

# Ekwi and Etem in Karamoja

**A study of decision-making in a post-conflict society**  
**Karamoja Action Research Team with Patta Scott-Villiers**

## Context

Karamoja is seen as a 'development challenge,' and has been the recipient of a raft of technical interventions imposed on a bemused population, (Kratli 2010). This report challenges the idea that it is Karimojong<sup>1</sup> who should change in order to stop being a development challenge. It suggests that development actors should look more carefully at where the potential lies among the people. This book aims to re-orient priorities. But first, there are three aspects of recent history in Karamoja, a sub-region of Northern Uganda, that are worth considering briefly: pastoralism, disarmament and land. This formulation of the context is drawn from a special edition of the *Journal of Nomadic Peoples* (2010, vol. 4 no. 2) edited by Saverio Kratli.

It is widely assumed that pastoralism is backward and unproductive, even though pastoralist producers across Uganda are responsible for most of the livestock production in the country. Pastoralism has better economic performance than other forms of production in Karamoja and other cattle producing areas (Kratli, 2010). This fact is largely ignored by development agencies, whose livelihood programmes in the sub-region are almost exclusively focused on cultivation and 'alternative livelihoods', and by the government, which has promoted a policy of land alienation and sedentarisation. This has not reduced Karimojong determination to own livestock, but it has undermined herder-cultivator relations, and the relations of pastoralists with their government.

Besides bringing much needed peace, the ten-year disarmament programme in Karamoja had devastating effects on Karimojong society and economy (Mkutu 2010, Knighton 2010). It created a void in self-organisation and self-belief that was then enthusiastically filled with new, less effectual modes of local governance and production. It is only recently that Karimojong have begun to recover, re-organise and rebuild.

Another influence has been the gazetting and degazetting of land for conservation. By 1965, almost 95% of Karamoja was gazetted. In 2002 half of the gazetted area was degazetted 'to attract foreign investment [for] commercial agricultural ventures' (Rugadya, 2010). While some of it was subsequently occupied by the small farms of Karimojong who had lost livestock during the years of insecurity, there has also been an increasingly obvious sale of the land into the hands of unknown investors. In 2009 an additional 6,800 km<sup>2</sup> was under 38 mining licenses (ibid). The richest land is gradually being sold, leaving farmers and herders deeply insecure about their rights to the land.

These facts are a backdrop to the research presented here. The work concludes that the years of violence and the peace that has followed wrought profound changes in social and political relations, a problem manifest in alarming changes in land use, tenure and ownership. This had left people in Karamoja in a precarious position. The research found local information exchange and decision-making structures in a state of near-collapse. As the research continued, and partly as a result of the debate it provoked, Karimojong have begun to take active steps to revive systems of information exchange and decision-making to negotiate questions of land, peace and justice.

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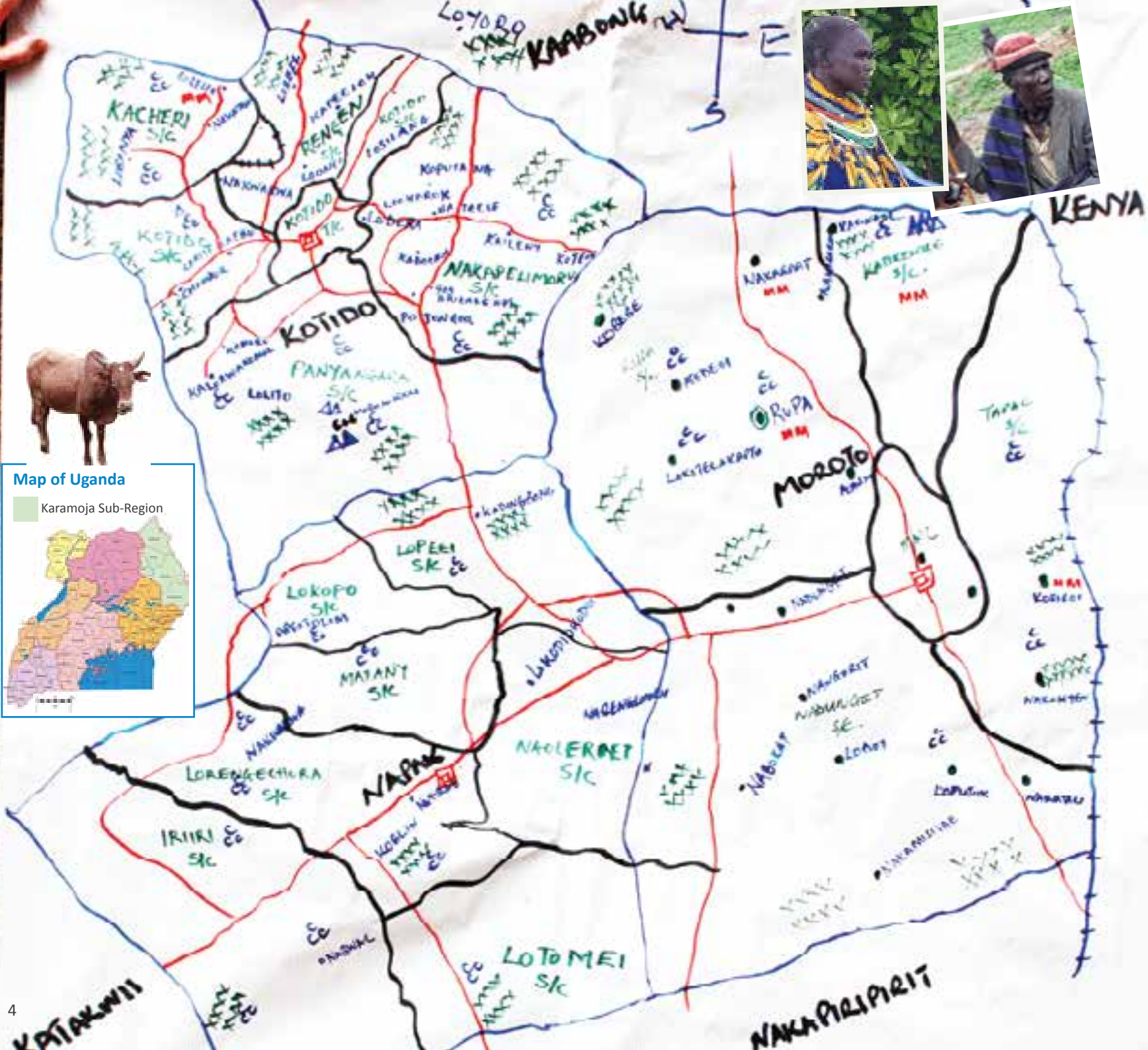
<sup>1</sup> We use the term *Karimojong* in this book to refer in a political sense to the citizens of Karamoja. Our term embraces people from a range of clans and groups who speak a similar language and live in the sub-region of Karamoja. They include Jie, Matheniko, Bokora, Pian, Dodoth, Tepeth and others.



## Introduction

This book presents the findings of a nine-month action research process in Karamoja. Over the months, the broad topics of the research – land, peace and customary law – were refined to three precise areas of focus on how decisions are made: herder-cultivator disputes and Karimojong governance; peace and the links between customary and state law; and land alienation and associated state laws and policies.

The research team, 23 young men and women from Karamoja, developed the initial text for this book in September 2013. They presented their evidence and analysis to elders in four communities for review, amended the narrative and then translated it into English. Sarah Wilson and Alastair Scott-Villiers from Pastoralist Communication Initiative (PCI) and Patta Scott-Villiers from Institute of Development Studies (IDS) typed and edited it. Natalie Newell and Longoli Simon of Restless Development and team elder, Logwee John Bosco assisted in detailed checking and supported all the logistics. The photographs, taken by members of the research team, are both record and illustration. The team chose which images to use and Sarah Wilson laid out the book. The context and methodology sections at the beginning and end of the book were contributed by Patta Scott-Villiers and checked over by all the researchers. As language was interpreted from eloquent spoken Karimojong to simplified English to more complicated written English and back again for checking, there has been an inevitable evolution of meaning. In the end the book is a negotiated perspective.

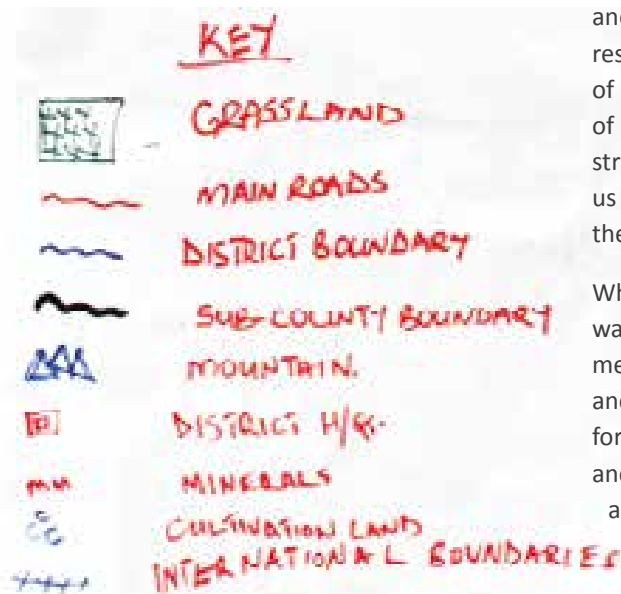


Map of Uganda

Karamoja Sub-Region



Map of Kotido, Moroto and Napak Districts. All locations and boundaries are approximate.



## Research team and method

The Karimojong Action Research Team is 23 young men and women from Kotido, Moroto and Napak districts. Our purpose is conducting research in Karamoja for Karimojong. Some of us have been educated at school and some of us have not. We consider this our great strength. 25 elders from the three districts help us with analysis and also act as spokespeople in the Karimojong parliaments (*akiriket*).

When we were recruiting each other, we wanted a team that was balanced between men and women, schooled and not schooled and rural and urban. In selecting, we looked for an interest in the issues affecting Karamoja and a respect for Karimojong, as well as an ability to speak and listen well. We have a mix of orators, questioners, memorisers, photographers, note-takers and organisers. We are also a mix of people who can speak

well with elders, those who can speak well with government and those who are good with young people.

We research contemporary issues and present the evidence to people in Karamoja. We also seek to inform local government and NGOs and bring them into debate with citizens on the issues raised by the research. Using the findings, we support action with Karimojong, government and NGOs. We are Karimojong working for Karamoja.

We selected the topics of peace, land and customary law during a scoping exercise in Napak and Moroto in December 2012. It was our initial hypothesis that profound changes to how peace, land and customary law are managed have come about as a result of the years of insecurity. We believed that these themes would have resonance with communities across Karamoja and expected that evidence on the issues would





generate debate and action within the Karimojong and with the various agencies working on these matters.

Between February and August 2013, we visited 89 communities (some of them three or more times) in 14 sub-counties of Moroto, Napak and Kotido, where we interviewed 527 people and talked informally to many more. Our criterion was diversity. We travelled to the furthest kraals (cattle camps) as well as the most easily accessible villages, and talked to old, middle-aged and young, men and women, leaders, entrepreneurs, householders, herders, farmers, officials and workers. There were discussions under trees, in kraals, fields and houses as well as in the offices of officials of the Government of Uganda, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and NGOs. We estimate that around 4,850 people took part in our discussions.

We stayed the night in people's houses or by their fires. The women stayed with women and the men with men. We shared food with our hosts, and helped with the animals, household tasks and in the gardens. Once we were comfortable together we discussed the research topics, recording interviews on voice recorders and taking photos.

We visited 32 of the settlements and kraals a second time and 11 of them for a third time to build the argument and develop action with a growing network across the three districts. Second and third visits deepened understanding, fed back findings and followed up developments.

The research had four phases. An initial phase in December 2012 scoped the topic. Were we right to think that peace, land and law were important contemporary issues? What questions did people want us to consider? During the second, investigative phase, from February to April 2013 we visited 89 communities and asked three questions, one each for peace, land and customary law. In April we spent a week in Moroto analysing the material and prepared feedback for the people and officials.

In the second phase, from May to June 2013, we shared evidence and analysis with Karimojong and heard their feedback at meetings and discussions in 32 of the 89 communities. The elders called this 'sharing *ekoi* and building our relationship'. *Ekoi* is well-informed news. We

discussed possible actions. We also took the preliminary analysis to local government and NGOs. We then continued with interviews, probing to understand more about the how, who, where and what of the matters that were coming into focus. Also during that time we asked a number of men and women elders to act as our mentors, contributing to analysis and becoming spokespeople. In late June we met in Kotido to analyse the results of the second round and we took the preliminary analysis to the elders and refined it.

In July and August 2013, we returned to eleven communities where people had taken action on the findings. Continuing to build the evidence, we took part in debates as to what people were doing or planning to do. We spoke at community meetings and with government, while the elders presented to the Karimojong parliaments (*akiriket*). We helped link government and the people, supported exchange visits between communities and contributed to a complex peace process.

In early September, after a meeting at which we developed the draft text of this book, we met elders at Rupa, Nakwakwa, Nakapelimoru and Panyangara to review and develop the argument that we present here.

The book begins with the first theme of herder-cultivator disputes and internal governance among Karimojong. The second theme is the story of a peace process, which throws more light on internal governance while also showing the workings of cooperation between customary and state bodies. The third theme turns to the phenomenon of land alienation and associated state laws and policies. These three sections are followed by a synthesis in which we draw out an argument about changing modes of decision-making in Karamoja. The end of the book introduces the research team and presents a review of the research method, asking whether and how this method can be taken forward or replicated elsewhere. For us it has been a great experience. It is unusual in Karamoja for young people to have freedom to do what we believe is right and assistance to make it happen. We have enjoyed it very much and we intend to continue!





# Disputes between cultivators and herders

Karimojong systems for managing the balance between herding and cultivating had been disrupted by years of insecurity and the changing pattern of land use that came with the peace. The research team gathered evidence on changes in land use and its customary management, developed an analysis of the current situation and presented it to communities across Moroto, Napak and Kotido Districts.

