene, the people of Karamoja were a collection of tribes (the Dodos, Jie, Labwor, Bokora, Pian, Matheniko and the Upe) with historical links. Their way of life was communal. A person was an individual only to the extent that he was a member of a family, a community or a clan. The means of livelihood were cattle and cultivation of land. The means of livelihood were never owned by an individual but by all the people. And no single individual could dispose such communal survival means.<sup>4</sup>

It is also important to note that before colonialism, pastoralists in Karamoja and the neighboring regions were accustomed to free possession of firearms which

<sup>2</sup> Opuli-Watum, D.R (1980), The Karamoja Problem is a land question, from Edward (Kampala), Vol. 2, No. 3/4.

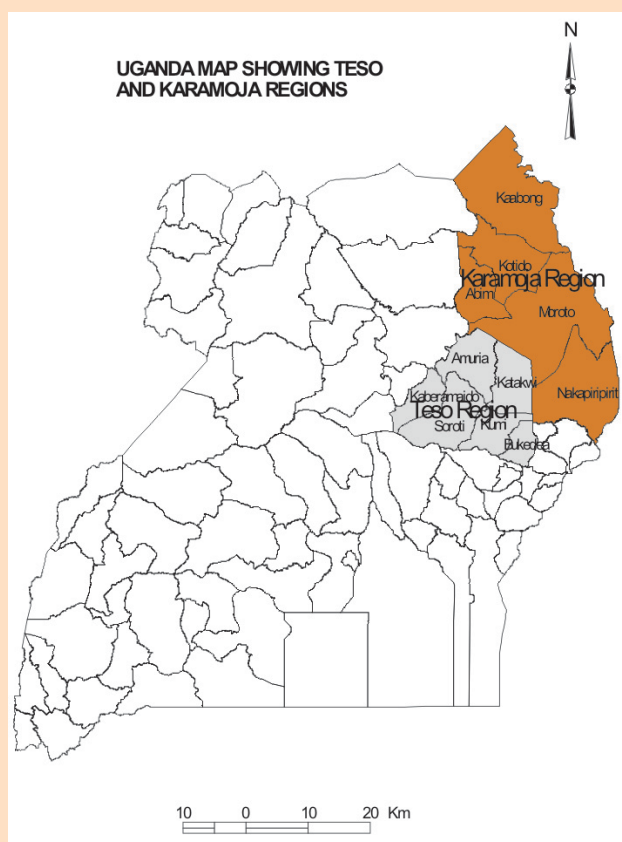
<sup>3</sup> Opuli-Watum, D.R. (1980), The Karamoja Problem is a land question, from Forward (Kampala), Vol.2, No. ¾.

<sup>4</sup> This information was provided during Interviews.



for many decades had been obtained from Ethiopian gun runners and Arab and Swahili slave traders, poachers and merchants from the East African Coast.

In the first half of 1888, the East African coast had been the conduit for as many as 3,744 assorted firearms, mainly Breech-Loaders and Winchester rifles. By 1910, a private army operated in Turkana border lands with Ethiopia and Sudan, which were organized in units of between six hundred and one thousand fighters. They were mainly armed with single shot rifles and they operated in smaller tactical units. Therefore Britain had to “pacify” Karamoja and Turkana regions before they could claim full administrative control of this sphere of influence.



After the transfer of Uganda Rudolf Province to Kenya in 1926 and the creation of Kenya and Uganda as they are known today, the British tried to confine the Turkana and Karimojong within the newly created states. Before the arbitrary colonial delimitation sliced their grazing areas, the Turkana and Karimojong had lived with in the Rudolf province where they shared natural resources under a system of social reciprocity. After the partition of Kenya and Uganda, these transhumant societies were expected to respect the invisible meridians that delineated the newly created states.

In order to get protection from the colonizers, each ethnic community was expected to lay down arms they had acquired over many decades and stop cross-border livestock rustling. When they refused to surrender guns peacefully, Britain conducted a disarming campaign codenamed “Operation Tennis” from the Turkana side of the Kenya/Uganda common border. The operation was unsuccessful due to lack of proper coordination and the evasive agro-pastoralists who simply relocated to rugged mountainous terrain, out of reach of colonial patrols.

Consequently, Karamoja and Turkana regions were declared “closed districts” where movement within and outside was restricted without a valid pass. This decision was ostensibly aimed at containing the spread of livestock diseases down south, particularly rinderpest and pleuro-pneumonia. In addition, by restricting transhumance, the policy had the impact of impoverishing the two communities who previously had a thriving agro-pastoral economy and barter trade in grain, iron ware, and livestock. It also insulated them from mainstream nationalism and fervor of patriotism that was going on in the southern half of each country. It remains to be seen whether the cattle rustling and violence the Karamojong have meted on their neighbors is related to the effects of this confinement.

### **1.5. The History of Karimojong Cattle Rustling in Teso**

Accounts by most people in Teso, especially the elders, indicate that Karamoja cattle raids into Teso started between 1945-1950. Strict measures were put into place by the then colonial District Commissioner with patrols of Kings African Rifles to control these raids. A post was established at Omoro which was part of Teso to curb cattle raiding. Cattle raiding in Karamoja started as a local tribal affair limited in area and scope, but later went out of hand leading to humanitarian emergencies. Initially, the two tribes enjoyed a cordial relationship where the Itesots allowed the Karimojong the privilege of grazing and watering their livestock in Teso during dry seasons.

However, this relationship soured in early 1950s when the British government imposed restricted movement of livestock in and out of Karamoja due to the outbreak of the contagious Borbone plural pneumonia disease. The Karimojong stubbornly refused to vaccinate their cattle against the killer disease, prompting the Government to prohibit their cattle from grazing in Teso land. The cattle that crossed the border into Teso were captured under quarantine regulations. The sick animals would be burnt to destroy the disease while some would be eaten by the Iteso, although the quarantine regulations did not permit that. When the Karimojong learnt their cows were being eaten, they became very angry.



