



REFORMED WARRIORS: A CASE STUDY FROM UGANDA¹

Introduction

Only 8 years ago, Northern Uganda, and particularly the Karamoja sub-region, was riddled with various levels of conflict, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic divides and the LRA. Today, much of that violence has subsided. The question is, how did Uganda move towards peace?

In this case study, Mercy Corps looks to answer that question in part by examining the role of youth, particularly a group of youth known as ‘reformed warriors’ a name generally used for young people who have given up violence in the Karamoja area of Uganda. Between 1970 and 2011, Karamoja faced brutal, deadly conflicts between and within different communities.² These conflicts over cattle and resources existed before, but in 1970, the proliferation of weapons led to an increase in casualties.³ Due to government policies and peacebuilding efforts, the once violent Karamoja has turned a corner, where violence and insecurity have decreased significantly.⁴

It is in this post-conflict environment that youth are beginning to find their voice and many are advocating for peace. In some cases, youth that were formally perpetrators of violence are now building peace in their communities. These youth—Reformed Warriors—turned in their weapons, and through a reconciliation process were reintegrated into their communities. Not only have they reintegrated, but some have become ambassadors for peace, working to spread messages of peace to their communities and beyond. These Reformed Warriors are paramount in the story of peace and development in Karamoja.

In many cases around the world, many formerly violent warriors are not welcomed back into their communities. This case study highlights how youth moved from engaging in violence to peace, the government’s engagement in these activities, and what others can learn from these youth’s experiences. The study is organized as follows: a brief history of the Karamoja region, followed by methodology, analysis of the role of youth in peacebuilding and ending with recommendations.

¹ The case was written by Adrienne Brooks, David Gatere and Rebecca Wolfe from Mercy Corps.

² United Nations Development Programme. (2015). *Uganda Human Development Report 2015: Unlocking the Development Potential of Northern Uganda*.

³ Human Rights Watch. (2007, September). *"Get the Gun!" Human Rights Violations by Uganda's National Army in Law Enforcement Operations in Karamoja Region*(Rep. No. Vol 19, No 13(A)). Retrieved <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/uganda0907/index.htm>

⁴ Saferworld. (2012, May). Tracking conflict and security dynamics in Karamoja, Uganda – An update. Retrieved September 06, 2017, from <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/546-tracking-conflict-and-security-dynamics-in-karamoja-uganda>

The Karamoja Context:

The Karamoja region of Uganda borders Kenya and South Sudan, though the tribes living in the area also spread to Ethiopia and these ethnic divisions cross borders. Nearly 1.2 million people live across 10,550 square miles of semi-arid land in Karamoja. The region is fairly remote from the central government, and while there are formal government structures in place, generally traditional structures remain, and elders hold the power in most communities.⁵ Seventy-eight percent of the population is below 30 years old.⁶ To address concerns among the large population of young people, the government has incorporated more youth into the formal governing structures. Youth representatives are elected to local, district, and even parliamentary positions. Relationships between elders and youth are strained, as the youth in formal government structures tend to challenge the traditional governing bodies, primarily composed of elders (MADEFO KII).

Ethnically, the area consists of various groups, including the Karamajong, Dodoth and Jie. The Dodoth and Jie do not identify as Karamajong, and fought the Turkana and Toposa along the borders in Kenya and South Sudan. Although the Dodoth and Jie are relatively peaceful now, they used to be highly combative in cattle raiding both within Karamoja as well as bordering regions.⁷

The semi-arid environmental conditions have encouraged livelihoods based on the raising of animals, primarily cattle and goats. Because of the dependence on agro-pastoralist and pastoralist resources, pasture and water disputes are a major source of inter- and intra-ethnic conflict within Karamoja's districts as well as across the borders with Kenya and South Sudan. Historically, these tensions have often erupted after attempts at demarcating territory for grazing or cattle raids, and due to retaliation, escalate quickly into widespread violence, particularly if there is an inter-ethnic component to the violence.⁸ Ambushes made travel throughout the region dangerous, if not impossible.

⁵ HRW 2007

⁶ Cardozo, M., Higgins, S., & Le Mat, M. (Feb 2016). *The Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding*. UNICEF.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Howe, K., Stites, E., Akabwai, D., & Mercy Corps. (2015, November). "We now have relative peace": Changing Conflict Dynamics in Northern Karamoja, Uganda. <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/we-now-have-relative-peace-changing-conflict-dynamics-in-northern-karamoja-uganda/>