In this chapter we explore how customary ways of dealing with land use are returning and we explain the role of *ekoi* (information), *etem* (meetings) and *akiriket* (parliaments) in resolving disputes and enacting laws.

*The picture shows Akol Ekulukol at an akiriket in Nakapelimoru, where he spoke about the importance of all Jie giving priority to the cow - that Jie is the land of the cow. This was later raised at the Jie four-sub-counties akiriket in Lomuth.*



## The evidence

Kraals are mobile cattle camps managed by younger men that shift periodically, often tens or hundreds of kilometres in order to give livestock different qualities of grazing from season to season. When a kraal moves close to a settled village, disputes can arise. The problem is most acute where families who have no livestock extend their cultivation over land that once was grazing land or animal track ways. Herders and cultivators both complain that government and NGOs have supported only cultivation and given little or no attention to herding, creating divisions between those who have animals and those who have not. The two factors of loss of stock during the insecurity, and promotion of cultivation during the peace have created new conditions for conflict over land use.

At Nakonyen in Moroto District, a newly-established kraal, we found mostly young men with cows and some small areas of cultivation. When asked how they are using the land, they gestured to the horizon and said ‘we have much land. We cultivate a little and the cows are just grazing all this land from here to over there.’

However, at Lodoi near Moroto town inside the densely packed villages, people said that ‘here during cultivation season the cows have difficulties in moving. Crops block the tracks. They get so narrow the animals can’t pass. So the livestock have to stay far from the village’.

At Nangorit in Moroto we found a similar issue. During the cultivation season cows had difficulty in passing through the fields and reaching grazing areas. They had to walk a very long way round, because there were no track ways through the gardens.

At Rupa we found both cultivation and herding, but still people there complained that cultivation has extended onto grazing land and the only place left for cows was up on the mountain. Even the tracks that lead to the mountain were blocked in many places.

In Nabwal in Napak we met Lokawoyan who told us, ‘we settled here for cultivation. And we were cultivating and cultivating, not caring about anything else. At the time, there was insecurity so

we didn’t expect to ever have cows here. But now peace has come and people are bringing their cows. There are no tracks for them. Even when you want to take your oxen to plough there is no path and the women have to carry the ploughs.’

In Natirae we found similar misunderstandings between cultivators and herders. The herders were claiming that this land had not been cultivated in the past and should be considered grazing land. The cultivators asked them, ‘who are you? Where are you from? You just come and herd on our land.’ At Nakwakwa, close to Natirae, we heard the same thing.

At a kraal in Lolito, in Kotido district, herders said, ‘there is peace now and people are cultivating. As the gardens are piling pressure on us we have to move away. It is not so difficult. Now there is peace, there is much grazing land.’

At the kraal of Lokuda, at Kaileny, the herders told us they had moved to that place because of insecurity in the northern part of the district. They complained of being pressed by the cultivation on one side and insecurity on the other. They felt they had nowhere to go with their animals.

At Kopusang there were many large gardens and large farms supported by NGOs. The cattle herders had been forced to move further and further away. Elders in Nakakwa said, ‘NGOs make us plant trees when we would prefer to be building a dam for animals to water.’



In the new settlements of Lobanya and Kolorwakomol we found that herding and cultivation were managed without dispute.

## A dispute resolved

The pattern of land use in Natirae began to change in the time of insecurity, when herders had to desert the land. Later, with the peace, the land was repopulated and government and NGOs encouraged cultivation. The insecurity had allowed division to grow between different groups, and new systems of authority had confused the traditional mechanism for dispute resolution.

Natirae village is surrounded by cultivated fields. When we visited in May we found a recently established kraal close by. The people, all of whom were Bokora were not on good

*These herders have come to say, "let us have some place for grazing cows." Even what we are doing here is cultivating in order to get cows. Yet if we get cows then where shall we graze?'*

terms. The cultivators complained that livestock were destroying their crops. The herders responded by saying, 'it is the cultivators who have encroached on the grazing and we can do nothing about it.'

We slept in the kraal and in the morning we met a group of young herders. The kraal leader Apanyekodocho explained the herder point of view. 'They are cultivating without minding our cows' he said, 'and every time our cows step on their gardens they complain. Yet this used to be grassland. We need to work this out with these people.'

According to the group at Apanyekodocho's kraal, there were no kraals at Natirae three years ago when the first settlers came, because there was no peace at that time. Kraals were forced to stay in areas protected by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) until the peace consolidated. Grazing around the protected kraals was poor since there were so many animals confined in limited areas. As the insecurity lessened, herders and their animals began to leave the protected areas and spread to the old grazing territories.

As Apanyekodocho put it, 'Natirae was a grazing land before the cultivators settled. But during the time of the insecurity the cows had stayed away for a long time. It was around 10 to 15 years ago that our kraal was last here, but the kraal leaders knew the place and had been waiting to come back so our cattle could get a good diet.'

We returned to Natirae in June to share our evidence and analysis. We called a meeting and explained how we were finding the same problems in many places. This time we stayed with the cultivators, spending the night with them and talking. We wanted to hear more of the detail of their complaints. The men and women cultivators said they were the first people to settle here. 'We came three years ago. We came and found it free, so we demarcated the land and gave to each person 35 metres in width. Since these herders have come and put their kraals here they are really disturbing us. The government will not help us with this matter because it is internal to Karimojong. On our side, we would not trust them to resolve it well.'

We asked the herders if they wanted to meet the cultivators. They assented, saying 'we have really had conflict here. We need to meet the

cultivators. We will ask them to show us where we should graze the cows and which places their gardens are going to occupy.' Then we asked the cultivators if they wanted to meet with the herders and they said 'If there is a possibility we will do so.' So we made preparations to bring them together and slept that night in the kraal.

In the morning we asked the herders to go with us to the cultivators. The cultivators had said, 'since the herders are visitors, then they should meet under our tree.' The herders in the kraal accepted this. As researchers our task was to listen, watch and record how the discussion proceeded.





The cultivators asked the herders, 'why have you come to this area? We hope you have not come to bring chaos.' The herders replied, 'we have come here knowing that this is our former grassland, where we normally bring our cows during the wet season for the salty grass. We have come for nothing else.' The herders said to the cultivators 'we should not have to quarrel here. We are finding people cultivating everywhere and this is a problem. We need somewhere to go. Where exactly do you want us to graze our cows? We need to find a way of portioning the land so there is space for our grazing and your cultivation.'

The cultivators addressed the kraal leader, Apanyekodocho, 'if we allow you to bring your cows through here, your shepherds will come and steal our cassava and your cows will be eating as they pass the crops. How will you take care of these problems? We know that if there is theft we will quarrel. We also know that if your cows eat our fields we will quarrel.'

Apanakolreng, one of the cultivators' most eloquent speakers, spoke in a way that is customary to those Karimojong elders who are skilled at negotiation and coming to agreement. He focused on the common interest. 'These herders have come to say, "let us have some place for grazing cows." Even what we are doing here is cultivating in order to get cows! Yet if we get cows then where shall we graze? We should reach agreement so that the cow has space to graze.'

After Apanakolreng had spoken, the herders and cultivators reached the following agreements:

- Cultivators must limit their cultivation to places agreed in the meeting.

- Herders must not allow their cows to step into the waters, but water at specific points. They must keep the water troughs clean.
- Wide track ways will be opened for animals to pass.
- The gardens which have been cultivated in the place where the herders will graze should be left until harvest and the herders should keep watch of their animals not to tread on that field, but they should not be cultivated again. They should be left as grazing land for the future.
- The fingernails of thieves have to be cut short.

They agreed that the children of the cultivators would come to the kraal to get milk. 'We are one people' said Apanakolreng. 'You people of the kraal should be coming here freely and we will share and talk.' That day they agreed that the kraal leader Apanyekodocho should stay and eat with the cultivators.

The herders asked the cultivators to pass the message to the rest of the settlers who had extended their gardens on the other side of the village of Natirae. 'They should be aware of our presence and the agreements that we have come to at this meeting.'

Two weeks later we returned to Natirae to record how the resolutions of the meeting had been implemented. We went to the kraal and slept there. We asked them if the track ways had been opened, if they were wide enough, if the cultivators had not extended their gardens and if the herders had kept to their promises not to steal or damage crops. The young men said 'the resolutions have been useful to us. We are staying on well. Our cows are grazing here and even in the other direction.'

Several months later, we returned yet again and stayed with the cultivators. We asked for an update. They told us the herders and cultivators are still staying together well. Apanakolreng, the orator, said, 'Apanyekodocho, the kraal leader, is a good man. All that we agreed in the last meeting has been observed.' Almost all the farming families in Natirae aspire to own animals and see the need for maintaining the balance between grazing and gardens.



## Etem - a way of deciding

In Kotido district we found a similar situation, this time among the Jie clans. In Potongor, youth leader Apatilokori said, 'the people settling and cultivating at Potongor have forgotten about cows! Our cows are suffering. Each day we set off for grazing early and reach the grass three hours later. We have to begin our return back in the middle of the afternoon. The cows don't have enough time to graze well and when they return they are so tired they cannot produce much milk. As the cattle go along the narrow paths, it is difficult to stop them from destroying the crops on either side. That causes quarrels every day between cultivators and herders.'

At Lobanya we found disputes between herders and cultivators being dealt with through a system of agreements. The founders of the village

*'The animals go up the mountain for grass. The grassland here has been completely covered in cultivation.'*

Loyongo Paul (now chair of the local council) and Loluk Paul (who had been a councillor) called people together to speak to us. We shared the *ekoi* of the conflict between herders and cultivators in many villages. They explained that the site of Lobanya village and its gardens was

originally a grazing area, but the herders deserted the place during the years of insecurity. When the peace came, people who had lost animals took the opportunity to start a new settlement there. It was easier for those with no animals to return first to these areas, since without cows they were less vulnerable to raids. They said, 'we now have cows around and we are also cultivating here. There is place set aside for cultivation and a place set aside for grazing animals. The track ways are open.'

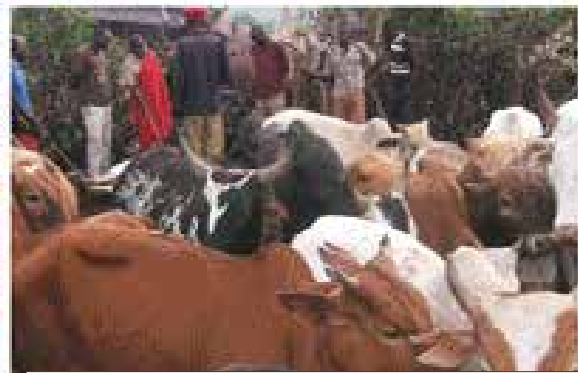
They asked us to look at the track ways and we saw that they are open. They said it was good of us to visit them and have this discussion, especially since we shared

According to the research team's elder Logwee John Bosco, the practice of *etem* (Kotido) or *ekokwa* (Moroto/Napak) used to be the norm across Karamoja. *Etem/ekokwa* are meetings to which all men and women in a community are invited. Anyone who has an issue, whoever they are, can bring it to be discussed by everyone. But, during the years of insecurity, a group of people deliberating together became a target. People at such a meeting would be shot without question. So *ekokwa/etem* faded away. It works in this way. People are sitting under the morning tree and discussing the news before they move out to their work. *Etem/ekokwa* can be called from anywhere around the village or kraal. It only requires that a message is passed around. Unlike *akiriket*, the formal parliaments that have strict rules of ritual and procedure, *ekokwa/etem* have few rules, only respect for the discussion. The meeting is opened by the one with the issue or by an orator whose assistance has been sought. The orator will begin by saying, 'I think the number of people is large now. We have a lot of things to do. People need to go and do their work, so if there is an issue of the *ekokwa*, can somebody come up and raise it?' Then the one with the issue puts it forward and the deliberation begins. When a person wants to speak they must seek permission from the one who calls the meeting.

with them *ekoi* from elsewhere. Loyongo Paul said, 'animals and crops coexist here. We make sure the pathways are clear and even grazing areas are being controlled without any disturbance. We manage all this through *etem* (community meetings). They work more effectively than council meetings for this purpose, because all the people can come.'

Loluk Paul explained how the people of Lobanya had revived the practice of *etem*. He continued, 'we agreed that if there is a dispute,





Kraal in Natirae

Lokowoyen in Nabwal said 'now peace has come and people are bringing their cows around. There are no tracks for them.'



Boy from Potongor who came to our office and told us that if someone gave him 5 cows he would give up cultivating today.



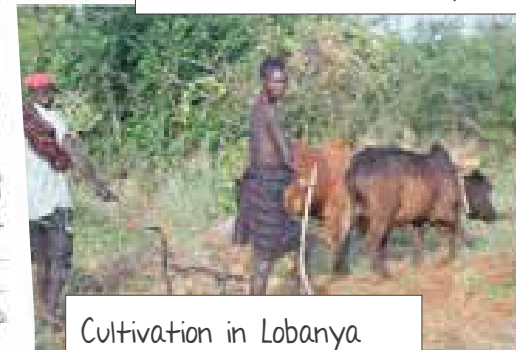
Nakonyen - small areas of cultivation. People said, 'when we need more land, we just graze further'.



Cultivation in Nakwakwa. 'There are places they have cultivated so much that even these oxen can't pass.'



APPREHENSION IN KRAAL  
 It was in the night of the 1st that we arrived  
 following upon the instructions from the  
 Government to be stationed at the kraal.  
 The immediate difficulty was that the  
 kraal in any part of the kraal blocked the  
 animal pathways and the cows and  
 oxen will have to walk to the kraal and  
 that would make it possible for the kraal  
 to be opened just as the kraal would  
 be in order to graze land for pasture and  
 a surplus.  
 The animals were not to be  
 included in the kraal, which would be  
 a surplus.