An Internally Displaced Peoples' Camp in Katakwi which has almost become a permanent settlement due to constant fear of Karimojong raids

The Karimojong blamed the Iteso for having been behind the plan by the government of confiscation of their cattle. The Karimojong did not appreciate the fact that the quarantine was intended to make them vaccinate their cattle. When the practice continued for a long time, the Karimojong reacted and started raiding sub-counties in Teso land that neighbored Karamoja notably; Ngorians, Usuk, Magoro and Kapelebyong with the aim of recovering the lost cattle.

Apart from the quarantine, harsh climatic conditions set cattle rustling off around 1955, as several Karimojong herdsmen sought water and pasture in Teso. In 1955 for instance, a group of Karimojong herdsmen forcefully crossed the border line at Olilim and Palam villages in order to find green grass and water for domestic use and animals. These herdsmen were grazing cattle that belonged to two of the richest and most respected Karimojong leaders. About 350 heads of cattle were captured including Geno's biggest bull named "APAIRIONO ETOME". It was the biggest bull in the whole of Karamoja district (now Moroto district) comparable to almost the size of an elephant. Geno used to worship his bull and valued it as a god which had given him fortune for riches.

This angered Geno and his in law Labwok who went back to Karamoja and organized their people to come for the bloody raid. The raid covered Nagrian, Magoro, Toroma and Usuk Sub-counties. The raiders burnt the wooden bridge at Komolo inside Katakwi district to prevent security personnel from coming to challenge them.

For so many years, the raids remained concentrated within Usuk county because at the time there was a balance of power since both Iteso and Karimojong were using spears and shields as weapons. With the acquisition of guns, the Karimojong became militarily stronger and were able to raid far and wide in the whole of Teso and other neighboring regions.

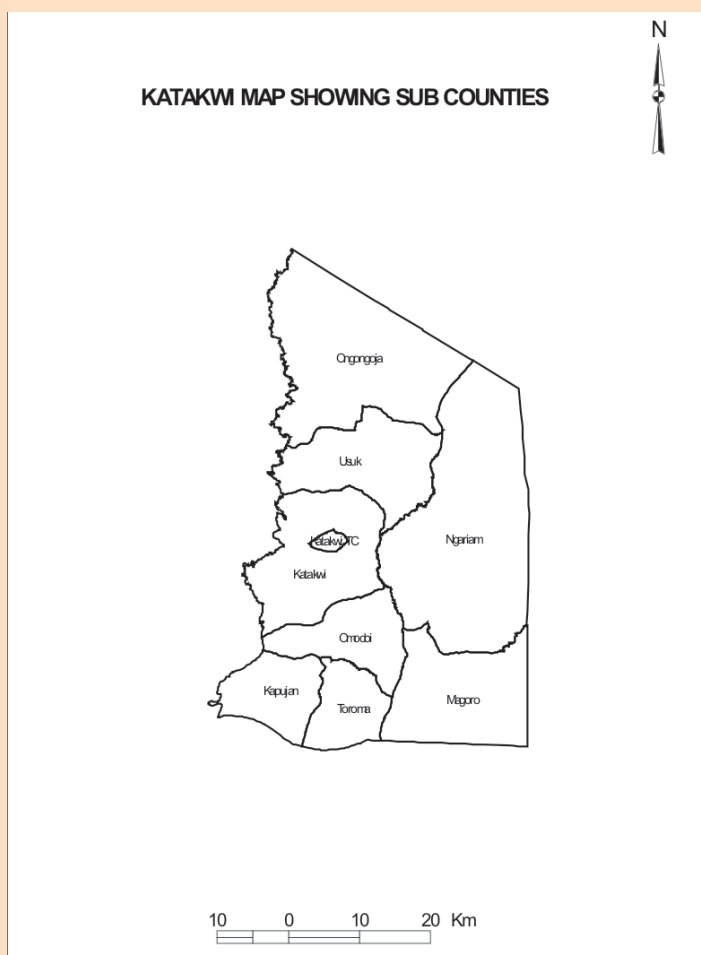
## CHAPTER 2

### 2.0. Katakwi- Moroto Border Conflict

#### Geographical Description of Katakwi District

Katakwi district is one of the six districts that make up Teso region located in North Eastern Uganda. The district gained its district status in 1997 through an Act of parliament. It first became a district in 1970s having been carved out of Soroti district when it was known as North Teso district but this status was cancelled in the 1980s.

Katakwi district borders Moroto and Nakapiripirt districts, Kotido district in the west Karamoja sub-region, Soroti district in the south and Kumi district in the south east and Lira district in the north-west. The administrative headquarters is based at Katakwi Town Council, which is about 380km East of Kampala. With a total area of 5,114 sq km, Katakwi has 177 sq km under water and land area of 4,740 sq km. The rest of the land is under forests. The district has a total population of 300,012 people out of whom, 145,081 (48.4%) are male and 154,931 (51.6%) are female.



Katakwi district is generally a plateau with gentle undulating hills, resting at 1,036m-1127m above sea level. The district experiences two rainy seasons a year. The wet season runs from March to October while the dry season runs from November to February. The mean annual rainfall varies from 1000 mm to 1500mm. Presently, the rainfall pattern has become unreliable and unpredictable with the December-February period being the driest season.

The soils are mainly sandy sediments and sandy loam. The bottom land contains widespread deposits of alluvium. Though not very fertile, the land is productive with agricultural production becoming the major economic and employing activities in the district. Geological surveys have revealed that rocks of basement complex such as grainites, migmatites, gneiss, schists and quartzites underlie most areas. The vegetation is savannah grassland dotted with shrubs and trees. There are two minor lakes (Lake Bisina and Lake Opeta) along its border with Kumi district and River Kiriik- a seasonal river that flows from neighboring Karamoja. It also has large swamps of water on both sides of the district. Human beings, livestock and wildlife animals depend on water from these sources.

### **Cattle Rustling in Katakwi District**

Compared to other regions in Teso, Katakwi district has historically suffered most at the hands of Karimojong cattle rustlers. The acquisition of fire arms by the Karimojong made cattle rustling more sophisticated and more violent making life in Katakwi more pathetic and thereby resulting into internal displacement of hundreds of people.

The predominant ethnic group is Itesot who are the indigenous people. The district also has a sizeable number of Langis, Karimojongs, Bagisu, Baganda, Basoga, Banyoro, Banyankore herdsmen.