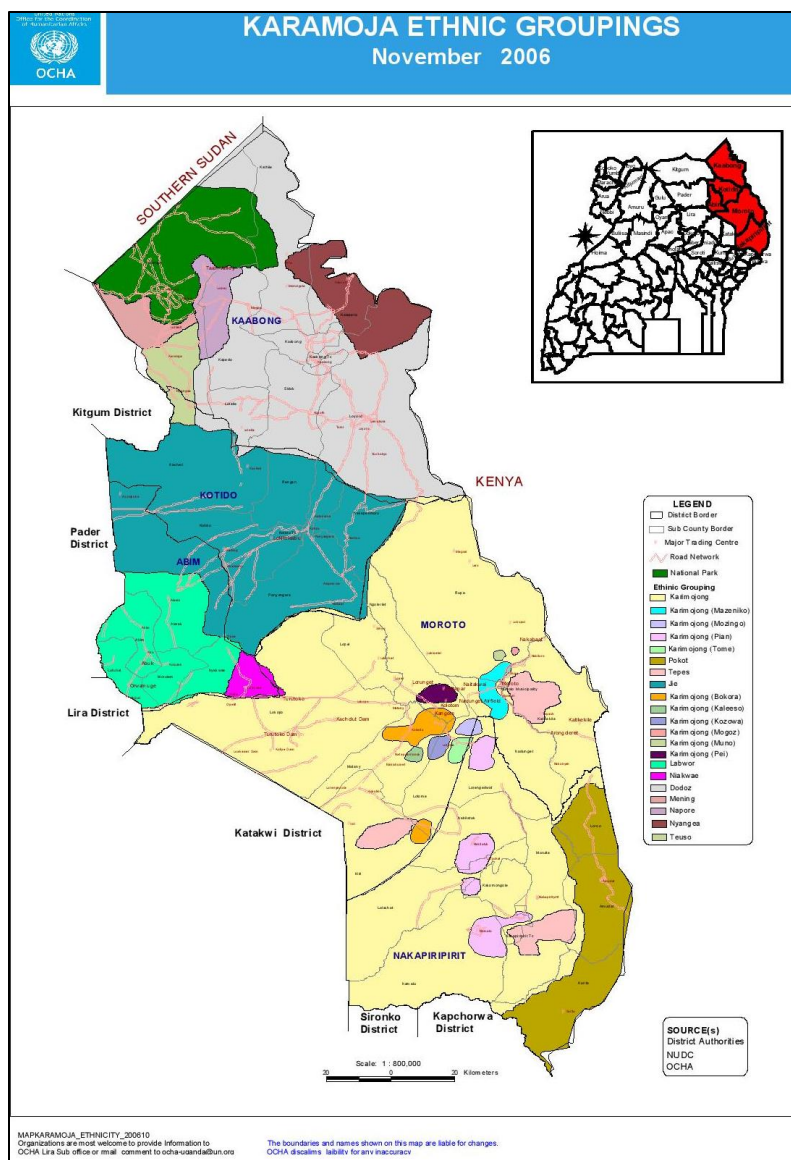


Figure 1: Map of Karamoja Ethnic Groups⁹

With a median age of 15.5 the majority of those who commit violence are youth, primarily cattle raiding. Ethnic groups consolidated their young fighting force in the *kraals*—corrals or fenced off areas away from the villages where the cattle were kept. Most of the youth that went to the *kraals* spent their time protecting cattle rather than going to school and as a result, were largely uneducated, limiting their employment options once leaving the *kraals*. The problems of unemployment among youth in the *kraals* were compounded by pre-existing high unemployment rates and an economy unable to keep up with population growth.¹⁰

⁹ Akabwai, D., & Ateyo, P. E. (2007, December). The Scramble for Cattle, Power and Guns in Karamoja. *Feinstein International Center*. Retrieved from http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/The_Scramble_for_Cattle1.pdf

¹⁰ Ahaibwe, G., & Mbowa, S. (2016, July 29). Youth Unemployment Challenge in Uganda and the Role of Employment Policies in Jobs Creation. Retrieved September 06, 2017, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa->

In 2002, the Ugandan military, the Uganda Peoples Defense Force, began a voluntary disarmament campaign, which included providing supplies and small amounts of cash to those who turned in their weapons. This was unsuccessful primarily because of the existing insecurity in the area and people felt if they turned in their guns and others didn't, they would not be able to protect themselves. As a result voluntary policy evolved into forced disarmament, resulting in severe and widespread human rights violations, including random searches, detainments and the deaths of innocent people, including children.¹¹ While physically removing weapons and providing some degree of stability, the disarmament process traumatized many throughout the communities. To bolster the effectiveness of the disarmament program, the Moruitit Resolution was implemented to reduce the attractiveness of cattle raiding by requiring the perpetrator of theft to return double the number of stolen animals plus one additional animal.¹² Now, if the cattle thief was caught, it is far costlier to pay back the cattle.

Fighting over resources—particularly cattle—and land remain the primary source of conflict, but the nature of the conflict has shifted from large-scale violence to small-scale criminal behavior.. The transition from pastoralist to agro-pastoralist lifestyles has led to increased demand for land to grow food.¹³ Climate change, and related droughts, is also contributing to a scarcity of resources and subsequent struggles over water and grazing land. (KII- Simon at MC, GHG program) There is still some theft of cattle given its value in Ugandan society, however now it is largely viewed as crime-related behavior rather than related to conflict. While the scale of the violence surrounding raids has dropped, the loss of 1-5 cattle can still be detrimental to many families. This theft occurs between families, within communities, between communities, and across borders. In addition to crime and fighting over resources, domestic violence is a significant security risk, though it is unclear if it has increased due to men coming home from fighting or there is increased reporting. Many respondents mentioned the rise in alcoholism is contributing to increased domestic violence and other crimes. ..