Cultivation in Lobanya

# HERDERS AND CULTIVATORS

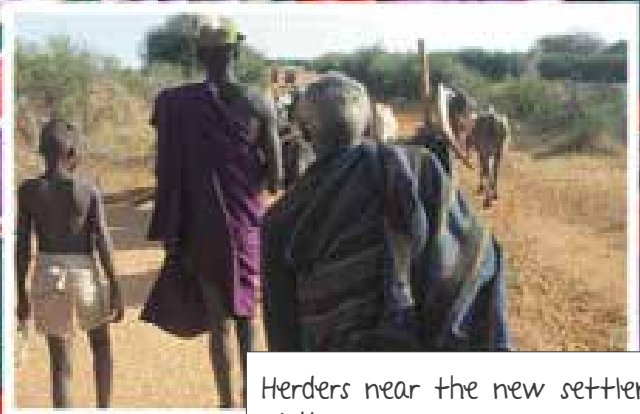
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## APARLIAMENT IN LOMUTH?

This type of gathering is the greatest of its kind in the region. It always done during the month of July in Gambia. It is chosen by the elders. It's must for all the seven clans in the to attend and the (heads) elders of the seven clans are the main...



Man in Rengen shows team member, Apangakile, where one of the animal pathways has been cultivated over.



Herders near the new settlement of Kopusang.

the *etem* is able to determine which land is for which person. For the herdsmen we allocate land for animals and access to water. We tell them not make the mistake of letting the animals eat the crops.'

We stayed in Lobanya for two days, consolidating our understanding of the processes of *etem*. Then we went to Potongor. Apatilokori told us, 'most of us are cultivators' he said. 'The animals go up the mountain for grass. The grassland here has been completely covered in cultivation.' We asked how they managed that and he said 'we are failing because individuals are thinking only of themselves, believing that each one can manage everything alone'. We shared with the people in Potongor how the people in Lobanya were managing the relations between cultivators and pastoralists using *etem*.

In Loonei, a village close to Potongor, we met Maria, who described a similar difficulty between animals and gardens. 'We have animals here, but for them to get grass they have to go down the main road and it is a long way. We have been struggling with each other over access tracks for animals. There was a case two days ago when some herdsmen wanted to open up a trackway through a garden and the owner wanted to take the herdsmen to the authorities. That is not good. The owner of the garden asked why his neighbours wanted to open track ways on his land.' There is little trust that local authorities would be able to resolve these disputes. People fear favouritism and lack of understanding.

In a meeting with a number of men and women, we presented our analysis of the issues at Potongor and Lobanya. We explained how the people at Lobanya were managing these

kinds of issues using *etem*. We said to the Loonei people, 'If you ever get time then we would be able to take you there'. They replied, 'even tomorrow we can do it!' When the people of Potongor heard that the people of Loonei had asked to go to Lobanya, they asked if they could come too.



*'We have been struggling with each other over access tracks for animals. There was a case two days ago when some herdsmen wanted to open up a trackway through a garden and the owner wanted to take the herdsmen to the authorities. That is not good.'*

The people of Lobanya liked the suggestion. We collected ten men and women, chosen by the *etem* in Potongor, Kapeelok and Loonei, and went to Lobanya. They were well received and were taken through the way that Lobanya handles land issues through *etem*.

The day after the visit we received a call from one of the herdsmen of Potongor, who told us that the herdsmen there had held an *etem* that morning involving the whole community. The result was an agreement to open track ways. Some track ways had been opened that very day.

A phone call from Kapeelok told a similar story. They had started a discussion on how to use land for both cultivation and herding and they too had opened track ways.

Several weeks later, at a big Jie meeting in Nakapelimoru, Lokoliteba, one of the Potongor people who had visited Lobanya, confirmed the achievement: 'we have sorted out the issue of herdsmen and cultivators and opening up track ways.'

## **Akiriket - binding laws**

Kaileny is a meeting point of Jie and Turkana kraals. Here Jie kraal leader Lowokotide told us how the situation of conflict between herdsmen and cultivators had reached troubling proportions. 'You people,' he said to us angrily, 'there is something which happened here. My boys yesterday were caned. Those cultivators slaughtered our sheep and told us to move away from their area. Is this good? Should we not be able to live together? Should not the animals be able to eat good grass here in the wet season and then go elsewhere in the dry season? Cultivators should be hospitable to herdsmen because, even for those of us who don't have cows, we will have them as soon as we are able to afford them. We have to be careful we are not destroying this customary way of living. The lack of animals by one person shouldn't be a cause of animosity, because all the animals are ours.'

We shared with Lokuda and the others at Kaileny the understandings we had gained from

Potongor, Loonei and Lobanya. We recounted how Lobanya people had been using *etem* for dealing with these difficulties and making land use fair for the balance of cows and sorghum.

As we continued to move around Kotido district, we heard that the debate about herder-cultivator relations was spreading. By July, it seemed that most of the Jie people had heard the stories and were talking about the issue.

In July there was an *etem* in Lookorok, Nakapelimoru sub-county, consisting of six sub clans of the Jie, to discuss the peace and the beating at Kaileny came up. Lopkume, an elder from Lookorok, said, ‘people of Nakapelimoru, this issue has now become ours, because we have beaten the herders. We have made a mistake. It is our young children who have made these mistakes. The mistakes were made by just two people, not the whole of Nakapelimoru.’ But Lomoromedot and Loriga, who had done the beating, did not accept the responsibility and failed to turn up to account for themselves. So the meeting was inconclusive.

The young herders who had been beaten told a number of influential Jie elders about what had happened to them. The elders then raised

*The land of Jie is one. This issue belongs to us and is good for us, because grassland is for all of us. The life of a Karimojong is about both a cow and sorghum. There shouldn't be any conflicts over land and like in the past, grasslands should be there.'*

this issue at the *akiriket* at Lomuth. *Akiriket* is a site of deliberation and a place where binding decisions are made. *Akiriket* also refers to the people who are needed to sit under a particular shade to make the decision, and it also means all of the people of a given clan. *Akiriket* are events of law, society and religion.

At an earlier *etem* at Lookorok the elders said, ‘it looks like the people of Nakapelimoru are calling for a small stone to be rolled to them.’

The small stone is a curse that will bring bad luck to an entire village. On hearing this, Lopeikume, an elder from Nakapelimoru remembering that Nakapelimoru had suffered such a curse 35 years ago and the effects had been terrible, immediately addressed the elders. ‘We have done an act of shame and if the elders are calling for a small stone, it will bring more shame to us. Please forgive us,’ he said. The elders accepted the apology and withdrew their threat. Their interest was to achieve peace and binding resolution, not to throw curses.

Then, in the *akiriket*, the elders announced that grassland beyond the river at Nangololapolon should not be touched and that land should not



be cultivated. Then they said, ‘the land of Jie is one. This issue belongs to us, because grassland is for all of us. The life of a Karimojong is about both the cow and sorghum. There should not be any conflicts over land. Grasslands should be respected.’

This binding decision that the cow has access to all of Jie is a matter of vital importance. It means that herders will be welcome to put their kraals close to any village and that herders must respect the integrity of crops grown in agreed places. It cements the relations of the two sides of Karimojong prosperity: the cow and the grain, the herder and the cultivator.

Logwee John Bosco explained, ‘the animal is speared. The fire is set. The meat is cut and roasted. The people gather. They don’t take positions until everyone who is needed is there. The elders ask, “are there people from this *akiriket* here? Are there people from that *akiriket* there?” Then the first elder says, “we can settle now and know why we are here.” The *akiriket* must begin with the slaughter of cow, goat or sheep. Its purpose will vary. It could be that the person who provides the animal would like to say, ‘it is long since I talked to you. I just want your blessing.’ Or the person has a complaint and brings the issue to the court. The meat is half-way roasted. The elders bless it and the reason for them being here is mentioned, and the old man says “you can give people food.” Now old men send their young boys to finish roasting their pieces.’ Then the formal debate begins and it is blessed by the rituals and its seriousness is appreciated. *Etem* and *ekokwa* are important because they can also involve older and younger women. Women do not take part in the *akiriket*. *Etem* and *ekokwa* are more frequent, because they do not cost anything. *Akiriket* are expensive.

## Conclusion

Our research has shown how the land pattern has changed and how customary management of land has been eroded. Our *ekoi* spread the analysis, reported the debates and shared the different solutions. It gave the people an idea to revive the old knowledge of *etem*. These approaches had been neglected, even though people had neither developed, nor been given by government, new ways to solve communal issues. Government is seen as a body that makes

announcements and sets the agenda when it calls a meeting. It is not understood to be concerned with resolution of local issues.

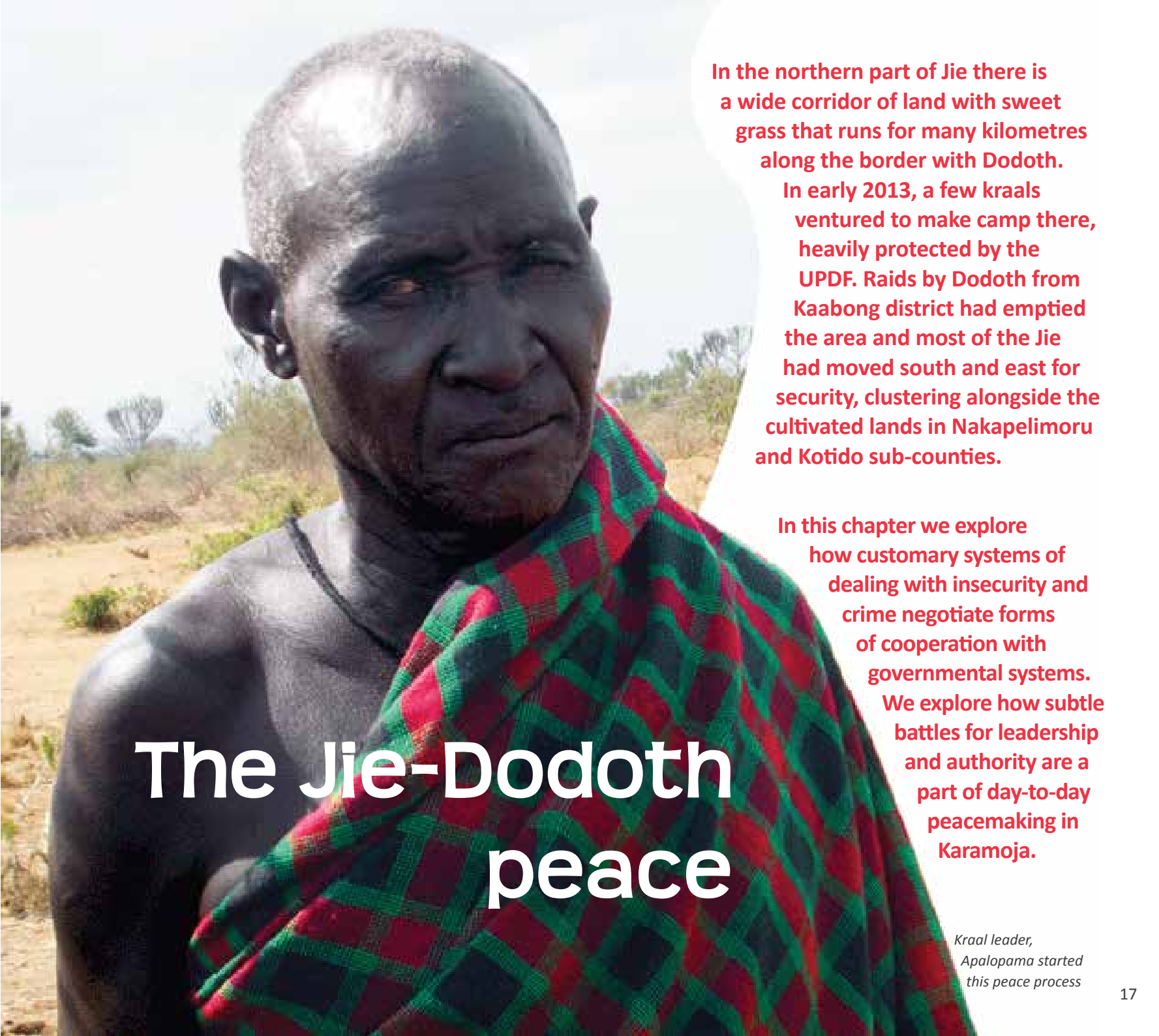
During more than a decade of raiding and violent disarmament, the number of cows had fallen. Once peace finally came, many people were destitute, so they started expanding their cultivation. They were aware that they were blocking pathways and extending onto grazing land, but at first there was no competition, because there were few cows. Later as cows began to return, no one person was able to bring up the issue of land disputes. In part this was because the conflict had caused distrust and animosity between people. It had led to people feeling they should only look after themselves. Government had introduced a new form of authority in the villages, which involved local councils rather than *etem* and *akiriket*. Government and NGOs had promoted cultivation and given secondary importance to grazing land. During the course of the debates, however, it became clear that most cultivators were attempting to rebuild their herds and that they would prefer to give grazing equal importance to cultivation. The means of striking this balance was *etem*.

While *akiriket* set binding laws, implementation relies on *etem/ekokwa*. These community meetings make practical local decisions. The decade of insecurity almost destroyed the tradition of *etem* and without *etem*, *akiriket* had retreated into obscurity, continuing to be important in social and religious ritual, but ceasing to deal with more overtly political problems. After the researchers provided evidence for the frequency of herder-cultivator disputes, it was not difficult for the people to tackle the problem by reviving *etem* and blessing the decision with *akiriket*. It was a matter internal to Karimojong and subject to local law. As a result of this success, people agreed that *etem* and *akiriket* need to be strengthened for the future. As one young woman put it, ‘it is a revival of what is already inside Karimojong and, see, good things have come.’

**These good things are more than just resolution of local disputes. Indigenous *etem* (as opposed to a different kind of meeting called by government or outside agencies), are places of power, where evidence is marshalled and decisions made. They are the public sphere of Karimojong society, a crucible for social and political relations and a vital site for education for the young.**







# The Jie-Dodoth peace

In the northern part of Jie there is a wide corridor of land with sweet grass that runs for many kilometres along the border with Dodoth. In early 2013, a few kraals ventured to make camp there, heavily protected by the UPDF. Raids by Dodoth from Kaabong district had emptied the area and most of the Jie had moved south and east for security, clustering alongside the cultivated lands in Nakapelimoru and Kotido sub-counties.