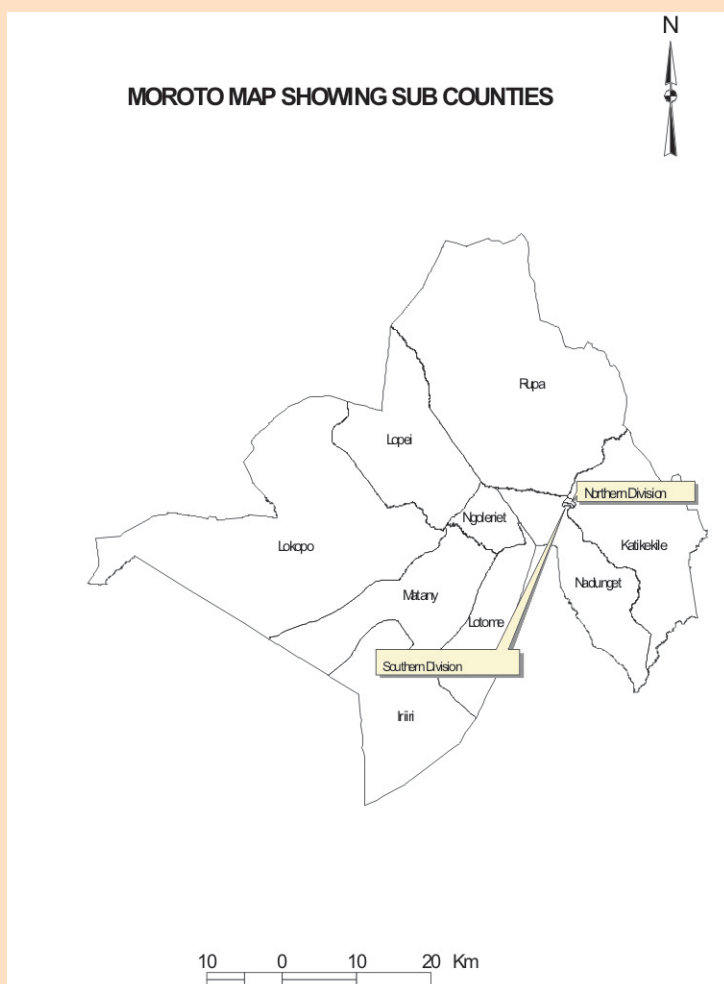
### **Geographical Discription of Moroto District**

Karamoja region and Moroto district in particular lies in the North-eastern part of Uganda where the northern Savannas meet the western shoulder of the Great Rift escarpment. This scarp line forms the frontier with Kenya and the watershed of westward and eastward flowing river systems. Most of the area comprises a gently sloping plain at 1,050m broken only by steep-sided volcanic inselbergs such as Kadam, Moroto, Napak and Toror. The whole region lies within categories which the East Africa Royal Commission considered marginal for settled cultivation. Only in the west, near higher ground, as in Labwor, is suited for settled agriculture that can be carried out without irrigation. To the west, the red sandy soils give way to heavier black cotton soils (clay) broken by lighter red-sand ridges. The drainage lines in this western area are seasonally waterlogged and swampy becoming permanent swamps in the Teso and Acholi

district lines<sup>5</sup>.

Moroto District, part of the former “Karamoja province”, is located in Karamoja region, of Northeastern Uganda. Moroto District has three counties (Bokora, Matheniko and Moroto Municipality), eleven (11) sub counties and covers an area of 8,600sqkilometers. According to the 2002 population census, 114,773 people live in Moroto District.

Moroto District’s climatic zone is semi-arid and characterized by a prolonged dry season from October to March. Three main ethnic groups – Karimojong, the main inhabitants of the rangelands and the Pokot and the Tepeth, who live in mountains of Moroto and Napak, reside in Moroto District. While these people have differences in language and culture, they share a similar socio-economic lifestyle; they all are agro-pastoralists who practice subsistence crop production along with semi nomadic animal rearing.



<sup>5</sup> Randal Baker, (1977) **Polarization, in**, Philip O’keefe and Ben Wisner, eds. *Land Use and Development*, London, International African Institute.



It should be noted however, that within this territory, there exists some strips of land which do not fit the situation that has been described. These are the zones which border with Teso, Lango and the Acholi regions to the west, and the zones occupied by the Pokot and the Sebei to the south, where agriculture is possible. These contested border areas currently do not only provide pasture and water for livestock of the Karimojong but also provide wild foods, medicines and building materials.

### **Features of the Borderline**

According to the information obtained from Karamoja side, the Acacia tree marks the boarder line between Katakwi and Moroto districts and has a milestone that runs through to Sising hill and bares a straight line up to Lotukei Mountain. Also, along the same axis can be traced the old mark of sign posts which were inscribed South of Karamoja in 1963. These border marks can be found adjacent to the same acacia tree and during the dry season, the straight lining can be seen from above in an aerial view. However, this information is contested by the people from Teso who want a fresh border demarcation by the Government.



Ngoya J.B. one of the Researchers standing at what is claimed to be the border between Katakwi and Moroto districts

## **2.1. Nature and Discription of the Conflict**

The Katakwi - Moroto border conflict revolves around claims and counter claims of land on both sides of the border by people in the two ethnic groups - Itesots and Karimojongs living in Katakwi and Moroto districts respectively. While the conflict revolves around the border land claims by each side, it has been complicated by cattle rustling by the Karimojong whose motivation besides land seems to include cattle, pastures and water resources found in Katakwi - Teso region. Consequently hundreds of people on the side of Katakwi district have been internally displaced and currently live in Internally Displaced Persons' Camps (IDPs) in appalling conditions.

## **2.2. Issues and Views about the Conflict from the Field**

During the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted in Katakwi and Moroto districts, the following issues and proposals were raised concerning the border conflict.

### **2.2.1. Causes of the Border Conflict**

#### **Environmental Scarcity**

It emerged from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews that lack of water both for cattle and human beings on the side of Moroto in Karamoja region drives people to migrate to where there are permanent sources of water.

Climatic changes in Karamoja sub-region were also cited as a cause and sustainer of the border conflict. People in Katakwi observe that weather changes make conditions in Karamoja unbearable and unsuitable for both cattle and human beings which forces them to look outside of their geographical area.