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, we adapted the Most Significant Change methodology, to qualitatively examine the effectiveness of peacebuilding in Karamoja and what we can learn from it. We conducted focus group discussions and key informant interviews over the course of 3 weeks in the capital city Kampala, as well as various towns within Moroto and Kaabong Districts in Karamoja. Those in the focus group discussion were 'Reformed Warriors' who worked as Peace Ambassadors, or were community leaders in the various districts and villages. For key informant interviews, we spoke to community leaders, government representatives and police chiefs. Villages and groups were selected based on their history of significant violence between ethnic groups and contributions to peace. Verbal consent was given at the beginning of each interview or focus group discussion. The research team included one researcher, the Peace III program officer and PEACE III program assistant to help with participant selection and translation.

in-focus/2014/08/26/youth-unemployment-challenge-in-uganda-and-the-role-of-employment-policies-in-jobs-creation/

¹¹ HRW 2007

¹² Howe, Stites, Akabwai & Mercy Corps (2015)

¹³ Ibid.

Focus Group Discussions

The field work included eight focus group discussions in three districts of Karamoja. The Peace Ambassadors, Listenership Club, and Women’s Peace and Justice Commission were identified by Mercy Corps PEACE III staff. School peace clubs were identified by the Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU) in Kampala. Respondents ranged from 18-30.

District	Group	Demographics
Moroto	Nadunget Secondary School	15 male and female youth
		5 males
	Sports for Peace (Peace Ambassadors)	2 females
		1 elder
	Listenership Club	4 males
		4 females
Kaabong	Kalapata Peace Ambassadors	6 males
		1 female
	Sokomej Peace Ambassadors	8 males
		3 male elders,
	Women’s Peace and Justice Commission (Karenga)	14 females
		2 elders
Kotido	Youth Leaders group	3 females
		5 males

Key Informant Interviews

The field work also included 28 key informant interviews with national, district, and local level government officials, members of the police force, members of peace committees, elders and peace ambassadors. Please see Annex 1 for a detailed report of interviewees.

Limitations

1. Gender: Few women were interviewed for this case study due to our sampling frame focused on Reformed Warriors. Few, if any, women are considered Reformed Warriors. We only spoke with one women’s group involved with Reformed Warriors, based on the border of South Sudan. Additionally, only one female was present in a FGD with Reformed Warriors, and only in Kalapata. This is understandable because of the male dominance in the Returned Warrior community. Some NGOs have begun to address the role of women in peacebuilding activities through gender policies. Though Karamoja has achieved relative peace, sustaining that peace will involve the entire community, and must include women.
2. Positive Deviance: One other limitation to this study is the frame of reference. We specifically examined “positive deviants,” to learn about what worked in terms of peacebuilding in Karamoja. We talked with people who decided to turn away from violence and return. We did not examine those who did not turn away and what is keeping them committed to engaging in

violence. It's possible that those unidentified barriers will make it difficult for Karamoja to achieve even greater peace and security.

The Case of the Reformed Warriors

Since 2011, many warriors have disarmed, returned home, and are choosing to be actors in peace rather than violence. "Peace we are enjoying now came from the youth, and was supported by the government and partners." (LCIII, Tapac) Through a reconciliation and reintegration process, these warriors in Uganda set out on a path towards peace. Many of the youth not only overcame the challenges of reintegration, but also began to spread messages of peace, becoming Reformed Warriors and Peace Ambassadors. Below, we explain how youth started this journey of becoming Reformed Warriors, how they stay on that path, and the activities they engage in that helps spread peace beyond their communities.

Becoming a Reformed Warrior

Many male youth across Karamoja were involved in the intercommunal violence, particularly in cattle raiding. During and after disarmament, some youth decided to give up violence. While a young warrior may decide to return to his community, there was much distrust within the communities of the returning youth. In every interview, respondents were asked "Who is considered violent in the community?" and in each case, the youth were noted as the greatest perpetrators of violence. Reformed Warriors credited the trauma healing process, which included a combination of self-reflection about what one did during the violence, counseling, building understanding of trauma among the community, dialogues to help perpetrators and victims to come together. This process helped build good will of communities that initiated their journey towards peace.

"The will comes from within you, looking at past where friends died, this drives us."
(FGD Sports for Peace, Tapac)

Trauma Healing

Young warriors, former warriors and community members including elders, women, and children were all traumatized by the extended period of violence in Karamoja. Participants spoke of killings and rapes in ambushes along the roads. (KII Elders, Kaabong West). Additionally, warriors who fled experienced additional trauma while displaced in South Sudan and Kenya. One Reformed Warrior from Kalapata noted that in South Sudan, they faced many issues. "We experience many challenges, we were being killed and targeted. We would be suspected at home. We also saw the gun motivated us to do bad things." (Kalapata Peace Ambassador) Additionally, as communities were traumatized by the violence, they were reluctant to have former warriors return, even if they expressed that they had turned away from violence.