In this chapter we explore how customary systems of dealing with insecurity and crime negotiate forms of cooperation with governmental systems. We explore how subtle battles for leadership and authority are a part of day-to-day peacemaking in Karamoja.

*Kraal leader,  
Apalopama started  
this peace process*

## Insecurity

In March 2013, we visited the kraal of Apalopama at Lobeel, in the north of Kotido district not far from the border with Kaabong district. We found the kraal under the protection of a barracks of the UPDF. Meanwhile, the kraals of Arukan, Lomida and Lokuda in south Jie, near Nakapelimoru, had no need of such protection. We asked Apalopama about it. He said, 'I am here because of good pasture, but I can only be here with the protection of soldiers. There is raiding between our brothers the Dodoth and the Jie all along the border with Kaabong. Ours is the only kraal here, the others are in the safe parts of the district to the south and east.'

Apalopama explained that even as the grazing was good, living under the protection of the army presented difficulties. The soldiers had to be fed. Moving to new pastures meant first writing a letter to the district authorities and the UPDF. 'Unlike other kraal leaders, I cannot move at any time to whatever grass I feel like. And I cannot see a way to come out of this situation' he said.

'It is only peace that would allow me to move freely without these soldiers. The problem is that the Dodoth are being stubborn. We tried peace with them but we did not succeed. They continue to raid. Peace is neither simple nor cheap. It is long, it is expensive and it must include the government and the herders from both parties.'

*'With raiding, it is one person who begins to set for a raid and others join him, but the success of the raid will depend on that one person. The same goes for peace.'*

We asked Apalopama if he planned to try again to agree peace with the Dodoth. Lobokoteba (one of the research team) said, 'even with raiding, it is one person who begins to set for a raid and others join him, but the success of the raid will depend on that one person. The same goes for peace.' Apalopama thought for a moment and said, 'you are right. When the other kraals begin migrating from the south to the east, I will also move closer to them and put the idea to them, if they can take it.'

We returned to Apalopama's kraal in May and found he had moved to a new site further to the east towards Nakapelimoru. There were crops growing around the kraal. We asked about how the cows and the gardens were doing. Apalopama gestured around at the gardens to left and right and said, 'we have a new problem here now. We are being pushed by the cultivators, their gardens have come all the way from over there - up to here! We are now facing insecurity from all sides, from cultivators and from our brothers, the Dodoth, over there. I should take up what you have been suggesting. We should try to make peace with our friends the Dodoth. There are Dodoth cows in this very kraal of ours, so it should be possible for their owner to promote peace with his people over there.'

'Many of the Jie kraals have now come from south side of Jie to the eastern side for the tasty grass. Now is the right time for me to suggest to the rest of the kraal leaders that we go for peace, because they have also come to taste the nastiness of this place at this time. Lomaria's kraal has come to the mountain at Moru-eperu, and those people will also want to discuss this issue.'

The raiding between Dodoth and Jie was not being controlled. People became more and more insecure as the criminals continued with impunity. Herders had to find protection either with the army or by moving to the cultivation areas, putting them under stress as their movement was limited and their animals suffered. Cultivators began to suffer too as more and more kraals came near the gardens. Then information began to be exchanged, leaders were pressed to act and it became possible to make moves to confront the insecurity.

## Peace Talks

Apalopama sent messages to the kraal leaders of the Jie through *etem*, saying 'the best we can do is get peace with the Dodoth, because being protected by soldiers is troublesome.' The other kraal leaders responded



*'When peace comes milk becomes plentiful'*

well to the idea of peace talks and went on to hold *etem* in each kraal to bring more of the herders inside. Lokwateba, Aboka and Apanyeepong, young men, undertook to inform the peace committee in Nakapelimoru about the proposal for talks. This peace committee had been formed by elders and young people during the time of peace talks with Turkana, Jie, Bokora and Matheniko and had proved effective in linking herders with officials. The committee would make a connection with government and NGOs. Government would be needed for underwriting the peace agreement and having authority over mechanisms of policing that would sustain the peace once made. NGOs would be needed to provide resources for transport and communication.

These discussions were beginning at a time when there was much grumbling between herders and cultivators in Nakapelimoru sub-county. The cultivators were calling for peace on the Dodoth side, because peace in the north of the district would reduce the pressure of herders in the east. At Kaileny cultivators had beaten a herder and the people had called an *etem* at Lookorok to try to resolve the issue. The meeting was on the last day of May. After the matter of the beating had been discussed, Apakoima said, 'let us work towards the peace with the Dodoth in talks at Loyoro.' Once the meeting had agreed to pursue peace, the people addressed the research team, saying, 'the strong energetic people can move on foot, but our worry is how to get the elders to Loyoro. We would be very grateful if you would help us to transport the elders.'

Members of the Nakapelimoru peace committee agreed to inform the Kotido district authorities. The Kotido district would then inform the government in Kaabong. The people at the meeting became enthusiastic. 'When shall we do this?' asked one youth. 'Let us schedule a date for a meeting with the district government so that these things are not delayed.' 'It should happen quickly,' said a young woman. 'Today is Thursday,' said a young man, 'let us call them to meet us on Saturday here at Lookorok, so that by Tuesday we shall be going to Loyoro.'

Two days later, on Saturday 1st June we returned to Lookorok. The peace committee had called the district representatives, including a representative of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC), the police and the army officers along with people from NGOs working on peace, the Kotido Peace Initiative (KOPEIN) and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). They sat and discussed a plan for a peace meeting at Loyoro.



Members of the research team were at the planning meeting, both to record and make suggestions. One of the district officials demanded that the cameras and voice recorders be confiscated. On seeing this, the elder Lopeikume said, 'what is happening? Are you dividing us and sending them away? These young Karimojong have offices with us; they are always with us; they sleep in our places and see the challenges we are facing. You have your offices and sleep in them down there in Kotido.' A district official was concerned and ordered the police to give the cameras back, and the authority of the meeting shifted back to the elders. But it continued to be a polite but determined battle for authority.

At first the government and NGOs seemed to wish to take over the planning and leadership of the peace process, even though the youth and elders said firmly that the best process would be led by Karimojong. Government and NGOs should provide supplementary support, they argued. Officials of one of the NGOs announced that they already had a plan to take 20 elders from Kotido district to meet with 20 elders from Kaabong district in August to discuss how the Jie and Dodoth could come together. 'Why is this NGO only looking for elders?' asked one young man. 'Why should it take such a long time?' asked a young woman. The young people said, 'this is a public concern for all of us. If you are only interested in elders, your process may fail, because while elders are the people who do the ritual part of the thing, you also need us younger people, the energetic class, the fighting ones. It is us who

*'This is a public concern for all of us. If you are only interested in elders, we feel your process may fail.'*

will find a way to reconcile the youth from here and from there, since it is us who have been fighting one another. Then the elders come and do their rituals and confirm it.'

The meeting agreed that the NGO might take its elders to Loyoro, but the youth and herders would also come. They also made clear that they wanted to hold the meeting the following week. Apanyepong, a young man, said, 'if we wait until August, thieves will finish our cows. On Monday I am going to the kraals to hold *etem*. On Tuesday I will be on the road to Loyoro with my youth.' Esther, from our team, then argued that the NGO shouldn't pay allowances because that would weaken the power of the peace process. The power of the orators won the day, and all the parties agreed to the plan and to help as they could.

The peace process began with the leaders encouraging a network of people to agree to become involved, creating momentum and generating resources. Messages were sent and people were reminded of the law and the common good. As enough people began to believe that there was a chance of success, the idea took on momentum. There was a struggle for leadership of the peace process between the customary leaders and the officials, each of whom felt it was their duty to take the lead. The people's leaders used oratory to assert their authority and the officials used their statutory structures and resources. The youth, as intermediaries, ran between these authorities, passing messages, organising *etem* and creating a flow of information on which decisions could be made. On the Dodoth side the pattern was the same.

*'Peace Cows' - given for the peace discussions at Loyoro*



## The Postponement

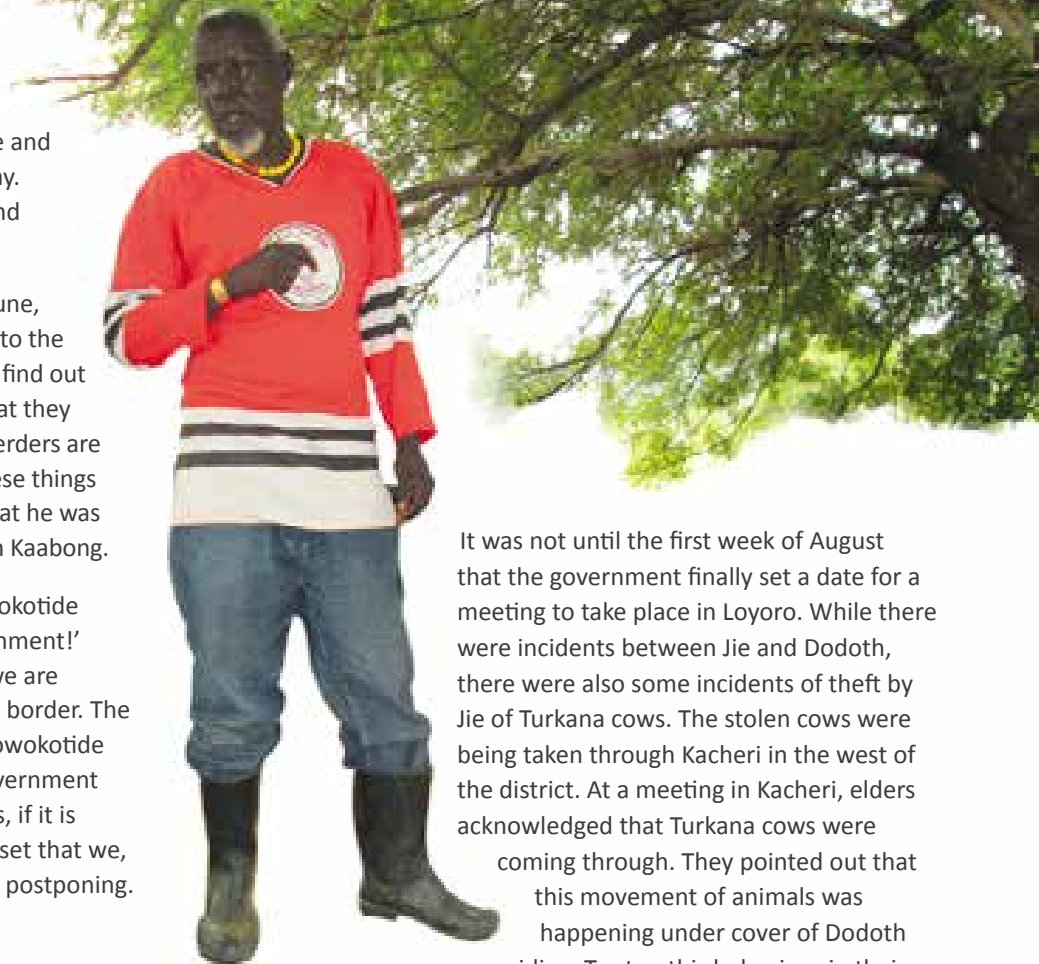
The day was scheduled for Tuesday at Loyoro. Tuesday came and the meeting did not take place. It was postponed to Thursday. Thursday came and it did not take place. The government and NGOs had postponed.

The herders were frustrated by the repeated delays. In mid June, two weeks after the second meeting at Lookorok, they came to the research team and said, 'we agreed under that tree. Can you find out what is causing the delay? The government officials tell us that they are taking time to inform the government of Kaabong. The herders are impatient. Can you inform the government that we want these things done as soon as possible?' We spoke to the RDC, who said that he was doing what he could to get a response from the authorities in Kaabong.

A month later, at the end of July, we visited the kraal of Lowokotide at Lokapangitenga. 'We are so tired of waiting for the government!' he said. 'We are facing pressure from the Jie cultivators so we are beginning to push our kraals in the direction of the Kaabong border. The kraal of Lomerikori has already migrated towards Loyoro.' Lowokotide added, 'we will go there with God alone. Meanwhile the government will be coming from behind. If bad comes let bad come to us, if it is good, it is all upon God.' One of the herders said, 'we are upset that we, the black<sup>2</sup> people, have set the dates and the government is postponing. Does it not know the problems we are facing?'

It worried us to see the herders migrating into an area where there is fighting. It feels dangerous when the people say they are moving with God. It was also a message, of course. The kraal leaders were reminding us all - government, NGOs, research team, Dodoth and Jie – of authority.

We asked the people in one of the NGOs to find out the cause of the postponement. We told them that people were moving into the area where there was insecurity. The NGO staff had also been frustrated by the delays. They had learned that the relevant official in Kaabong was busy on the border with Sudan, trying to solve problems of cross-border conflict there. 'Until he returns to Kaabong,' they said, 'there can be no progress in solving the problem between Jie and Dodoth.' It seemed ridiculous that something as important as peace was being held up in this way. We continued to press the government and NGOs for progress.



It was not until the first week of August that the government finally set a date for a meeting to take place in Loyoro. While there were incidents between Jie and Dodoth, there were also some incidents of theft by Jie of Turkana cows. The stolen cows were being taken through Kacheri in the west of the district. At a meeting in Kacheri, elders acknowledged that Turkana cows were coming through. They pointed out that this movement of animals was happening under cover of Dodoth raiding. To stop this behaviour in their area, for which they had liability, they had an interest in seeing peace with Dodoth. They decided to institute a peace committee, like the one at Nakapelimoru.

The elders at Kacheri argued that success with the peace at Loyoro would depend on senior Jie elders like Apalopama and Apalopus. 'Time and again' they said, 'when there are such seasons of raiding, these are the old men who resolve the problem. They are unique in their ability to manage the diplomacies and sensitivities of peace talks. We do not say this because Apalopama or Apalopus know how to talk smoothly, but because we believe that these are the chosen people of God. They are the ones who can open up the way to peace on the side of Dodoth. Our experience has shown us that.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Black' is an imported word that refers to those who are not in government, nor educated, nor living in a town.