#### **The Culture of the Karimojong towards cattle**

A culture among the Karimojong that cherishes the practice of keeping large numbers of cattle was also identified as a cause of the border conflict. It was pointed out that keeping the border conflict alive allows the cattle rustlers a chance to continue carrying out raids. It was for instance pointed out that among the Karimojong one is considered in high esteem according to the number of cattle one accumulated.

#### **Politicisation of the border by politicians**

Political interests by politicians who capitalize on keeping the border conflict alive in order to win elections was also identified as a cause and sustainer of the conflict.

#### **Inferiority complex and superiority complex**

Inferiority complex and superiority complex of both ethnic groups was also identified as a cause. The Karimojong accuse Itesot of a superiority complex since they are more educated than them. This factor was seen both as a cause and sustainer of the conflict.



### **Availability of small arms**

Availability of small arms among the Karimojong was also singled out as a cause of the conflict since they consider themselves strong and can take anything they want by force.

### **2.2.2. Factors that are sustaining the Conflict**

The section below discusses factors that have prolonged and sustained the conflict.

#### **Availability of Small Arms**

The availability of guns in the hands of Karimojong sustained the conflict in a sense that they have not sought to resolve the conflict through peaceful means but through force. For instance there were attempts by officials from the Ministry of Lands of the government of Uganda to survey the border but they were chased away by warriors from the Karamoja side. It looks like the resort to force is as a result of power that the gun confers to the holder.

#### **Lack of a National Land Policy**

The country does not have a national land policy which would have provided a conflict resolution mechanism for land conflicts in the whole country. At the moment, the national land policy is being formulated but it has not been completed. As long as there is no national land policy with an elaborate land conflict management mechanism communities will continue to kill or harm each other over the struggle to access and control land that is continuously reducing in size and productivity.

#### **Poor Politics and Lack of a Culture of Negotiations**

In Uganda, most politicians thrive on political manipulation of the electorate in order to be elected into political positions including being elected to Parliament. As such some politicians drum up ethnic sentiments and present themselves as defenders of their communities land and other resource rights hence sustaining conflicts. More so, there is a general absence of a culture of peaceful negotiations over contested issues, interests and needs in Uganda. Most parties in a conflict always pursue a zero-sum game instead of win-win situation. This culture therefore explains why most conflicts in Uganda never end.

#### **Social, Economic and Political Marginalization of Karamoja Region**

Karamoja is one of the poorest regions in Uganda. The region has the worst socio-economic indicators in the country and the population is largely dependent on relief aid from humanitarian agencies. As long as the people in Karamoja continue living on the margins of life, conflicts between themselves and with their neighbors will never be resolved.

### **2.2.3. Critical Actors in the Conflict**

Any effort to end the Iteso-Karimojong conflict or even the conflict within the Karimojong will depend on the extent to which the main actors are identified and their roles in sustaining and ending the conflict.

#### **Women**

One important category of actors in the conflict are the unmarried women whose desire to be married is predicated upon payment of bride price of up to at least 40 herds of cattle. This is important for their recognition and respect in their communities. This forces some young men who do not have enough cattle to raid. While the young Karimojong men are the key actors in cattle raiding, women usually bless them before going out on raiding missions and praise them when they come back successfully. Therefore, women have a position of influence in fuelling the conflict. They inspire husbands to raid by either beating children to portray poor household welfare (example lack of food, treatment) or minimizing/belittling their husbands considered a humiliation. This forces men to go and raid in order to defend their status. Women also cook special food for warriors, keep and give ammunition to warriors apart from the prestigious welcoming ceremonies they organize on return of the warriors. They also benefit from dowry paid for them and from milk and other products. Women only want a lover or a husband who is a successful raider.

#### **The Army**

The Ugandan army is particularly singled out as a key actor because of its role in combating cattle rustling, disarmament and sometimes its involvement in illegal activities in the region. The army has been blamed for sometimes conniving with cattle rustlers or indifference in combating cattle rustling.

#### **Non - Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs)**

The NGOs and CBOs have been providing development and humanitarian assistance to the people in Karamoja and IDPs in Katakwi district. Some of the NGOs are directly involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation of the two ethnic groups.

#### **The Church**

Both the Catholic and Anglican Churches are highly respected and have great influence in Teso and Karamoja regions. Both institutions are involved in Evangelism and development activities in both regions. Any attempts to resolve the conflict between Teso and Karamoja must involve both churches.

#### **Ngikaracuna**

Ngikaracuna are youthful warriors. They are the active warriors and the implementers of the decisions taken directly or indirectly by elders and women.

Their interests are in forced acquisition and expansion of herds as well as personal fame.

### **Witch Doctors**

Witch doctors perform rituals/ceremonies aimed at instilling fearlessness.

### **Ngimuu**

Ngimuu means Twins while *Ekediany* refers to Left handed persons. These smear the earth mud on the warriors going for raids, thus evoking greater brevity and supposedly immunity from attack.

### **Ekungut**

These are persons who were conceived or born as a result of mother not experiencing menstrual period. They are believed to have natural powers of being able to mix and spy on the enemy without being suspected. Their findings are taken very seriously.

### **Political Leaders**

Political leaders protect or conceal the raiders so as to maintain their political positions and avoid annoying the electorate. It is also alleged that some of the political or tribal leaders have private armed groups whose sole purpose is to carry out raids and therefore do not cooperate in the recovery of raided cows. They also conceal culprits since they are beneficiaries, politically and materially.

### **The Kraal Leaders**

The Kraal Leaders in Karamoja have a lot of influence on the warriors given the powers and respect they command.

### **Government**

Government is a key actor in the conflict because it is responsible for providing security to its citizens in a holistic manner. For example Government is supposed to develop Karamoja and is supposed to keep law and order which surprisingly in this case it has failed to keep. Government should be blamed for failing to check the illegal possessions of firearms by Karimojongs.

### **External Actors**

Countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya have been singled out as sources of small arms that fuel and sustain the conflict in both regions. Kenya is particularly a key external actor as it is a country that hosts the Turkana and the Pokot pastoralists involved in the cattle rustling in both Teso and Karamoja.