Consequently, for reconciliation and the eventual reintegration of the reformed warriors, trauma healing was needed in these communities. The trauma healing process includes sharing experiences, mourning together as a community, reflecting and healing internally. "Through meetings, we sit together, and we meet other villages to show togetherness in community" (FGD Listenership Group). These meetings were

first initiated by Mercy Corps as part of the PEACE III program, which is funded by USAID.¹⁴ Through this process youth realized not only that they wanted to give up fighting but also how they could advocate for peace. For example, many youth fled from Kaabong to South Sudan during disarmament, and conducted large scale raids through violence against their own community, so there was a great deal of concern over returning youth to Kaabong, specifically. Through facilitated community dialogues between the youth and the community, the returning youth were able to express their regrets and ask for forgiveness, and eventually able to return. As one Peace Ambassador said, “When we came back from South Sudan, these meetings helped because the people wanted to kill us, so the meetings helped us gain confidence. We were integrated into the community through these dialogues, pleading forgiveness, and now we’re here. So we feel the meetings are very good.” (Reformed Warrior/Peace Ambassador, Kaabong) As made clear by this peace ambassador in Kaabong, the meetings opened up an opportunity for the warriors to return, and begin the process of reformation. Many youth felt confident to return to communities, which were more open to acceptance.

The trauma healing process also addressed the gap and distrust between youth and the community by helping youth and communities reflect on their own role in the violence and examine their narratives of victimhood that justifies violence. Knowing the youth also went through a process to understand their role in the violence helped communities begin to trust them again. The “youth are traumatized because they are used to killing. So they need trainings and healing to help them change their minds.” (KII DADO, Kaabong). Another person credited the trauma healing process for helping to reform the youth, “After disarmament, there was a common idea of transforming minds of youth away from cattle [raiding]. Although now we didn’t do livelihoods, we did engage in dialogue. Engaging the youth took their mind from harmful processed. They now appreciate the importance of peace.... Counseling and social support has helped to build peace.” (KAPDA KII)

Having now experienced peace, many youth don’t want to reengage in violence. “Those days, some of us grew up fighting, raiding, killing. But now, we feel we should save lives. The gun didn’t know mother and father, just killing. So we lost our friends. Now some of us can even produce children. Even livestock now growing and we can grow food. We feel peace gave us this. Now we work with our wives.” (Sokomej Peace Ambassador) This trauma healing process supported this shift for many in Karamoja.

Social Support Builds Peace

¹⁴ The lead implementer of the program is PACT.

Women’s Support for Peace

Women were central in helping youth start the path of reformation. In one case, a group of women in Karenga identified a need for change in 2006, a very violent time during the disarmament period. They came together as a small group, to bring back their husbands, sons, and daughters. “If we hadn’t formed the group in 2006 for peace, we wouldn’t be here today. We pray for strength to teach peace like men.” (FGD with Women PA) They began doing dramas and performing peace messages across their own community and neighboring communities. Today, they are highly regarded and help bring groups together in mediation and dialogue. This is through the peace committees and formal structures – formal structures such as?. They also cross to South Sudan to talk to other groups there about peace and mediation.

Trauma healing provided initial support to direct former warriors to the pathway of reformation, reconciliation and reintegration. However, staying on this path is difficult, especially given various pressures on young men. In interviews with these Reformed Warriors, we find there was one critical factor that kept these warriors on the path towards peace: social support.

Just as negative social influences led many youth to engage in violence, including raids, social networks can help reinforce positive behaviors and keep these Reformed Warriors on the right track towards peace. Below we describe some of these social supports.

Clubs and Associations

Many Reformed Warriors formed groups and associations together with themselves and with other youth in the communities. These groups help Reformed Warriors, through positive peer support, to stay on their trajectory towards peace. These groups contribute to internal strength and fortitude to maintain this the path of peace even when there are temptations to go back to their old ways.

These groups also helps form bonds within the community that strengthens their trust and engagement with the community, rather than becoming isolated. These groups span many different sectors, including financial, sports, and peace groups. Many of these are formal and have support of the government or international partners.

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VLSAs): Many youth, both reformed warriors and other youth, formed VSLAs and other income generation groups. VLSAs are often a small group of village members who contribute to a revolving fund that helps people save and provide capital for income generating activities. Essential for VLSAs to work is that there is trust between group members to repay the loans. In addition to providing capital, VLSAs have been shown to build social capital between group members. People lend money to members and depend on them to pay it back. This trust that develops between people strengthens the relationships between them, and as a result members begin to help each other in various ways, not just financially.¹⁵ In the beginning, Reformed Warriors and other groups were taught VSLA systems through various programs and NGOs. But now, youth come together to start groups on their own (GHG program officer 2017 KII).