Apalopama was in the meeting at Kacheri. He stood and said, 'I have moved my kraal near to the Dodoth border now. The RDC visited me in my kraal and he was angry. He asked me why I was alone in this war corridor. Did I want his soldiers to be attacked by the enemy? I told him that I have moved my kraal near the Dodoth to find a way to get peace. The RDC said, "try your best and where we see things going on, we shall come in and support you." The only thing the RDC can do is to keep on feeding me soldiers to protect me' said Apalopama. The soldiers are so many that I do not have enough milk to feed them."

As far as the Karimojong people are concerned, peace is best made when the process is left in the hands of the people. This is because for Karimojong peace is not just made through talking, but it is a blessing from God. Certain people must be there. For the Jie in 2013, it was people like Apalopama and Apalopus. When the process is in the hands of the people there is commitment to carry it through and maintain it. At Kacheri people gave a number of examples of peace talks presided over by government that had been long and had not succeeded.

Divisions between different authorities almost caused the process to fall apart. Despite the goodwill of individuals on all sides, it was still possible for one authority to frustrate progress. When the

officials at Kaabong failed to respond to the urgent desire for a meeting, customary leaders on the Jie side moved their kraals into the danger zone, calling on the authority of God to force the process forward. The cost of protection rose, the UPDF barracks came under pressure, the government in Kotido wanted to see progress. The confusion led to misunderstandings and more crime, as Jie began to raid Turkana cows under cover of the insecurity with Dodoth.

The research team was in continuous contact with the people who were contributing to the delay and with the herders and elders, giving feedback to each of them



and keeping the possibility of peace alive. Our research had made it clear to all these people that there was widespread interest in peace. Clan leader Lowokotide talked about how his people needed peace in the north to release pressure down in the south. This story came from many sides. We felt that accurate information and sound analysis was also helping to reduce misunderstanding and suspicion. In talking repeatedly with different clan leaders, youth, women and elders, and asking 'what are you going to do now?' The research team played a part in keeping the discussion alive during the period of delays.

## The Peace

On morning of 9 August, members of the research team sat in a planning meeting in Kotido town to discuss the peace meeting that would take place that afternoon in Loyoro. The RDC, the Brigade Intelligence Officer, and other agency representatives were all sitting round the table. The officials had planned a long list of speeches at Loyoro. We made a strong representation for reducing the official speeches and for allowing Karimojong elders and youth to lead the meeting. The officials resisted. We gave our reasoning. We spoke of the progress so far that was the result of the leadership of the kraal leaders. Eventually the meeting agreed to our point. It was decided that the agencies would help to



transport elders selected by the Karimojong, the government would provide security, and both parties would then leave the management of the meeting to the protagonists.

We went to Loyoro in the afternoon. After the traditional prayers and rituals, less than 45 minutes were spent for the officials' introductions. Then everything was left in the hands of the people.

On arrival to the meeting place some elders from Loyoro were concerned. They said 'we don't see the people of Jie, Apalopama and Apalopus, our neighbours who we fight with.' They meant that the success of the meeting depended on these crucial elders. Similarly there were elders on the Dodoth side who were also eagerly anticipated. The meeting started when the key elders from both sides had arrived. The Dodoth were the first to speak. Later a young boy from Jie stood up and the people cried "sit down! We want Apalopama, the elder, to speak on this occasion!"

Apalopama stood up and addressed the Dodoth. 'I want peace. I am peaceful.' He challenged them, 'my kraal is about 15 kilometres from here. I am near you. But where are your kraals? You are hundreds of kilometres away inside Dodoth. It means you are the ones who still want to fight.'

Later Apalopus from Kacheri criticized the government for its failure to provide security and justice. 'You government just come to peace when you see us going for our peace. Much of your time you spend going to Kampala where you are paid an allowance. We want to see your army doing their job. We want to see them where there is insecurity doing their job for us.'

The discussion went on and on until the people reached the time when they agreed. The meeting at Loyoro resolved the peace. The people agreed on fines for wrongdoing and compensation for victims of future thefts and injuries. They agreed to bring kraals of Jie, Dodoth and Turkana together. 'To begin it,' they said, 'the Jie who are visiting here and the Dodoth who are staying here should spend the night and eat together in the same place. Tomorrow, you Jie should take these Dodoth to your kraals and do the same. That will be the beginning of our peace.'

On the criminals who tend to break the peace through raiding, they agreed on a system to make sure thieves and raiders who are caught stealing cows did not escape justice by paying a bribe. If a raider is taken to the police and they wish to release him, the peace committee must first

assess whether it is correct that he should be let go. The RDC confirmed that the peace committee should guide the police in this matter.

The Loyoro peace meeting was a profound event. Men and women were all given the opportunity to speak. At the beginning they were quarrelling and bitter, but they continued speaking until they were exchanging kind words. Then the women started ululating, and people said 'things have come to normal now. The people came from great anger, through sadness and now they are OK. Aha we are alive!' The meeting ended and the old men and women were transported back to their places by those who were supporting the peace, and the *karachuna* (the youth) remained, eating together as had been agreed.

A few days later the research team went to Loyoro to check how the resolutions had been put into effect. They found the kraals had all migrated, people had mixed and were smiling. The UPDF had pursued some raided cattle, the animals were returned and the fines set by the meeting were imposed and paid to those whose cows had been taken and returned. Some thieves had continued with raiding even during the peace meeting. There is still raiding in the area, the UPDF is still protecting kraals there, and policing and justice are not yet fully reliable, so the peace is not complete, it is only relative.

The research team moved across the district to explore opinions of peace making among the Jie.

In Panyangara, Anyik, an elder, said, 'this making of peace happens in a particular way. It requires one person to come with the idea, and then we all come together and support his dream for peace.'

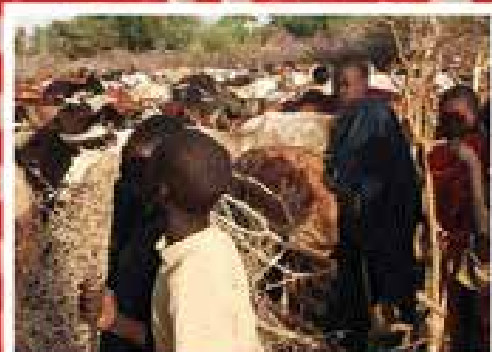
Arukan in Panyangara said "we are the ones who are supposed to be at the centre of making and keeping peace. We should be strong ourselves. We shouldn't wait for other people to help us make peace. It should be that other people should first find us strong and help us go ahead with the peace that we want to make.'



# THE JIE-DODOTH PEACE



A boy in Apalopama's Kraal (top). Goats that had been taken by Dodoth being returned to Loonei (bottom)



Cows are a central part of peace. We cannot make peace without cows.

2<sup>nd</sup> 08/2013 KOTEIN

The team has created a sense of trust among the community members so that the two conflicting sides (Jie and Turkana) brought ~~copies~~ <sup>copies</sup> of Moles ~~low~~ <sup>low</sup> price we went ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> concern with this, we connected them to the KOPRAID OFFICE when they got the RDC informed. The RDC then wrote a letter to the bridgehead to let the animals that were recovered and in their custody be released and take to KOTEIN barracks for handover to the Karamoja (Central Turkana). We also request the team to deliver the letter to the bridgehead and also make sure the animals are handed over.



Romano, the coordinator of KOPEIN. We worked with him on this peace process



Arukan's Kraal doesn't have protection from the army. It is towards the south and east of Kotido District. Because of the peace these warriors from Bokora, Matheniko, and Jie can dance together at night.



## LOYORO MEETING



Turkana man: "I joined your peace process when I was as young as this boy and you Dodoth and you Jie are still fighting. And up to now I have not gained any peace. What is the real matter here? We must talk it here in this meeting."



Lokorilung: "To whom do you want me to take my hand for peace? I've brought my hand begging to you for peace three times. I've taken long sharing with you this issue of peace. If we are not going to solve it now, then you should find where to put me with all the animals of the Jie."



Lokoromoy from Dodoth is speaking against Apalopama (Jie) here.



Apalopama was extremely serious at Loyoro in challenging the Dodoth

Arukan: "As for me on the southern side, I have accepted peace. Why are you people failing? You Apalopama and Dodoth. Why have you people refused? I'm surrounded by many people and I'm at peace with all of them - the Bokora and the Matheniko."



Thiloy: "This issue of insecurity is the one making me stand here. I hate it. We women are crying. We have shed blood. We have remained widows. Why don't you children accept peace? When I go home I will make sure to tell each of my children never to steal again. Whoever steals again I will tell them, 'you will no longer be my child!' As for you government officials. We know very well you rely on allowances. We came here without allowances. If you want allowances, then the people who said the talking will only be from the 'black' people today did right."



An elder and member of the peace committee in Nakapelimoru said, ‘government should support us when we make decisions to act for peace, instead of lengthening the peace process or making us fail. If we say we want to have peace next week with our neighbours, officials shouldn’t tell us that we have to wait for some other person, because in the time that is wasted, people will die and animals will be lost.’

The peace meeting and the agreements drew on Karimojong traditions of diplomacy and justice working in tandem with those of the government. The right people had to be there at the meeting and they all had to be given the chance to speak. The meeting had to allow them to speak their grief and annoyance and to come eventually to goodwill. It was not only about talk, but also about God, who is needed to create the goodwill and cement the decisions. The meeting had to agree on a systematic approach to dealing with crime and providing justice, an agreement between customary law and the law of the state. It had to include the actions of the administration, the police, the peace committees and the kraal leaders, youth and elders. The meeting also had to set in place an active demonstration of trust. That is why the young people stayed with each other that very night, and why the kraals became mixed. They could then spread out onto the sweet grass along the Dodoth-Jie border.

## Conclusion

Peace is good relations between people. It relies on a fair system of policing and justice. When the people are all divided, the systems stop working, criminals exploit the confusion, small disputes can become violent and people have to run for protection. It is a situation that can last a long time if people within the society do not take action.

Peace begins when information starts to flow between people about their desire for peace. Then the leaders will agree to take action. They call the people together, remind them of the law and the need for peace, and ask for information to be shared and people to take up different responsibilities. People bring their energy and resources. Accurate *ekoi* keeps people informed and helps reduce misunderstandings.

When everyone has agreed to move forward and everything seems possible, it is not unusual for leaders to get into disputes



with one another over authority. They can quarrel over resources and there can be accusations about who is causing delays or who is being untrustworthy. State and Karimojong systems of law and authority operate in parallel, and disputes about authority and protocol can easily arise. Disputes lead to confusion and mistrust between those who would otherwise be co-operating. Unscrupulous people will take advantage of the confusion. Thieves will continue to steal and create problems for the peace.

Peace in our sub-region relies on Karimojong working alongside the government and government giving respect to the Karimojong tradition and law. Sustained peace has to encompass the rituals that are for God, the procedures of discussion and decision between the people, as well as institutions for protection, punishment and compensation. The institutions have to pay attention to the difficulties that are inherent in bringing customary and state law together.

When the team first went to the kraal of Apalopama he expressed his weakness: peace is a complicated process, he said. It takes long, it involves a lot of people, it is expensive. But then he reasserted his leadership. He went to the people. He moved his kraal into the danger zone. Through elders’ meetings and *akiriket*, people made it clear that they wanted a process that was led by them. We stood up for this principle in meetings with the government. We believe that the officials were ready to listen to the research team on this matter, because our information was accurate, our arguments, derived from a large number of elders, women and youth, were sound. This combined with the goodwill of the Kotido and Kaabong governments. Our story shows that if people wait for government to create peace, they may wait a long time. It illustrates that processes led by NGOs have not always been effective because they do not understand all the requirements. It is best to act using the powers and knowledge of our own people. The government and NGOs will come in to support.

**In this chapter we have shown how customary ways of dealing with insecurity and crime depend on and yet resist governmental systems and vice versa. We explored how subtle battles for leadership and authority are a part of the process of negotiation, and once settled can lead to excellent results.**



Some issues of land, peace and customary law depend for their resolution on relations between Karimojong and government offices outside the sub-region – the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the Uganda Police, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) and the authorities regulating land investments. These relations involve powerful offices and significant differences of understanding. The short pieces in this section show where we reached on these complex matters. We did not come to definitive conclusions, except to realise that there are misunderstandings that need to be cleared up and improvements that could be made. Since Karimojong raised these issues over and over again during the months of our work, we present them here as an agenda for future research, debate and cooperation.

# Agenda for future action

# Wildlife, livestock, herders and cultivators

## The problem

Since the disarmament was completed, people have spread out from where they were confined, going back to their places. This movement has increased the pressure on land and revealed disagreements between those who have claims to it, including between the Karimojong and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

There has been very little discussion between the people and the Wildlife Authority about issues of demarcation, access and compensation, but there are many complaints and considerable confusion. Karimojong worry that the Authority is expanding its area. Local Wildlife Authority representatives insist this is not the case. Efforts at dialogue have been well intentioned, but, so far, have had no significant effect.



## The evidence

Between March and July 2013 we heard repeated complaints and questions concerning the Uganda Wildlife Authority in many different places including Kobebe, Maro Anadou, Lolelia, Lobeel, Loletto, Longiropo, Panyangara and Lobanya.

In Lolelia cultivators and herders complained that wild animals had raided the crops, they had also brought trypanosomiasis and there was no compensation. They pointed to the UWA helicopter flying overhead and said, 'people cannot move freely in the bush because there is an UWA surveillance chopper. Look – there it goes!'

In Lobeel, Loteyo Albachir described how a man had been killed by a buffalo and there had been no compensation.

At the Loyoro peace meeting in August 2013, a representative of the Uganda Wildlife Authority explained that if a person has an issue they should come to the office with evidence and they will be compensated. 'But,' said an observer, 'he did not say that a person will be compensated if the animals have eaten up your garden, only if an animal is killed on your land during sport hunting, then you will get a share in the proceeds along with the sub-county.' Another observer reflected, 'while the Uganda Wildlife Authority made a statement at Loyoro peace meeting, we are not really satisfied. We need to have a deeper conversation.'