## **2.2.4. Consequences of the Conflict**

In this section, the key consequences of the conflict are analyzed:

- **Poverty and Insecurity on both sides**

The conflict has resulted into underdevelopment of both districts. On Katakwi side where hundreds of people are internally displaced, the conflict has undermined peoples livelihoods. People who used to feed themselves and fend for their families have been reduced to depending on relief by NGOs. It is also important to note that the land conflict coupled with cattle rustling has restricted movement for most Karimojong who are generally criminalized as cattle rustlers and risk being lynched publicly if caught trespassing through Teso region. This has greatly affected the Karimojongs' ability to look for work outside their region. Most importantly the region can not attract foreign investment which would create jobs and other opportunities because of insecurity.

- **Ethnic hatred**

The conflict has served to rekindle traditional hatred and amplify rivalry between the ethnically related tribes. This has greatly undermined the regions' ability to engage in joint development necessary to propel the region forward.

- **Food insecurity**

The insecurity in the region has undermined the people's ability to produce adequate food stocks for subsistence and for sell. Consequently, the region especially Karamoja is chronically hit by food shortages.

- **Collapse of the traditional authority of elders**

In Karamoja, the conflict has partly resulted into the collapse of traditional authority and other cultural institutions that held the society together and ensured peace and tranquility. Availability of guns in the hands of every able bodied Karimojong has reduced the authority elders used to enjoy over the youths. Consequently society has become lawless as the power lies in the holders of the gun. Persistence of negative practices that can only survive in the situation of anarchy such as rustling, robberies and road ambushes and killings.

- **Break down of Law and Order**

Communities have lost trust in the leadership (formal leaders) and increased their determination and desire to defend land by whatever method (violent or non-violent means).

- **Further isolation and marginalization of Karamoja**

The border conflict and other associated insecurity in Karamoja has made it difficult to access the region by people from other regions. Consequently, the region has further been isolated and marginalized which makes people

more vulnerable.

### **2.2.5. Previous Attempts to Resolve the Conflict**

This section focuses on attempts that have been undertaken to resolve the Katakwi-Moroto border land conflict.

- Moroto district councilors and MPs led a delegation in the 1966 to reclaim the land which Hon. Obwangor allegedly wanted to grab from Karamoja. The delegation met the then President Milton Obote to complain about border boundary alteration by Hon Cuthbert Obwangor who was a minister for Local Government. President Obote declared the border drawn by Obwangor illegal and not binding.
- The Moroto Local Government in 2005 had come up with a position paper on the border issue which they presented to Government.
- In 2004/05 the Central Government and Local Government also tried to resolve the border conflict but their efforts did not yield any results.
- The ‘Magoro Accord’ of elders crafted for the purpose of promoting peaceful coexistence and sharing of resources especially water and pasture between the two communities.
- Another attempt to resolve the conflict in the recent past is when the leadership in Moroto and Katakwi with support from the officials from Ministry of Lands agreed to survey the border. The surveying exercise is known to have been stopped and the surveyors chased away by Mr. Achila- former LC V Chairman Moroto now MP Moroto with the support of Karimojong warriors.



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## CHAPTER 3

### 3.0 General Findings and Analysis of the Causes of Katakwi-Moroto Border Conflict

Several causes have been advanced to explain the border land conflict between the Karimojong and Iteso over Katakwi –Moroto districts. These causes whether historical/colonial, environmental or political have resulted into a violent conflict that has led to displacement of hundreds of people most of whom are internally displaced and continue to fuel traditional hatred between people that are ethnically related. The research established the following as the major causes of the conflict.

#### 3.1 Lack of a Clear Border Demarcation, Constant Border Shifts and Gazettment of most Potentially Productive Land in Karamoja

While the link between land and conflict in Karamoja and Teso regions is complex, it is important that this crucial link be better understood and appreciated in order to be able to find lasting solutions to the problem. The research findings indicate that in Karamoja, the communities never understood anything about borders because there have been constant border shifts from Komolo, Angobo, Orungo to the current contested Acacia tree without people ever raising their voices. Lack of a clear and definite border demarcation between the two districts, the history of border shifts that has characterized the region and its neighbors partly explains the root cause of the conflict.



**The Acacia tree:** The boundary between Karamoja and Teso? (Photo by Ngoya J.B.)

### 3.2. Environmental Scarcity and Stress Leading to Pressure to Acquire Land

The research findings from both Teso and Karamoja region reveal that underlying the struggle to control land on either side of Katakwi and Moroto districts is due to the desire to access water, pasture for their cattle which are scarce in Karamoja. Karamoja region is largely a semi arid region and is increasingly unable to sustain the livelihoods of the population. Consequently cattle rustling and pastoralism become the most immediate coping mechanisms for survival. Unfortunately pastoralism and cattle rustling are conflictual methods of survival which are not sustainable in an environment where natural resources are increasingly becoming scarce. Several scholars have confirmed the nexus between environmental scarcity and the various conflicts within the Karimojong ethnic communities and among the neighbouring tribes such as the Itesots, Acholis and the Sabiny. This literature is summarised below.

*It has also been pointed out that one of the causes for the current border conflict between Katakwi and Moroto districts is linked up with the bigger problem of environmental scarcity and stress faced by Karamoja region generally. Micheal D. Quam (1996) has observed that drought and hunger is a defining characteristic of this region. During the long periods of dry seasons, herdsman leave their permanent settlements and move with their cattle to temporary encampments near pasture and watering places located to the west and south of the central plains, often crossing over into the territory of neighboring groups and districts. Quam further points out that competition for scarce resources, particularly water and pasture, and the high value placed on cattle have produced a culture of raiding and warfare.*

*Backer (1977: 161), corroborates Quam's point to the effect that inadequate pastures and water during periods of drought coupled with the pressure and accentuated by the spread of tsetse flies, have forced the Karimojong to look for more land. This pressure coupled with increasing population forces most people from marginal lands to fertile lands hence causing conflicts with the farming communities. Noveli (1988) observes that the need to find new grazing grounds drives them to take their livestock where grass and water are relatively abundant. This leads to various groups to scatter in different directions where water, pasture and fertile land can be found. Consequently, competition arises among adjoining groups for pastures and watering places, leading to violent confrontation.*