**“When we form groups,
we can sustain peace.”**
(Sokomej Peace Ambassador)

In addition to the social aspects of the VLSA, the income generated from their businesses, started through the loans, helped alleviate financial pressures that kept them on the positive path—and not engage in crime, which is often financially motivated—and spend more time promoting peace.¹⁶ There was also a feeling that people would lose their newly found income if they reengaged in violence. Peace also allowed them to engage in economic activities. “Since we have realized peace, we are more involved in business and cultivation, from which we can sell crops. We have small shops. We also cultivate firewood to sell to earn a living. We can even mine gold” (Sokomej Peace Ambassador). Most respondents pointed to the importance of livelihoods to peace in their communities. Some reformed warriors pointed to the successful business owners who could in turn purchase cattle, or expand their herds. With a steady economic base provided by the VSLA, Reformed Warriors mentioned that they have a better ability to

¹⁵ http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/ECON-2013-CARE-%20Connecting-the-worlds-poorest_0.pdf

¹⁶ Becker, G (1968) Crime and Violence: An Economic Approach.” *Journal of Political Economy*. 76:169-217

participate in peace activities, such as group exchanges, dramas, or other activities. Youth also saw how peace benefited them economically. “When we embrace peace, riches come, move freely, business, we can prosper.” (Sports for Peace, Tapac FGD) These benefits help youth to engage in positive behaviors and remain peaceful.

Sports for Peace: Some reformed warriors have joined with other youth, both male and female, in Sports for Peace groups. These groups bring youth together several times a week within a community, and even brings them to other communities every month. The youth from other communities, or within one, come together to play and compete in sports. These events begin with dialogue and information sharing between the youth of the other communities. “We have opportunity to talk and listen to each other in groups” (FGD with Sports for Peace). One reformed warrior noted that “everyone in the community wants to hear what we have learned” when they return from the sporting events. These are opportunities to engage with other communities. He continued, “we have opportunity to talk and listen to each other, bring issues of peace to community meetings”. (Sports for Peace, Tapac) In these cases, not only do they form bonds, but some youth even bring back messages and learning opportunities from their visits with others. These build trust with the community, strengthen bonds and social groups, and ultimately reaffirm a reformed warriors path towards peace.

Peace Ambassadors: Some Reformed warriors came together to form groups of Peace Ambassadors—where they work together to spread messages of peace. “We want to serve, so future young ones can live in a peaceful place.” (FGD Listenership Group) These groups are tightknit and are often joined by others in the community, including elders and women. These groups travel together and reinforce the importance of peace. Working together on this common goal solidifies their commitment to peace, and receiving positive feedback from their activities furthers the bond to the group and engaging spreading the word. In the next section on “Spreading the Word” we discuss the activities of the Peace Ambassadors in greater depth.

Cross-Community Exchanges

The groups described above receive greater support through exchanges with Reformed Warriors. These exchanges promote information sharing between different communities, even previously fighting communities. One Peace Ambassador pointed out that groups that go to speak to other communities find that other groups are facing the same challenges (FGD Sports for Peace). In this process, they are sharing ideas on managing different issues, which can strengthen both groups, and in turn, strengthen peace in both communities.

The cross-community exchanges, initiated through the Sports for Peace activities as part of the PEACE III program— also created friendships between different and even formerly fighting ethnic communities. “They do exchange visits, learn from each other, engage in community dialogue, and become friends with other youth in other communities” (KII, LC1 and Elder, Tapac). Through these exchanges they identified mutual interests, and this cooperation strengthened connections, making it harder to fall back into conflict. “Exchange visits are important to understand each other’s approaches.” (KII Subcounty Chief, Kalapata) An example of cooperation was around grazing: “[The youth] also contribute to joint grazing to promote peace and share work together.” (FGD Sokomej Peace Ambassadors). The exchanges also have led to economic partnerships. “Youth are building relationships with the Turkana community [in Kenya].

There's been good trade practices, especially with livestock. This helps promote peace in the community." (KII Elders, Kaabong West).

In addition to these group exchanges creating friendships, the exposure to other people and culture has also led to intermarriages. "In Kalapata now, we are developing relations with the Turkana. There are isolated cases of violence, but the communities are staying together. In the next 5 years, there will be more intermarriage and coexistence. Other communities will also do this." (KII Subcounty Chief of Kalapata) During an interview with Peace Ambassadors, there was a village meeting to discuss the most recent marriage between a young man and a Turkana woman. "There's a Turkana woman who came and we are negotiating for animals (dowry) now." (Peace Ambassadors, Kalapata) These strengthened relationships within and between communities helps to reify the path towards peace for the Reformed Warriors and disincentivizes a return to violence.

Spreading the Word

Many Reformed Warriors have stayed on the path to peace for a long time. These Reformed Warriors have achieved peace and reintegration but rather than ending their journey there, they have become Peace Ambassadors, spreading the word of peace to those still finding the path or those still engaged in violence. "Some of the youth who are facilitators in community give their own experience. They go to Kenya to share experiences, which is good because they speak for themselves." (KII, DADO Kaabong) These peace activities not only help other communities, but also provide positive feedback to the Reformed Warriors where they see how their actions are changing lives, and keeps them on this peaceful path.