At Maro Anadou an old woman called Maria Nyaoi showed us huts that had been burned when the authority chased the people from their settlement. She said 'we could not even harvest the crops. They were left for the wild animals.'

At Kadingbong we found a man who showed us a markstone. To show that there was no communication, he asked, 'who is the Uganda Wildlife Authority? What colour is his skin?'



*Man in Lolelia with bites from insects he believes were brought by wild animals*



At Napak a woman said she was in a land committee when the new district was being created three years ago. 'We went to look at the boundaries. All of a sudden we saw surveyors who told us, "you are on the reserve of UWA and you are not supposed to be here." We did not know it before.'

In Panyangara, an old man called Apanadom spoke to a community meeting. He had been in charge of the settlement of Kalosarich in the 1970s. 'In 1960s during the colonial rule, Kalosarich was our settlement. In those days the only game reserve was in Turtuko. It was called the Bokora-Matheniko Game Reserve. We all respected it. During the insecurity our village became a battle-ground for the Bokora, Matheniko, Jie and Turkana. We settlers could not bear the situation and we all migrated to Panyangara land. When, at last in 2010, there was some little peace, we thought of going back to our land. Along with cultivators and some herdsmen who were formerly in Longiropo, next to Kalosarich, we moved back to settle and graze our animals. After growing our crops for nearly a season, UWA came and organised an abrupt meeting. They ordered people to evacuate the place before evening. We tried to explain that we had lived here before and that our crops were close to harvest, but they would not understand. We realised it was serious when the authorities set our settlements to blaze in fire. The rangers that were armed started shooting and we had to flee. Two children died when their mother was crossing the river in her panic. We are now squeezed up as you can observe; animal pathways are narrow and grazing areas have diminished. All this is just because the land that we are supposed to occupy is being claimed by UWA. They have even refused to show us the clear boundary.' Others at the meeting confirmed the details, including Akello the mother of the two children.

'We grew up finding wild animals here. They should leave us with our land and our animals, because we know how to live with them. For us, we are initiated with the names for all those animals - lions, elephants, giraffes.'  
Apanadom



## Action

The people at Rupa asked us to approach the Uganda Wildlife Authority on their behalf. They wanted to invite UWA to Rupa to discuss access to Lotithan and Kobebe. We met with Okello Sam, the Warden for Law Enforcement at Moroto. He welcomed our visit. We explained the number and extent of complaints and requests for dialogue and passed on the message about the invitation from Rupa. He agreed to meet them. We returned to Rupa with the message from Okello and they set the date for July 30.

The local council chair opened the meeting and an elder called Apongole was the chair. The elders told Okello Sam that they had called him because they wanted to know why government had refused access to certain areas. An elder called Cheere said, 'for us Karimojong we are from animals. We even put on the feathers of animals. Some of us are giraffes, some are leopards, some lions. We all know of the Bokora-Matheniko Game Reserve in Turtuko, but we never knew that Lotithan was gazetted. We can show you the graves of our forefathers there. Limamoi, a sub-county chief, died and was buried there. Lotithan is a place that was really ours.'

Another elder, Yeel John, then explained about access to the dam at Kobebe. In 2011, government asked the people where they thought a dam should be put and they suggested Kobebe. The government went ahead and built it there. 'After government asked us where the dam should be put, and we chose the place and government built it, why is it

that government is now saying that we cannot migrate and cultivate there? It is our ancestral land, and our families want to enjoy the meat and milk there. If the government wishes to maintain Kobebe as a reserve, then it should give us somewhere else as good. Kobebe is our land.'

Team meets the Uganda Wildlife Authority in Moroto



'Take your kraals to Kobebe, but don't cultivate and build settlements till we get feedback [from the President]'

Okello Sam thanked the people at Rupa for inviting him. He asked them to be patient. 'The issue of Kobebe is already on the table of the President. Take your kraals there, but don't cultivate and build settlements till we get feedback' he said. Then he read the Uganda Wildlife Act. Hearing it, the people at the meeting said they understood more about the role of Okello Sam, as one who enforces the Act. Lomaria, an elder, said 'we are not yet satisfied. We really need to talk to the people who have sent you here.' The Karimojong were still concerned that gazetted areas increased during the time of insecurity. One young man said, 'even today people have seen new markstones appearing.'

A month later we met elders at Pupu. They said, 'we appreciate that you tried to help us to meet the Wildlife people, but we did not come to an agreement with them on something to be physically done, so we are not satisfied. We must continue to understand this thing and to talk to the Uganda Wildlife Authority.'

## Conclusion

The issue that lies between the Karimojong and the Uganda Wildlife Authority has only begun to be explained here. The meeting at Rupa indicates just a few of its aspects. The people are complaining about the Wildlife Authority and the Wildlife Authority is not on altogether good terms with the people. There is goodwill and politeness in seeking resolution, but also suspicion and misunderstanding. Accusations are muttered on both sides. The elders invoke tradition, memory and ancestral rights and the Wildlife Authority invokes legal statutes and the necessity for conservation.

Comparing this issue with the other matters of land and law that we have researched, we find a new level of difficulty. While the herder-cultivator disputes could be resolved in *etem* under the umbrella of the clan *akiriket*, using purely customary law, and the Jie-Dodoth disputes could be resolved in a meeting involving a three-clan *akiriket* with backing from the administration, both were essentially questions for Karimojong to resolve. The UWA-Karimojong contention requires a higher level of sophistication. The laws involved are national and the authorities and interested parties are more difficult to convene. It suggests an *akiriket* of all the clans of Karimojong in dialogue with the government of the sub-region and the national Uganda Wildlife Authority. It presents an important agenda for research and dialogue.



'From the map of the UWA Game Reserve... it is crystal clear that the current new settlements by farmers at Longiropoo and Looiangataruk are very far and had nothing to do with the Uganda Wildlife Authority.' Extract from a letter from the people of Longiropo and Ngataruk to Loki Peter Abrahams MP.



## Police and justice

Lepo, a young man in Napumpum said ‘we have always been able to manage our own matters but when we bring it to the police it fails. Apalopus, an elder, said ‘we are committed to the fight for peace, but it is government that is making us fail. We need to strengthen the relationship between government and those of us selected to work on peace issues.’

Lepo told us about his responsibilities for ensuring that thieves are caught. ‘We catch them and hand them over to government. Then tomorrow you see that person released with a bribe. Then you find he has stolen again. He is again caught. This thing of releasing him without us being involved creates conflict between us and him. Last week, we passed by here and we found a criminal drinking. He said – “hah! These people thought I would stay in prison forever.” That kind of thing will endanger our lives because the thieves will be against us. When a thief is caught who was causing trouble for the community, he should be investigated properly. The community should be given the chance to say whether to release him or not. If we go and get him out then he will see that the people who put him in are the people who let him out. The police should not take bribes to release people.’

Lokorilung in Losilang said a similar thing. ‘We have our own system for dealing with the bad elements in society, but the government is weakening our efforts. There is a man we have been struggling to punish. He keeps being put in prison and let out again. Then he stays amongst us and causes trouble. When someone is released like that he comes back with his anger against the person who originally gave evidence against him. He looks at us with bad eyes.

‘It would be better for the elders and peace committees to work with government to make the decision either to formally release him or not. Then, when he gets out of prison, he doesn’t come in a fit of anger and blame us for not working on his release. If we work in this way it secures the lives of those who reported him in the first place. It also works in his favour because if he is released unfairly, people who have lost cows will punish him in other ways. At present, the life of the person who is released without due process is in danger, because people against whom he has done

the crime need compensation. If that compensation is still owing, people might want revenge.’

‘Previously members of the community would come together and cane that person so he is forgiven there and then. But this new system of government creates a lot of division among people. It doesn’t seek to unite and create harmony.’

People are aware that the systems of government and community law and policing require constant efforts at alignment. But they also charge that the state system of policing is inefficient and sometimes corrupt, which undermines the law and generates insecurity. The issue has come up many times in many locations. It calls for continued discussion and further research so that people and government can be precise about the problem and well-informed when they decide to act.



# Unexplained investment

In the many parts of Moroto District, land is being cleared by outside investors. Local people say that it is not clear how investors come to invest, especially those who are clearing whole mountainsides or fencing large areas. There are companies from India and the Gulf, as well as contractors from other parts of Uganda.

At the gold mines of Nakabaat a grader was clearing soil from a hill where the local people were mining gold. One of the miners, the son of Apailiokom, said 'we have no idea to whom these machines belong, and why they are here. The owners have not explained themselves to the elders. Is there someone who has a debt with these investors and is seeking to pay off their debt with our mineral resources?'

At Lorukumo land is being quarried for cement production. A group of elders expressed their annoyance: 'they just go to the sites direct. They do not come to us,' One of them, Lokitikori, added, 'If we were meeting them, we would be able to ask them to put a factory here instead of ferrying our materials out of Karamoja. That way our people would benefit.'

At the mining site at Lotongir we met some youth who were panning for gold beside a mechanical excavator that had broken down. One of the young men told us that, when they found an excavator digging near

where they are panning for gold, they asked the drivers if they had spoken to the elders about being there. 'All of a sudden people came out with guns. We were scared and ran away,' Lochiro added, 'Even when we ask them these simple things they come and chase us.'

This week when we went to meet the elders in Rupa to share our final analysis, Cheere said the elders have failed to handle these matters of resource extraction. He said, 'When you are still handling one investor another comes in the same way. Even now they have started planting grass on a large piece of land in Rupa. We do not know why they are doing it. We have just seen them planting it.'

We met no one in the villages who could explain how the investors get access to the land. Elders believe that they bypass the sub-county offices. The elders plan to approach the district government to seek clarification.

The investor presence in Karamoja has implications for many communities. The potential magnitude of the issue calls for action that

brings a wide range of people into discussion. It means bringing multiple communities, government and investors together. It also calls for better and further research. Our research so far shows people not knowing and not understanding. We need to research this question accurately so that people can understand what is going on and be well-informed when they convene meetings on the subject.

*'If we were meeting them, we would be able to ask them to put a factory here instead of ferrying our materials out of Karamoja. That way our people would benefit.'*







## Conclusion

In reviewing the questions of land alienation and crime raised above, Karimojong men and women encouraged more dialogue with different offices of government. They appreciated the changed situation. One emphasized, 'peace has come, we have now to manage it.' Another added, 'The way of managing peace is by maintaining those meetings and making sure that disputes and law breaking are managed properly.'

It emerges that the development challenge for Karamoja today rests principally on the question of how to make inclusive and effective decisions and who makes them. The people consulted in this research named the different authorities that need to have understanding and be in dialogue: customary and governmental authorities, and the different groups within society who need to be included: youth and elders, women and men, different clans, and people of different livelihoods.

One of the reasons for the division between all of these people is the comfort of the more powerful actors with their way of running institutions and investments. The other reason is that the less powerful actors feel that their criticisms and suggestions will not be heard. It is a general belief in the superiority of the town over the rural areas, the schooled over the unschooled, the office over the tree, the investor over the herder, men over women and the old over the young. The research has shown, however, that technical interventions by powerful institutions are not enough to create development. The issues raised in this chapter, and those in the other chapters of this book, rely for their resolution on good administrative and social relations. When these are running well, so will Karamoja.

*'peace has come,  
we have now to  
manage it.'*



# Analysis

Elders  
in debate at an  
*akiriket* in Rupa.

In September 2013, at the end of nine months of research, the Karimojong Action Research Team presented this analysis and evidence to men and women elders at Rupa, Nakwakwa, Nakapelimoru and Panyangara. The elders replied, repeatedly, 'your analysis is clear and the matters you have identified are true across Karamoja.'

The devastating years of violence have been followed by an uneasy peace marked by profound changes in social and political relations, as well as in land use and land ownership. Disarmament not only reduced livestock, but in scattering the people and making it dangerous to meet, it almost killed *ekoi*, *etem* and *akiriket*. *Ekoi* is the information that flows around society that keeps it informed and able to make decisions. *Etem* are the community meetings open to any person and any issue that deal with practical matters and keep communities in good health. *Akiriket* are the parliaments where the old men make the law and sit in the court of appeal in the sight of God. They require livestock to fulfil their function. These three systems maintained a moral and economic framework within which people could go about their lives in a degree of safety and good relations with others. What more effective way to shatter a community than to hobble its capability to be informed, to meet, to perform its rituals and to decide on matters of the common good?

The damage is evident in our research results – households made strangers to one another and unable to resolve their disputes, uncontrolled expansion of crop land at the expense of grazing, pastoralism vilified and neglected, the richest land alienated, leaders powerless and mystified, information flow almost at a standstill. Pastoralists who once ruled the sub-region through *akiriket*, have seen their authority undermined and their resolve weakened. When peace came to Karamoja, *ekoi*, *etem* and *akiriket* were quiescent, and the government provided no alternative.

The research has pinpointed priorities for Karamoja. There are unresolved issues of land use, land ownership, policing and investment in the sub-region. We have demonstrated that significant numbers of people feel insecure about their land, because they lack information about or power over tenure, usufruct and ownership. They want to understand more and to have more dialogue on these topics. While herder-cultivator disputes have begun to find resolution in *etem* and

Young and old men and women are reviving *etem* in many places to deal with serious community issues. *Akiriket* have made landmark decisions on land and peace.

*akiriket*, the people still have many questions about gazetted areas and the rights of outside investors.

The gap created by the erosion of pastoralist power has been filled by strong government administration, providing weak services and inviting little real citizen participation. The increase in governmentality has been accompanied by a blooming of NGOs, spending money on a 'development challenge' that they have defined in

consultation with government and their head offices, but not with the people. According to our research results, their interventions perplex the average Karimojong. There is little real discussion between many in the NGOs and the people. Conversations between ordinary people and government are similarly strained.

Within the Karimojong themselves, a divide is growing between those who live in towns, have jobs and have been to school and those who live in the rural areas as herders or cultivators, who have not been to school. Social and political relations in Karamoja are at a crossroads. Relations between people and government and between country and town have been unproductive. This year, however, there has been a shift. Some of this positive shift may be the result of our research efforts and some may have pre-existed and contributed to our work.