*Randall Baker (1977) further points out how resource pressure made the people of Karamoja to move outwards towards the peripheries of the settlement belt, where they normally lived, into the barrier between themselves and their neighbours:-the Acholi, Iteso and Suk". He adds that on the west, Usuku County was handed over to Teso depriving the Bokora a sub-ethnic group of Karimojong of their best hedge against drought. But, much more seriously, on the east between the Kanyangareng river and the Chemerongit hills a tract of 3,700 Km<sup>2</sup> was given to the Suk of Kenya. Initially, this was thought to be a temporary arrangement during the drought*

*conditions in Suk county in 1927. But the Suk continued to advance under the laissez faire eye of Kenya whilst the Matheniko and the Pian were powerless to stop them until eventually the Suk occupied 15% of the Karimojong dry-season grazing.*

*Novelli (1988), commenting about the border conflicts in his book "Aspects of Karimojong Ethno Sociology" has argued that the establishment of borders, which had among its aims the ending of ivory and arms trafficking while reaching certain results in this field, did nothing but worsen the situation of the pastoral peoples, since it led to a loss not only of men and of livestock, but also of "a permanent peace." This led to competition for the few pastures and water resources that remained resulting into acute fights among the Karimojong groups.*

### **3.3. Greed for Land and Manipulation by Teso Politicians**

Among the Karimajong, it is generally believed that greed for land by the Teso politicians led by Mr. Cuthbert Obwangor, former minister for Local Government in Obote 1 Government is responsible for the current stand off between the Iteso and Karimojong over the Katakwi- Moroto border. The leadership in Karamoja allege that being a minister of Local Government during the 1960s, Obwangor and other Itesot leaders took advantage of the little education among the Karimajong and altered the border boundary in favour of the Iteso people.



**On clutches:** Mr. Cathbert Obwangor, a former minister of Local Government in Obote I government (1960s) with ACODE researchers at his home



Most people in Karamoja also attribute the conflict to the laxity of the Local Administration of Moroto district (Karamoja side) and its failure to follow up the matters of land or even document records.

According to Hon. Terence Achia, MP for Bokora County, the current demarcation of the border between Katakwi and Moroto districts departs from the original one which dates back to 1926,<sup>6</sup>. According to Achia, the unofficial drawing which has brought this unnecessary conflict can be traced from the drawings made in 1938 where the cartographer at that time inscribed on the map, 'District Boundary here uncertain'.

Mzee Abednego Achia- a respected elder in Karamoja, corroborates Hon. Achia's view. Abednego Achia was a member of the delegation of Councilors who came to meet President Obote over the border issue. Others included Bakari, Logwe Peter, Mudong Mathew, Napakori Peter and Naburi - when the border conflict started. A group of MPs from Karamoja led by Hon. Lobunei went to see President Milton Obote in 1966 to explain to him about the changes in the boundaries by Hon. Obwangor Cuthbert then an MP from Teso. President Obote subsequently made a pronouncement to the effect that the new boundary was illegal and dismissed Obwangor from Parliament.



**Mr. Achia Abednego:** One of the delegates who went to President Obote in 1966 to discuss on the Karamoja - Teso border issue

<sup>6</sup> This submission has been supported by Mr. Longole Zakayo who intimates that the first border was drawn in 1926 at Komolo. In 1938/39 under John Brassnot (DC of Karamoja), the border was drawn through Opetia via Lokitor, to Angobo with landmarks being heaps of soil with sisal planted on top.

In 2004, the border issues again resurfaced when the former LC V of Moroto District, Mr. Terence Achia and former LC V of Katakwi Ilemukorit went into confrontation over parts of Napak, Kodike and Alekilek which the latter claimed belonged to Katakwi. This recent claims and counter claims by politicians is threatening to inflame the conflict and could result into generalized violence.

It should be noted however, that there exists within this territory some strips of land which do not fit the situation that has been described. These are the zones which border Teso, Lango and the Acholi regions to the west, and the zones occupied by the Pokot and the Sebei to the south, where agriculture is possible.

### **3.4. Administrative Policies that pursued containment rather than Development and Empowerment of the Karamojong**

Both people from Karamoja and Teso agree that there has been a deliberate policy by all successive governments in Uganda to maroon and contain the Karimojong in dry, marginal areas. This view is collaborated by Baker (1977:158), who pointed out that authorities imposed a more apocalyptic ruling on the Karimojongs when they started to define the boundaries of the districts and to frame legislation on the basis of “these new and ill-conceived delineations”. The authorities then proceeded to allocate dry-season grazing which had formerly been the domain of some of the Karimojong groups, but which now appeared ‘unused’, to other communities. On the west, Suk County was handed over to Kenya hence depriving the Bokora of their best hedge against drought. Much more seriously, on the east between the Kanyangareng River and the Chemerongit hills a tract of 3,700 Km<sup>2</sup> was made over to the Suk of Kenya.

Initially, this was thought to be a temporary arrangement made during the drought conditions in Suk county in 1927. The giving away of Suk county deprived the Karimojong, particularly the Matheniko and the Pian of their dry season grazing land, leaving them with the option of either moving south wards where they threatened the cultivators of Sebei or to the west where they intensified the problems of the newly confined Bokora.

Other analysts such as Opuli-Watum (1980) have observed that, British imperialism pursued a land policy that deprived the people (Karimojong) of their best land. It turned a large part of fertile land into game parks for animals and another part was turned into game reserves and government land (Crown Land). Accordingly, the best land was given to animals and the people were crowded into semi-arid areas! This resulted into land exhaustion and its attendant consequences of social instability.

### **3.5. Lack of Participation in Decision-Making**

Most of the people that were interviewed especially the elders and opinion leaders in Karamoja link the land problem in Karamoja to lack of political and administrative participation by the affected people. The successive Governments that have ruled in Uganda have not involve the Karimojong in participatory decision-making in matters that affect them. Consequently most of the decisions have been handed down to them from above. The net effect of this is that most of the Karimojong leaders have not been socialised in matters of participatory leadership. The argument here is that increased participation in public affairs and decision-making of communities would create civic awareness of the peoples rights, duties and obligations, and are able to influence policies that affect them. Above all, civic awareness leads to harmonious co-existence and observance of rule of law.