Drama, Dance, Music

One of the most widespread and well-known peace activities in the Karamoja region is drama, dance, and music. Dramas, dances, and music bring communities together and inspire others to join. "Their dramas address current events and they can inspire change" (NEMAH FM, June 2). Many communities know of drama groups or music groups, and enjoy their performances. "[The youth] come together and perform, so the communities learn that other people are like them" (KII LCIII, TapacDramas) bring communities together, who can then go on to learn from each other and create relationships. "Drama speaks just like

"For us, when we die, we know our children will talk about peace"
(Women's Peace and Justice Commission)

that radio, its educational. Dialogue helps transform minds of others and share ideas." (FGD Listenership Group)

Reformed Warriors used drama, dance and music to spread messages of peace, and facilitate the process of reintegration for perpetrators of violence. They tell stories, with drama and music, of how violence is bad, forms of violence, and the importance of peace (FGD Sports for Peace). One Reformed Warrior highlighted songs for peace that appeal to the community, for example, "stop cattle thefts and pass messages about relationship building" (FGD Sports for Peace). Drama and music have also been part of trauma healing processes that continue throughout Karamoja. "These [drama and dance] groups are good at facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation by spreading their messages." (MADEFO, KII Moroto) Communities also recognize the role of the Reformed Warriors in these drama, dance, and music groups. The program officer from a local organization, MADEFO. said that when these groups move around the region, "they are recognized, in touch with things, able to go to kraals, and influence other youth to mobilize."

(MADEFO, KII Moroto). As one key informant said, “Music and drama bring communities together and inspire other youth. The Reformed Warriors inspire change. Other youth think, ‘He was raider, but not now. Look what can happen to me.’” (KII NEMAH FM)

Reformed Warriors not only focus on spreading messages of peace to those engaged in violence, but also younger generations. As one Reformed Warrior said:

“We help to sustain relationships for peace between different people, and educate the younger generation. We raise awareness among young people so by the time they grow, they are only talking about peace, not conflict.” (FGD- Sokomej Reformed Warrior)

The hope is that by educating the next generation, their will not be the repeat of violence and trauma that ruined so many lives in the region.

Mediation and conflict mitigation

As part of the cross-community exchanges, youth were able to resolve conflicts between communities through dialogue and learning new techniques for conflict mitigation. They used these techniques for better resource sharing or clarifying land boundaries between grazing land or farms. (KII- KAPDA). As one reformed warrior said, “Some dialogues help to solve conflicts that happen within the community because we see the problem and solution so we can bring peace. Meetings are like school where you learn new things. When you go to meetings and listen carefully, you can even solve your own problems within yourself. Dialogues also help discuss resource sharing like water and pasture, even know where to get gold.” (Sokomej Reformed Warrior/Peace Ambassador).

Most participants attributed new markets, increased safety, and open travelling routes to the resolution of these disputes through mediation. “We now have peace, so you can move to other places, sustain your livelihood, and move freely without being attacked. Peace is good for us. Peace has made us develop – for example, the construction of roads. No one attacks you when you move

An Inclusive Peace Policy

In 2015, the Ugandan government, in partnership with UNICEF developed a National Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation (PBCT) policy with a specific component devoted to youth. This was a formal recognition by the government on the importance of youth-led peace activities around the country. According to the Office of the Prime Minister, the purpose of the peace policy is primarily to increase impact by improving coordination in the following ways: 1) roles and responsibilities of international actors better defined so that they contribute to peace effectively and efficiently and 2) local engagement by an informed community so that peace is not only a top-down process, but also bottom up. With the support of UNICEF and youth representatives, youth were consulted at two different levels during the development of the policy. The first was in the draft stage to analyze the conflict context as it related to youth. The second stage was to incorporate youth feedback, attempting to “ensure that youth-specific interests were addressed by the policy.” (KII - Kut, Adolescent Youth Contribution Policy)

Government officials, youth representatives, police chiefs and district leaders including elders and religious leaders were all consulted as a part of this process. There was a very wide scope and many different opinions from around the country were included in this national-level policy. Though the pastoralist traditions, ethnic differences, and forms of conflict of the Karamoja region often separate it from other parts of Uganda, in this policy, the government consulted leaders and representatives from Karamoja in a very inclusive effort.

While the policy has realized several key successes, there are several challenges as well. Although many people were consulted in the policy, there is still a lack of awareness of the policy formation around the country, especially among the Reformed Warriors. This was surprising given the level of involvement and respect they have garnered in the community, as well as their widespread peacebuilding activities. However, very few knew about the policy when asked about it.

in the night” (Sokomej Reformed Warrior/Peace Ambassadors). Another Reformed Warrior said that the increased security led to increased trade: “We have joint trade with other communities, so get things you don’t have” (FGD Kalapata Reformed Warriors/Peace Ambassadors). Increased safety due to dialogues and mediation was an improvement that women particularly valued (FGD with women). “Some dialogues help to solve conflicts that happen within the community because we see the problem and solution so we can bring peace” (FGD Peace Ambassadors, Sokomej).