*Ekoi* is moving through the society again. Young and old men and women are reviving *etem* to deal with serious community issues. *Akiriket* have made landmark decisions on land and peace. Government, elders, peace committees and some NGOs have worked together on the Jie and Dodoth peace process, with Jie and Dodoth in the lead. People and government are attempting to resolve the difficulties of policing livestock theft. Pastoralists now want to organise larger *akiriket* to tackle sub-regional issues through dialogue. And they want to talk with government about how to formalise *akiriket* in relation to the administration of Karamoja. These are all important moves and achievements that begin to address social and political relations, as well as land use, tenure and ownership. They have the potential to be of enduring consequence.



# Researchers

We are the Karamoja Action Research Team, 23 young people from Kotido, Moroto, Napak and Nakapiripirit districts; from the Bokora, Jie, Matheniko and Tepeth Karimojong groups. We have two sub-teams - one covers Moroto and Napak and the other covers Kotido.

25 elders advise us and help us make connections in all three districts. Logwee John Bosco from Moroto advised us throughout. The other research team elders are:

Kotido: Lopeikume, Koima, Margaret Nyooi, Loluk Peter, Apalopus, Nakwaki, Apesearengan, Apananyagan, Lokorilung, Lokwateban, Maria Nyaoi, Lokiro Apalimaputh.

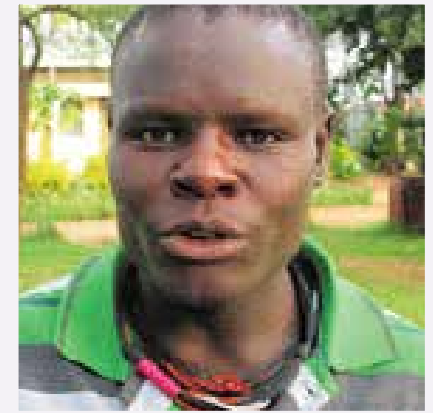
Moroto: Apangole, Odong Martine, Nakiru Tonosa, Iriama Michael, Nakut Maria, Sagal Etakar.

Napak: Adiaka Magdeline, Lopeyok Paul, Angole Daniel, Lokaoyan Paul, Lopiripiria, Toko Martina.



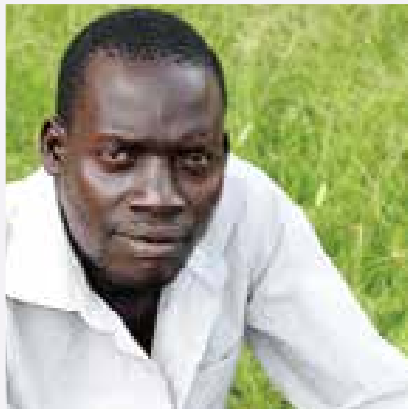
Agan Kizito Apalotebachuka  
Matany Sub County, Napak

'I didn't go to school and when I grew up I was engaged in raiding, but I nearly lost my life so I stopped that and started working on peace. I now live from cultivating and herding. I am also working to strengthen peace here.'



Logira Naputaria  
Nadunget Sub County, Moroto

'I haven't been to school. I have been a cattle herder and a raider. I have now changed my way of life and am sharing with my friends a life of keeping cows peacefully and finding ways to live from work other than raiding.'



Angiroi Thomas Ekodil  
Katikekile Sub County, Moroto

'I went to school only after I'd grown up. I have mined gold, traded goats, done quarrying and other business to make a living. I am the Moroto team logistician. I like the friendship this research has brought between groups.'



Kathy Comfort  
Lotome Sub County, Napak

'I love working with different communities. I'm also a musician and I like to raise issues and speak for Karimojong through my music. I'm proud of the work we've done in Karamoja together.'



Lolepo Lotimo  
Nadunget Sub County, Moroto

'I am a cattle herder. I began by looking after kids and lambs, and finally I graduated to cattle. My father was rich, but we lost our cattle in the insecurity and I started raiding. Since then I have burnt charcoal and done other digging work to make a living.'



Nakong Christine  
Matany Sub County, Napak

'When I first grew up, I began by collecting firewood to sell and later I started brewing. I have also been moving between Napak and Soroti to sell fish. Now I am part of this research team.'



Lokwang Moses  
Rupa Sub County, Moroto

'I started my education in 1997 and completed a bachelor's at Uganda Christian University in 2012. I love working together with my people to help achieve better development in Karamoja.'



Lokut Paul  
Nadunget Sub County, Moroto

'I grew up herding cattle, and I have also completed Senior 4. Now I dig murram to make a living for me and my family. I also use the money to pay my sisters' school fees.'



Lokuda Xavier  
Nabilatuk Sub County, Nakapintpirit

'I started as a shepherd and then joined primary school. I later gained a scholarship to study Development Studies at Makerere University. I love our culture, learning about our traditional laws and reading books.'



Sire Marczela Florence  
Moroto town, Moroto

'I'm interested in the world, in deep peace and outrageous fun. I love fashion and design so I sell earrings and clothes to make a living. It was so interesting meeting and talking to so many people on this research.'



Otiang Christine  
Rupa Sub County, Moroto

'I am a living from brewing, just like my parents. I was happy being a researcher and creating friendship with other people. We youth are valuable in society and we have to take life seriously.'



Lochen Apangakile  
Rengen Sub County, Kotido

'I am a herdsman. I started by looking after calves, and then cattle. I am responsible for the home so I used to go raiding. When my father died, I had to start calling his co-wives together to keep the household together.'



Eliah Longole  
Nakapelimoru Sub County, Kotido

'I am a steward. I am social, patriotic and confident. I am interested in seeing people come together with different ideas and come out with a common goal to be achieved as Karimojong.'



Nyanga Paulina  
Kotido Sub County, Kotido

'I haven't been to school. I have been in the kraal and have been milking cows and brewing for a living. I dress traditionally every day and I am a friendly person.'



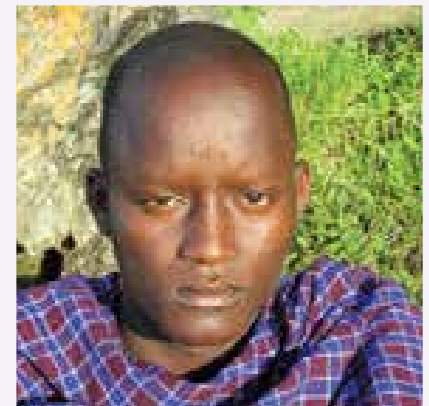
Abonyo Jane  
Kotido Town, Kotido

'I have completed my bachelor's degree in social work and social administration. I am the fourth born and hard-working. In this research I have moved many places and connected people by building relationships.'



Aguma Kapel  
Nakapelimoru Sub County, Kotido

'I buy and sell cows in Kotido district. Formally I was making a living through raiding and keeping cows. I am also an animal health worker for my village. I would like Karimojong to strive for wealth through peace.'



Lowiny Moses  
Kacheri Sub County, Kotido

'I am a student and a respectful and sociable young man. I am 21 years old. I have enjoyed reaching people in different communities in Karamoja and sharing with them about different issues.'



Logwang Lobokoteba  
Nakapelimoru Sub County, Kotido

'I am a retired warrior. I reach different communities in Karamoja and talk with people about resolving different issues, including conflict. The Karimojong should be given power to choose resolving their own issues.'



Illukol Naliana  
Panyangara Sub County, Kotido

'In the village I live by fetching firewood and selling it. Through this research I have gained a lot of knowledge to work with people from my community on land issues such as keeping track ways open.'



Atem Esther Odongo  
Rengen Sub County, Kotido

'I am self-motivated and focused. I am about to start a degree in social sciences at Makerere University, after winning a scholarship. I will continue to work with my people for the development of Karamoja.'



Munyes Joyce  
Panyangara Sub County, Kotido

'I am kind and passionate. I love doing business and taking care of my siblings. I am part of the research team because I love Karamoja and I want to work with other Karimojong on our future.'



Loware Pusia  
Panyangara Sub County, Kotido

'I used to be the head of all raiders. I rarely stayed at home. I lived in the bush. But in the end the raids failed me. I am now working with people in Kotido to ensure a better future for us Karimojong.'



Locheng Zephaniah  
Kotido Town, Kotido

'I was born in Moroto in 1988. I started being a photographer in 2003 and I was also a scout in Kotido Secondary School. I've also been doing other activities at home, like fetching water for my family.'

# Method

Patta Scott-Villiers



This research has demonstrated *ekoi* in action. It began as an outsider originated effort to pioneer a new approach to participatory action research in Karamoja and became an indigenous drive for practical knowledge. Karimojong researchers have collected, sifted and articulated facts and conveyed the *ekoi* into the deliberative space of *etem* and *akiriket*. In their final analysis they show that revival of good *ekoi* and *etem* is part of Karamoja's development. It links to a wider argument for the vital role of local research in the development of any society. *Ekoi* connects people.

At the start of the research project, I agreed with the funders Irish Aid that the work would try to be useful not only to Karamoja, but also give insight into new approaches to citizen participation in similar conditions. This section will look at the method with this proposition in mind – what worked and what does it tell us about replication?

It is helpful to consider four points. The first point is the quality of relationships between researchers and researched, including authorities of different kinds. The second is the quality of knowledge produced – is it trustworthy? The third is the practical and strategic outcome – has it been useful? And the fourth, less easy to answer at this early stage, is a question of enduring consequence – does it have lasting significance?

## Quality of relationships

Though the researchers decided what to study and how, and their decisions became increasingly sure as they went along, their decisions and successes were tempered by their relations with others.

The first team of 12 young people was recruited by the international NGO Restless Development in Moroto and Napak in November 2011 to design and carry out their own study of youth issues. The intention was to bring together a balance of unschooled and schooled, rural and urban, men and women. The first recruitment achieved a good balance of men and women, schooled and unschooled, but the rural-urban mix was uneven - the majority of the group has an urban and peri-urban background. Nonetheless, it was an important achievement. In January 2013 the first team recruited 12 more young women and

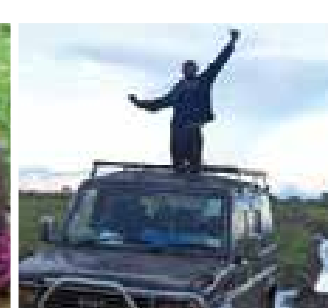
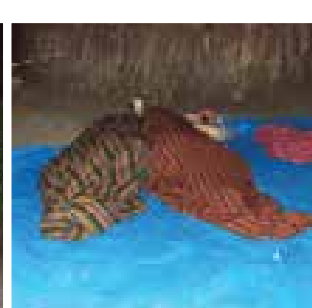
men in Kotido District. Having experience of what they were looking for meant that they came closer to the ideal. This second group is balanced in gender and education and the members come from kraals, villages and towns across each of Kotido's six sub-counties. The diversity (education, gender, lifestyle, and clan) reflected fractures in society that the research would need to bridge. Working together would give these young Karimojong access to all kinds of people, while their similarities would give them strength.

In 2011, I had asked Logwee John Bosco, a Matheniko elder, to be mentor to the team. His role was to advise the researchers on how they might develop the method in a Karimojong way. Later, in June 2013, once they had material, the team asked 24 respected men and women elders from across the three districts to join them as analysts and spokespeople. These elders are famous in the three districts for their oratory and knowledge. Their acceptance of the task, without recompense, was an indication that the team was on the right track.

## Supporting agencies

Restless Development has an office in Moroto that supports youth-focused community development programmes. Through a research coordinator, Simon Longoli, and with support from accountants and logisticians, they looked after the researchers, managed funds, led on protocols and kept the cars and the team moving. The organisation adopted a number of new systems so that the research team could have freedom to make decisions about where to go and when, and yet still be protected and accountable. These systems, and the relationships they implied, had teething problems, as might be expected. Could a group of young people manage car hire contracts? Would they know how to research? Would they keep precise attendance records? How and by whom should they be held to account? By the end of nine months the systems were working well. With Natalie Newell leading, Restless Development made a great effort to put this novel approach into practice. It made a difference to the team's sense that the research was their own.





The Pastoralist Communication Initiative (PCI) provided technical advisors Sarah Wilson and Alastair Scott-Villiers. They came to Karamoja every 7-8 weeks to lead an analysis meeting. They influenced the timing and transition from one phase to the next and, in asking tough questions and insisting on sticking to principles of balance and respect, they influenced the rigour of the research. I am from the Institute of Development Studies and I supported the methodology, with Logwee's help, and the writing of the book. This combination of people created many of the conditions of freedom and constraint: money, cars, advice and wise admonishments on the one hand, and bureaucracy, micro-management, variable logistics and incomprehensible suggestions on the other.

The role of the PCI deserves particular attention. It helped the team shift their understanding of the research from an outsider-designed process to one that became their own. The two European consultants are familiar with – and respect – pastoralist ways of speaking and doing things. They knew, for example, that it would undermine the purpose of the mentoring, if the 24 elders were offered allowances, but that it would be respectful to offer a goat when going for meetings with them. The young researchers, being consulted, began by saying, 'NGOs pay allowances. We should pay allowances too.' The PCI team asked 'if you pay allowances, whose agenda is it?' The researchers replied, with relief, 'of course we shouldn't pay allowances!'

In their bi-monthly sessions, the PCI consultants ask persistent questions and made continuous observations to redress the balance of power between the schooled and unschooled. (We cannot say educated and uneducated here, because someone who has not been to school in Karamoja has usually been educated at home in a way that emphasizes precise observation and clear speaking, along with the techniques of livestock or crop production.) When the new recruits first heard the word research, they thought reading and writing must be essential for all team members. Western thinking tends to promote the idea that only those who have gone to school can research. Karimojong thinkers

would remind us, however, that useful research entails inquiring minds, attention to detail, precision, intelligence, respect, honesty and articulacy. These are capabilities that are especially strong among pastoralists, because of the way they are educated at home.