Low public participation of the Karimojong in the affairs of Uganda, is evidenced in the low percentage of people participating in politics. For example, in the 1961 elections, only 4% of the population of Karamoja participated in the elections and this was replayed in the 1982 elections with 23.6% participating. In the same period only one Minister from Karamoja was in cabinet.

These analysts further note that peoples participation increases channels of communication and reduces conflict. They conclude that, unless the Karimojong participate vigorously in the political processes, their pastoral and other problems caused by semi-arid conditions will continue to be given scanty attention.

### **3.6. Politicization of the Border Conflict by Politicians**

Politicians on both sides of the conflict have found it politically expedient to politicize the border dispute to gain political capital among the electorate. It is important to note that such conflicts always escalate during elections and de-escalates after elections. Some politicians have personalized the border issue and the electorate as “my people” for the sake of votes which fragments communities.<sup>7</sup> The leaders in Karamoja for instance have pointed out that the problem has been as a result of incitement by the leadership in Teso. It is alleged for example that leaders in Teso once remarked that the Karimojong should not be seen anywhere near Teso. As a result, the elected political leaders on both sides of the divide have not been able to provide the kind of leadership that would be useful and effective in managing and resolving the border conflict and insecurity in the region.

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<sup>7</sup> This accusation of Politicians who incite the electorate during elections came up during Focus Group Discussions in both Katakwi and Moroto Districts.

### 3.7. Political Instability

Political instability and civil wars including the Uganda Peoples Army (UPA) rebellion in Teso (1987-90) and the inconsistent implementation of the disarmament programme have been cited as responsible for the current land conflict in Katakwi and Moroto. According to some circles in Karamoja, political instability has created insecurity which has confined people to the unproductive dry lands leading other tribes to take advantage of this situation and grab their land including the Katakwi-Moroto border land. According to opinion leaders in Karamoja, settlements in Karamoja were based on where the church was – Kangole, Namalu, Amudat, Iriir - because of the need for basic services like food, prayer, security, psychological support and this provided room for any claimant to think the land belonged to none.

*Other people like Longole Zachayo, an elder in Karamoja, points out that the government functionaries have taken advantage of the implementation of certain programmes to grab land or alter boundaries. Longole observed that since the appointment of the Karimojong chiefs in 1910 there has never been any change in the boundaries. The road was tampered with by the road agents under a road man called Ongolol and a road overseer known as Opus.*

### 3.8. Erosion of the Traditional Authority of Elders

It should be mentioned that the acquisition of sophisticated weapons especially the AK 47 by the Karimojong dealt a blow to the traditional authority of the elders who used to wield authority and influence over the society. Accordingly, guns define Karamoja to the outside world and this is no longer an issue for debate. The proliferation of guns into Karamoja characterizes the region and its people. Not only do guns define the way the Karimojong relate with their neighbors, but has also come to define the way the Karimojong live amongst themselves. The gun has redefined social and political relations within the community and is also a major factor mediating the relations between the Karimojong and the government of Uganda. The gun dynamic shifted power to whoever is in its possession who are currently the youths. Unfortunately, the erosion of traditional authority of elders in Karamoja occurred in the absence of strong institutions of government to take its place. Consequently issues such as the border disagreement that would have easily been handled by elders who know the history has been inflamed by politicians and young people to a violent level. Modern institutions especially those that are meant to administer justice and enforce law and order have proved inadequate to the task. This fact has been recognized by government at the highest level. President Museveni when visiting Moroto on 5th December 1998 acknowledged that the modern

judicial system centralized in Moroto was totally inadequate to the task of administering justice in the district. Consequently, there is need to increase government presence in the area to prevent communities from taking the law in their hands.

### **3.9 Absence of Effective Government Structures and Institutions**

One of the reasons that explain the causes of the conflict is the absence of an effective government on the ground in Karamoja and the absence of a clear development policy, consistent and enforced government policy on Karamoja. The isolation and hostility that has marked the relations between the Karimojong and successive governments in Uganda has left a legacy where Government presence is always absent or ineffective which makes Karamoja look like it is not part of Uganda. Consequently the Karimojong faced with insecurity decided to acquire guns to protect themselves against government and their neighbors out of fear and mistrust.

The absence of effective government at the local level in Karamoja has serious implications for the maintenance of law and order. For example, the whole of Moroto and Nakapiripirt districts, have only a single operational court which sits at the Moroto district headquarters in the municipality. It simply cannot cope with the administration of justice in the vast districts. Similarly, there are few police outposts in the entire region to enforce law and order. Equally important, there is a problem of underdevelopment which is directly linked to security and how the Karimojong relate to their neighbors. In some parts of Karamoja, there are no social services to speak of. The few that exists are provided and maintained by the international NGOs. As such, the region is linked more to the international donor world than to the Government of Uganda which ultimately erodes Government legitimacy among the communities.



## CHAPTER 4

### 4.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 4.1. Conclusion

In the final analysis, the research finds the Katakwi-Moroto border conflict a very complex and protracted conflict which needs serious and relevant interventions to manage and resolve it. The negative effects of the conflict are enormous as evidenced by hundreds of people who currently live in internally displaced camps in appalling conditions susceptible to epidemic diseases. Such interventions need to be spearheaded by Government which is mandated to define the land boundaries and providing wholistic security to its citizens. For too long, the pastoral communities in Uganda have been ignored and marginalized. Because of poverty and marginalization coupled with environmental scarcity, pastoral societies have become militarized as a survival and coping mechanism. This militarization has been interpreted as a given condition for all pastoral societies hence the justification for further marginalization and isolation. Civic and national consciousness demands social justice and equity in the treatment of all citizens irrespective of race, tribe, sex, color and occupation. Government as a matter of priority needs to design and implement a 'marshal plan' for the development of Karamoja region and other pastoral societies. Ultimately, Karamoja and Teso Regions are likely not only to emerge as a food basket for Uganda and the East African region, but will also no longer pose any security risk for the region.