Peace enforcers/promoters

Many reformed warriors also work as peace enforcers/promoters in their communities, through cattle tracking or engagement with community policing. For example, many Reformed Warriors help local authorities and Peace Committees tracking lost livestock. They “help local authorities in tracking lost livestock because it could be that their peer groups are the ones stealing the animals, so the [reformed warriors] can be helpful.” (KII KAPDA, Kaabong) As they once engaged in these activities and understand the youth perspective, their insight is helpful in resolving these cases (KAPDA).

The Police Chief of Moroto spoke of groups of youth as crime preventers, “they guide the community, track animals.” Reformed Warriors acknowledge the role they, as youth, can play as well. “Sometimes in [community] meetings, we also investigate and report wrongdoers. Youth support the community, fence the home, work together with other youth – youth mobilize ourselves and the youth involved in the community. This increases our level of peace promoters” (FGD Peace Ambassadors, Sokomej).

Youth are also involved in early warning in their communities. One elder in the in Kalapata described his relationship with youth and Reformed Warriors as members of his local early warning system. He had set up his own communication network for the youth in the *kraals* where he was the leader, so youth were engaged in the peacekeeping and lookout systems of this *kraal*. He noted that he valued the youth and the skills they had in tracking animals (KII Kalapata elder). He says, “I also have some youth located in different areas as peace monitors, so I send information to them, and they to others. I have early warning groups who track and recover stolen livestock. Since I started the information sharing with other youth, this has brought a new relationship between us and the Turkana. We have opened a road to Turkana [in Kenya]. So far, peace is prevailing.” In this case, the early warning system is in tandem with the Turkana youth and pastoralists.

Many reformed warriors are also involved in Peace Committees, which are traditional conflict mitigation mechanisms that can help to resolve issues that the community brings to them. While these groups are primarily led by elders, youth representatives play a decision-making role, even proposing new ideas. “Youth are empowered and can help, they are part of Peace Committees. They can engage themselves with security forces. No longer just elders, but also youth participate in discussions” (KII, DDG Moroto). Many youth are even called upon by the committees to carry out decisions, particularly if it involves dialogues with other communities, or cattle theft (LCI and Elder, Tapac).

Peace Education

In addition to spreading messages of peace through drama, music and dance, another way Reformed Warriors extoll the benefits of peace—such as freedom movement and trade—is through community meetings, going to schools and other forum. The hope is that by seeing these benefits youth will feel

motivated to make peace, and continue to work towards peace. Additionally, Reformed Warriors work with the community to understand the dangers of engaging in violence and how to not intentionally or unintentionally encourage their youth to participate, as well as work towards the benefits of peace. Reformed Warriors in Tapac noted the importance of these messages to creating trust with the community. “The community has developed trust in the messages we pass. When people see us moving in a group, they sit to hear the message. This attracts others to join as well.” (FGD Sports for Peace)

“We help to sustain relationships for peace between different people, and educate the younger generation. We raise awareness among young people so by the time they grow, they are only talking about peace, not conflict” (Peace Ambassadors, Sokomej). One local community leader points out the importance of these educational visits. “[Reformed warriors] visit other community to find out about violence and sharing experience among boys and girls.” (KII, Deputy LCV, Kaabong) Students from a Peace Club at Moroto Secondary School said that everyone in the community (elders, youth, others) talks about examples of peace. They remember and talk about days of killing. For many youth, they believe that peace starts in the family, so sensitization is both small-scale at a family level and large-scale at the community level.

Lessons Learned (for post-conflict countries)

Today, Uganda no longer faces large-scale cattle raids and widespread violence. However, as is common in many post-conflict environments, the nature of conflict has transformed to crime and other forms of violence, particularly domestic violence. Since this paper was largely focused on the past inter-ethnic violence we didn’t explore these other forms of violence here, but they should be explored in future research. Local authorities find their focus has shifted to small-scale theft, domestic violence, and other forms of crime. As violence has transformed to criminality, the question remains how can Reformed Warriors play a relevant role in stemming crime other forms of violence? Based on this analysis, there are a number of lessons that can be applied to other post-conflict settings, particularly when reintegrating former fighters who return to their communities once the fighting is over.

1. Invest in trauma healing to help youth and communities recover from violence: The reintegration of reformed warriors was due mostly to the work of trauma healing programs around the region. As a result of this process, communities and former warriors were able sit down together, engage in dialogue, ask questions, and tell their stories. Without this confidence building and mutual understanding between the warriors and the communities that they had formerly attacked, they could have been turned away, punished or worse upon their return. Unless these youth can be successfully reintegrated and get the support they need to overcome the trauma they witnessed during the conflict, the risk that violence, in various forms, continues is quite high.
2. Support positive social networks: While negative social networks pulled many youth into the violence of cattle raiding for decades, the formation of positive social networks is now keeping reformed warriors on a trajectory towards peace. These groups help youth keep each other accountable to one another and committed to a positive path. These positive social networks help keep youth on this path by addressing multiple needs of youth. For example, the VLSAs help youth access capital to start businesses while providing a trusted outlet to share experiences. These networks also extend beyond communities, strengthening bonds between previous warring

communities. While much is still needed to learn about how to foster positive rather than negative social networks and what makes youth attracted to one or the other, it is clear that investments in creating and supporting positive social networks keeps youth on a constructive path.