One or two of those who had worked hard and done well at school harboured a persistent belief that the unschooled did less work than they did, and were less useful because they were not writing. When challenged they would agree that the unschooled had attributes of eloquence, memory and often an uncanny eye for a photograph. Yet some of the schooled could not help assuming a kind of superiority. It was a hard prejudice to shake and most of them managed it, but relations between the two backgrounds in the team have not always been easy. It is a deep fissure in the society, so it was bound to find its way into the day-to-day dealings between the researchers. PCI was uncompromising about respect for the value of Karimojong education.

### Trousers and sheets

The researchers make a virtue of the balance of schooled and unschooled in their team. They refer to each other as the 'trousers' and the 'sheets,' a Karimojong way of identifying the difference between town and country. The division relates to recent changes in the locus of authority and status in Karamoja. The two parts of society are profoundly divided by the differences in their education and ways of life. The sheets are much more numerous and are mostly rural. Their powers lie in customary institutions, livestock and crops. The trousers are few, live in towns and are powerful in commerce and bureaucracy. The team found prejudice everywhere – some officials talked down to sheets, some villagers and herders were suspicious of trousers.

Sometimes in villages and kraals, their hosts would pull a sheet to one side and ask 'how did you get to know those trouser people? What did those town people tell you they were going to get from us *black* people?' Logwee relates: 'when the local people met the trousers at



first, they thought they were from the Intelligence Office. The people thought that the team came to look for problems to take back to their offices, so they would give lists. They would explain the lack of bore holes, hospitals, and schools. The end of every discussion was “take that message to the government!” The team members found this difficult. “Everywhere we go they tell us problems!” they complained. Many times it was only on their second visit that they got past this way of talking. Trust, they found, took time to build.

*‘In areas they have been once already, these issues about schools and hospitals are no longer brought, because if you have spent time and slept there, then the trust builds. Others in the settlement will be asking your hosts, what are they asking you? Then those others would see common, common things. And then many people would talk fully.’*

Even the sheets were not immune from distrust. ‘In Nabwaal,’ Naputaria said, ‘the men thought I had just come to see the enclosures and the places that were easy to get through and then I would come back at night and raid, especially when they heard my name which means to run very fast – it’s a name for a skilled raider.’ The second time he went to Nabwaal the men said, ‘you have come again’ and they trusted him a bit more.

### Staying the night

The team members would stay as guests in people’s houses. When they arrived at a settlement or kraal they would spread out and speak to different people, to get a diversity of perspective, and also so that when they were invited to eat and sleep, they would not be putting too much of a burden on the house. They brought maize meal and sugar and contributed it where they stayed.

They began by explaining their work, and then were helpful, chatting and observing. Then they slept. In the morning they asked people their plan for the day. They joined them in the fields or herding, or they waited for them to come back from their work before beginning the

interview. They used voice recorders in the interviews, took photographs and the writers wrote up journals and conversations in notebooks at the end of each visit. Logwee explained, ‘they were not making the people comply with the time of the team, but making the team comply with the time of the people. They would go with them to the gardens and leave their small possessions in the house. People saw that their visitors trusted them. That released all information freely.’

*‘Women went to sleep with the women and men with men. That was when there were no rains. By the time there were rains and we were in kraals, we found it hard.’*

By the time the team returned a second time, they would be friends. When they were planning the trip, they remembered to get small things that the people might need, like salt. ‘It was mostly the girls who were the ones winning the favour of having a goat slaughtered in their honour’ said Logwee. ‘They hardly got goats the first time they went. The second time the elders would advise the family, can you not slaughter a small kid for our visitor? I advised the team ‘when you pick food, ensure that you have swallowed and then they will know that you are really Karimojong.’

There were times when one team member found another sleeping in the car, a time when the entire group was three hours late for a community meeting because they decided to have lunch in town, other times when researchers were late because the car didn’t turn up. These were symptoms of a malaise that might have threatened the quality of the research and needed to be understood. Its origins lie in an attitude common among administrators and officials in Karamoja, which disrespects pastoralists, rural people and the unschooled. When the researchers were patronized, disrespected, or when they went through times of not being able to see why they were researching (it happens to all researchers), the disputes between the schooled and the unschooled would surface, internal leadership would weaken and the team would begin to lose energy and purpose. But it always managed to regain it. The researchers felt responsible for the work they were doing.



Logwee said, ‘when I saw the kind of behaviour that I thought would affect the delicacy of the research, I would come in, because if left it would spoil the whole research and the relationships they had built. I would make sure they would settle it, so they were happy when they went out. If they went out gloomy they did not bring good research.’

### Standing up for principle

In the offices of some officials, an unspoken disrespect left some of the researchers tongue-tied. People who could address a meeting of Karimojong found themselves without anything to ask or say. This feeling had its effect on their inquiry, and might have undermined their ability to relay accurate analysis to government. But among them were individuals who had the requisite skill and chutzpah, who took up the connector role with aplomb, as did Esther when she stood her ground on pastoralist leadership of the Loyoro peace process with the RDC and the NGOs.

In each of the four phases there has been a gradual increase in respect and a deepening and broadening of relationships. The scoping phase was a time of vague suspicion. The investigation phase was a time of getting to know people and mapping out the issues. The feedback phase was a time of friendliness and making connections between people and officials. The action phase has been particularly important in deepening cooperation.

The potential of the work has begun to show, and many in the society and in government are beginning to trust the researchers. The delicacy of the more contested subjects of research will continue to require considerable tact and care from the researchers. Having demonstrated trustworthiness and gained the support of elders and members of government and NGOs, they are now able to work on these more difficult areas.

Needing good and diverse relations for good *ekoj*, the research has pioneered a *shift in social relations*. Sustained connections between different parts of Karimojong society have been revived, and relations with government have developed new, more productive qualities. This gives the study substantial validity. The important message for

continuation or replication is that social divisions will always be part of good local research and will always demand a high degree of attention.

## Trustworthiness

The second element of valid research is the trustworthiness of the material. It is no good if its audience does not believe it. They must be able to see evidence, evaluate its sources and agree with how it has been interpreted. The young citizen researchers used their unique position to explore and articulate modern-day dilemmas in Karamoja. They used qualitative research methods to collect a bricolage of material: conversations, interviews, observations, stories, opinions and images. Collating, triangulating, weighing and testing, they forged it into evidence. It took nine months of data collection, repeated analysis and feeding back to incorporate a broad variety of voices and opinions into the narratives, until the material had been refined into a single argument.

Over-powerful voices, careless recording, a failure to probe, over-familiarity, failure to account for context, assumptions, lazy analysis and generalisation are all sources of potential untrustworthiness. The counter measures are rigorous repetition and review. The researchers were tireless in visiting so many different places, asking similar questions of so many different kinds of people and returning for more. It meant that occasional lapses of accuracy were overwhelmed by the volume of truth. As they began to realise that the research belonged to them their willingness to probe increased. When the elders agreed to help them and gave them advice and encouragement, and when they began to see their work provoking useful action, they felt increasingly confident.

When team members met for analysis, they discussed what they had found in minute detail. Then they began to present their findings at community meetings where they needed to make accurate and precise propositions; their careful data collection and analysis proved its value. The iterative nature of action research allows the researchers to draw a provisional conclusion from their material, put it out for debate and be challenged by



incisive thinkers and people proposing different views. As with other forms of research, it operates on cycles of investigation, proposition and revision.

*'In the feedback phase and the action phase we needed meetings. So we asked for etem and our elders asked for akiriket. First we would make sure the people interested in the topic wanted to come.'*

*'You asked us about everything we saw and heard to understand better the detail. When we sat for the analysis we would discover there were deeper things to know.'*

The elders advised the researchers that *eko*i must come from a clear source, because when people can hear where an opinion comes from, they can judge it by what they know of that person or institution's reputation. The study accommodated individual powerful views as well as compiling large numbers of views into aggregated statements. Team members would sometimes lapse and say 'the people said...' or 'the elders agreed...' Sometimes they would forget to distinguish the speaker or account for the number and kind of people who had proposed a certain view. They would assume a single stereotypical voice in a single generic place, (the youth said... the government did...). They might make a statement influenced by a single powerful individual who had determined how the situation should be read.

To put right these lapses, they checked back in their voice recorders and photographs, the unschooled used their memories and the schooled used their notebooks to remember who said something, where, when, how many and under what conditions. In this way, each statement that reached the final narrative was tested and given its place.

It is often said that researchers who are leading a study are supposed to be objective, so it is better if they are not from within. The young people had to make an effort to keep probing, when sometimes they felt they already knew the answer. Why, once they had established that herder-cultivator disputes were happening all over the place, would they need to go back to understand more? Didn't they already

understand it, wasn't it just that new modes of individualism and settlement were taking over from old ways of community and mobility? Surely government and NGOs already knew all this? The regular analysis sessions were vital in reviewing the evidence with forensic care. Were their assumptions right? What is the data telling them? What questions still need to be asked? These sessions with PCI and then with their elders were their own *etem*. They were intensive events to which the team brought evidence and sifted it with care before coming to decisions. Familiarity does not have to get in the way of accuracy or depth.

*'Why should we go there again? We've already been there three times. Haven't we heard enough from those people?'*

*'Go and find out more!'*

The trustworthiness of the evidence and argument depended on the quality of information collection and recording, which in turn depended on the sense among the researchers that the research belonged to them. Precise accounting of sources and an analytical discipline took time to build. It may be that the decline in *etem* means that young people do not have opportunities to take part in complex deliberation as they once used to. They miss the opportunity to learn the discipline of analysis, as it is not something taught in school, at least not until quite a senior level. As time went on the researchers worked out how to be precise and accurate, and then their work began to have effect. The implications for replication are the need for time and care. If the researchers are new to the task it means facilitated learning. The resource implications are not insubstantial, but are balanced by the unique results.

## Usefulness and relevance

Usefulness is the third element of validity. Participatory action research is an approach to inquiry that should yield results that are useful to the people who are researched. This begins with getting the right topics. If they urgently need to be investigated, shared, debated, spoken and acted on, good work will be taken up and acted on without delay. We saw



this both with the peace and the rapid spread of new herder-cultivator land arrangements. The revival of *etem* and strengthening of *akiriket* is also a major step forward in Karamoja.

*'The people would bring out the problem, and one of us would ask, what do you think could be done and how? People would say, if this were done, if somebody would do that... and we would say, you do something. Do you have to wait for government? In the old days how were things done?'*

The lines of inquiry into land alienation made less apparent progress. The research and the actions appear incomplete. Nevertheless, elders (men and women) advised the team that researching and resolving land alienation is vital to Karimojong. They asked the team to keep going. What better response could a research team ask for?

Reviving the practice of well-informed *ekoi* was useful in itself. After the first phase in Kotido, team members from Nakapelimoru reported they were being asked to attend community meetings, because they were starting to be recognized as a team who knew what was happening in other parts of Karamoja, who could spread *ekoi*. People in different communities praised repeatedly this ability to move, share accurate information and offer evidence-based analysis.

## Enduring consequence

Almost all the women and men elders who commented on the value of the work noted the importance of the revival of *etem* and strengthening of *akiriket*. They called repeatedly for continuation and expansion. In Panyangara one elder pointed out that the research will not be fully valid until it has been discussed at a large *akiriket* of all the Jie.

While it is too early to make claims for enduring consequence, it is necessary to have a method that is alert to it, since without enduring consequence what would be the point of all that work? In my view such consequence, while only properly visible in retrospect, can be sensed

in the continuation of questions and a sense of urgency and energy in seeking answers. The team tells me that when they move around (on foot now) they are hearing the following: "How can we go on strengthening *etem* and *akiriket*? How can *akiriket* coexist with government administrative systems? How can we see that the police collaborate with the peace committees? What could a big *akiriket* of the peoples of Karamoja achieve?"

## Conclusion

The work emerges as remarkably effective when judged against the four criteria – it built good relations, its evidence was judged trustworthy by Karimojong, the findings have been useful and the questions are still hotly debated. What it may lack in worldly sophistication and theoretical complexity it makes up for in utility and, dare I say it, enduring consequence. The research team's work has demonstrated that *ekoi* is essential to people's social and political relations, providing the data on which they may make decisions and negotiate. This work has shown how *ekoi* works as a stimulant in counteracting the erosion of social bonds that was brought about by a decade of violence in the region.

It has not been an easy task. The habits of elite disapproval have been strong – the schooled do not want to be upstaged by the unschooled, the new authorities would rather avoid too much resurgence of old authority, at least not without their oversight, and the NGOs would prefer to drive technical interventions without interference from the people. Obstacles like these are not unique to Karamoja, they are universal, but they may be more acute in regions where there has been so overwhelming and recent a transition of authority. In overcoming the difficulties of distrust, to the extent that they did, the research team achieved extraordinary things and worked extraordinarily hard, as did all their supporters inside and outside Karamoja. They showed that it is possible to regenerate inclusive systems of practical knowledge and in so doing, counter the alarming effects of defeat.



## Glossary

**Akiriket** Traditional Karimojong parliament (see page 16 for further details)

**Black** Refers those who are not in government, nor school-educated nor living in a town.

**Ekoi** information or knowledge that is spoken between people when they meet

**Ekokwa / Etem** Community Meeting, usually held early in the morning. *Ekokwa* is used in Napak and Moroto, while *Etem* is a Kotido word.

**Kraal** Cattle camp

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## About this book

This book was put together by the Karamoja Action Research Team with help from Simon Longoli and Natalie Newell of Restless Development, Sarah Wilson and Alastair Scott-Villiers of the Pastoralist Communication Initiative and Logwee John Bosco and Patta Scott-Villiers of the Institute of Development Studies. Patta

Scott-Villiers edited the book and wrote the context and method sections. Sarah Wilson designed it. The research team put together and chose the content and images. The research was supported by Restless Development Uganda and it was funded by Irish Aid through the Institute of Development Studies.

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## *Ekoi and Etem in Karamoja*

**A study of decision-making in a post-conflict society**

**Karamoja Action Research Team with Patta Scott-Villiers**

In 2013, a group of young Karimojong set out to explore land, peace and customary law in Karamoja. This book presents their findings on how decisions are made internally between Karimojong and between Karimojong and government on these subjects.