Focus group discussion: Consultative Meeting in Moroto district

## **4.2. General Recommendations**

The conflict between the Karimojong and Itesots has negatively impacted on both parties, although it has more seriously affected the settled farming communities in Katakwi side of Teso who are internally displaced. The border land conflict has escalated cattle rustling which has resulted into internal displacement of hundreds of people. Internal displacement has resulted into loss of livelihoods for most people especially cattle stocks and food. In this section we recommend actions and interventions to resolve the conflict and ease the suffering of the people.

Attempts to resolve the conflict through peace-building should aim at addressing the root causes of the conflict and strengthening the capacity to manage future conflicts.

### **4.2.1. The Government**

- **Government should pursue a policy of confidence building in Karamoja**

As already pointed out, all successive governments pursued negative policies of containment rather than engagement with Karamoja which made the Karimojong resent government's plan and to defend themselves from Government and other hostile tribes. Government needs to invest in building confidence among the Karimojong by carrying out genuine and sustained development in Karamoja region. Development programmes should be supplemented by setting up systems to ensure security of the people. Furthermore, Government must involve the Karimojong in development programmes right from design, through implementation to evaluation stages. Government must avoid the top-down approach which assumes the target people have nothing to contribute but rather and should instead adopt the down-top approach. The advocated down-up approach enlists peoples input and support and creates ownership of the development programmes by the beneficiaries and this is necessary for success.

- **Government should Review the Disarmament Programme**

Government is currently carrying out the disarmament programme. This programme needs to involve the leadership and support of the communities in Karamoja since people are now tired of the gun, with most of them identifying it as a source of their problems rather than security. Government also needs to manage the programme to avoid excesses by security forces which can cause resentment. Above all, Government needs to solicit support of neighboring countries including Kenya and Sudan which share the problem of small arms proliferation. This will ensure that disarmament in Uganda will not be followed by re-armament from these countries. The disarmament should be implemented as a package of development intervention and not as an isolated activity.

- **Government should Urgently Demarcate Katakwi - Moroto Border**

Government also needs to urgently take a decisive step to resolve the looming violent border land clashes between Katakwi and Moroto districts, where Moroto is claiming that the border line is 10km inside Katakwi territory. This is a new dimension to the Teso-Karamoja conflict and if not quickly addressed will lead to further violent conflicts. This will require that Government through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development surveys and demarcates the border. Finally, Government should develop a coherent and consistent policy on Karamoja that will span over a long period of time.

- **Government should Empower the Ministry of Karamoja Affairs**

Ministry of Karamoja Affairs should be empowered to deliver real development in Karamoja rather than cosmetic development, including sensitization of people on key development programmes. This ministry should be strengthened to wean people off relief aid and other handouts and offer sustainable development which helps people to take charge of their own destiny and survival. Effort should be made to enlist support of other regional governments especially Kenya and Sudan which face similar problems to address the regional dimensions of the problem.

- **Government should Stop Militarization of the Region**

As a way of preventing Karimojong cattle rustling and LRA infiltration into Teso sub-region, Government decided to create the Anti-Stock Theft Unit and the Arrow Group. While these groups have to some extent checked the incidents of rustling, they have significantly militarized the region. According to fieldwork interviews, the presence of many guns in the hands of civilian people in the region has sometimes been taken advantage of by criminal elements to rob and settle personal disputes<sup>10</sup>. As part of the interventions to resolve the border conflict, there is a need to increase Government presence by providing security by the police and the army that are trained to handle weapons and respect human rights. This calls for demilitarization of the region through disarmament and providing holistic security which includes development.

- **Government should Expedite Formulation of the National Land Policy**

Despite the existence of a constitutional and legal framework in Uganda, a number of challenges including violent conflicts over land have emerged over the years, which must now be confronted. Land to most Ugandans is viewed as property and a resource that is fundamental to their economic development and survival. Part of the explanation for the land-linked conflicts that have now engulfed the whole country is a complete lack of a policy framework that governs land access, control and ownership for citizens. The overall goal of land policy development as it emerges from existing documentation is to agree on a framework which will ensure the sustainable utilization of Uganda's land resources for poverty eradication. Eradication of poverty is directly related to



elimination of the causes of violent conflicts. Unfortunately for Uganda, the process of formulating the National Land Policy has dragged on since 1993. To this end, we recommend the speedy completion of the National Land Policy which must put at its core a mechanism for conflict resolution over land disputes.

#### **4.2.2. Civil Society should Invest in Peace-building**

Civil society and other stakeholders involved in peacemaking should support initiatives that will enable the leaders and people of the two regions to re-establish contact, trust, confidence and engage in face to face dialogue. There is a need for undertaking peace-building initiatives in the region such as reconciliation, peace education and development activities. It is imperative that development projects are designed in a way that can attract Karimojong away from cattle rustling and dependence. This point calls for a need to diversify the economic livelihoods of the Karimojong.

#### **4.2.3. Local Leaders should champion Social Economic Development**

Local Leadership should focus on mobilizing the population for social, economic development rather than inciting ethnic hatred. Government should also provide adequate judicial and law and order services to Karamoja. This requires recruitment and deployment of judicial officials at every sub county in Karamoja. Besides, adequate policing should be provided in both districts to apprehend and detain law breakers to breakdown the culture of impunity.

#### **4.2.4. Restoring the Traditional Authority**

Traditional authority by elders and men in the kraals is important in maintaining law and order. This authority has been greatly undermined by the gun power. It is recommended that the leadership in Karamoja should champion restoration of the traditional authority to complement Government authority in providing law and order in Karamoja region.

#### **4.2.5. Support Exchange Visits for Teso and Karamoja Leadership**

As noted earlier on, the problem of Karamoja and their neighbors partly stem from the containment policy by successive governments that have ruled in Uganda. This created anger, resentment and hampered development within Karamoja region. There is an urgent need to facilitate exchange visits by the leadership in Karamoja to other peaceful areas. This will provide an opportunity for learning lessons essential for building a culture of tolerance and co-existence within Karamoja and among their neighbours. More importantly, opening up the region to the outside world would create job opportunities for the people from Karamoja and improve their livelihoods. This point is evidenced by the number of street kids and older people that have taken to begging on the streets of Kampala which is their first interaction with the outside world. In other words, this contact and interaction can be facilitated to be more honorable and meaningful.

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Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment

Plot 96, Kanjokya Street, Kamwokya

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