3. Create feedback loops help maintain commitment to peace: Many youth pointed out during interviews that peacebuilding activities were the best way to make and sustain peace, as they saw first hand how their efforts were making people's lives better, increasing their commitment to engage in similar activities in the future. These activities include drama, dance and music, sports, dialogues, talking to youth in schools, mediation. Consequently it is important to create opportunities for youth to see the impact of what they do, whether it is doing a series of events so they interact with the same people repeatedly or hearing from people directly how they have changed as a result of the youth's activities. Additionally, there is a need for continued action to reinforce this commitment to peace.
4. Support policies that encourage youth to move towards peace, including disarmament: Most respondents from this study stated that forced disarmament that came after the voluntary disarmament process was the reason that most guns have been turned in to authorities and the UPDF in Karamoja, and this provided an important level of stability within Karamoja and incentives for youth to move away from violence. However, many challenges came with this. Most notably, the forced disarmament was characterized by human rights abuses and unfulfilled promises, which have created grievances making long-lasting peace difficult. For example, "If the government had given me everything I was promised, I wouldn't think of stealing" (FGD with Sokomej Peace Ambassadors). Therefore, disarmament is an important part of peace processes, and need to be done fairly and likely need to be paired with other policies—such as reintegration, including economic reintegration—for the peace to be sustainable.
5. Combine economic and social programs to adapt to the changing nature of violence in post-conflict environments: Inter-ethnic violence had decreased remarkably in Karamoja, increasing people's feelings of security, ability to move and trade. However, crime and domestic violence has gone up, a common occurrence in post-conflict environments. While there is little evidence that economic issues were why youth became involved in the inter-ethnic violence that plagued Karamoja earlier, a concern that came up repeatedly is what will these youth do when they return home. There was a strong belief that if they were unemployed, they would go back to violence. While it is unclear if that will actually happen, in general, crime is closely associated with unemployment.¹⁷ To deal with the crime and unemployment problem, the government created the Youth Livelihood Fund, a well-known program in the Karamoja region, to address the crime problem. The purpose of the Youth Livelihood Fund is to provide members of youth groups with loans to start their own businesses. However, the implementation of the program has been weak, contributing to frustrations among youth. The Youth Opportunities Program, which provided cash transfers rather than loans to similar groups, was shown to increase hours worked by about 17%

¹⁷ Becker, G (1968) Crime and Violence: An Economic Approach." *Journal of Political Economy*. 76:169-217.

and earnings rose nearly 50%, especially women's.¹⁸ However, this program did not increase stability. To reinforce reduction in both inter-ethnic violence and crime, combining economic and social supports—such as trauma healing—through these groups may lead to an overall improvement in security.¹⁹ Additionally, trauma healing or other psychosocial support may help with the residual anger and other self-control issues that developed over years of exposure and engagement in violence, and as a result may stem the increase in domestic violence as well.

Annex 1: Key Informants Interviewed and Focus Group Discussions

Key Informant Interviews

Kampala

Mercy Corps PEACE III Program Manager
Office of the Prime Minister
CEWERU
Director, Karamoja Resilience Support Unit
Mercy Corps YES Program Officer

Moroto District

Danish Demining Group, Danish Refugee Council
Deputy Resident District Commissioner
Police Chief of Moroto
NENAH FM
MADEFO
Deputy Local Council V
Gender Officer
Local Council III, Tapac
Local Council I and elder, Tapac
Subcounty Chief, Tapac

Kaabong District

DADO Program Officer
KAPDA Program Officer
KAPDA Program Assistant
Subcounty Chief, Kalapata
Elders, Kaabong West
Deputy Local Council V
Local Council III, Kalapata

¹⁸ Blattman, Christopher and Fiala, Nathan and Martinez, Sebastian. (November 14, 2013) Generating Skilled Self-Employment in Developing Countries: Experimental Evidence from Uganda. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2268552>

¹⁹ For an example where a combination of economic and social supports led to an decrease in violence in post-conflict environment, see Blattman, C. Jamison, J. and Sheridan, M (2017). Reducing Crime and Violence: Experimental Evidence from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Liberia. *American Economic Review*. 107(4):1165-1206

Community Development Officer, Kalapata
Kalapata Police Chief
Peace Committee Elder, Kalapata
SubCounty Chief, Karenga
GHG Program Officer, Mercy Corps

Kotido District

PEACE III Program Officer, Mercy Corps
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Restless Development

Focus Group Discussions

Moroto District

MADEFO Listenership Club
Nadunget Secondary School Peace Club
Sports of Peace, Tapac
Moroto Secondary School Peace Club

Kaabong District

Kalapata Peace Ambassadors
Sokomej Peace Ambassadors
Peace and Justice Commission, Karenga

Kotido District

Community Business Officers

Annex 2: Maps

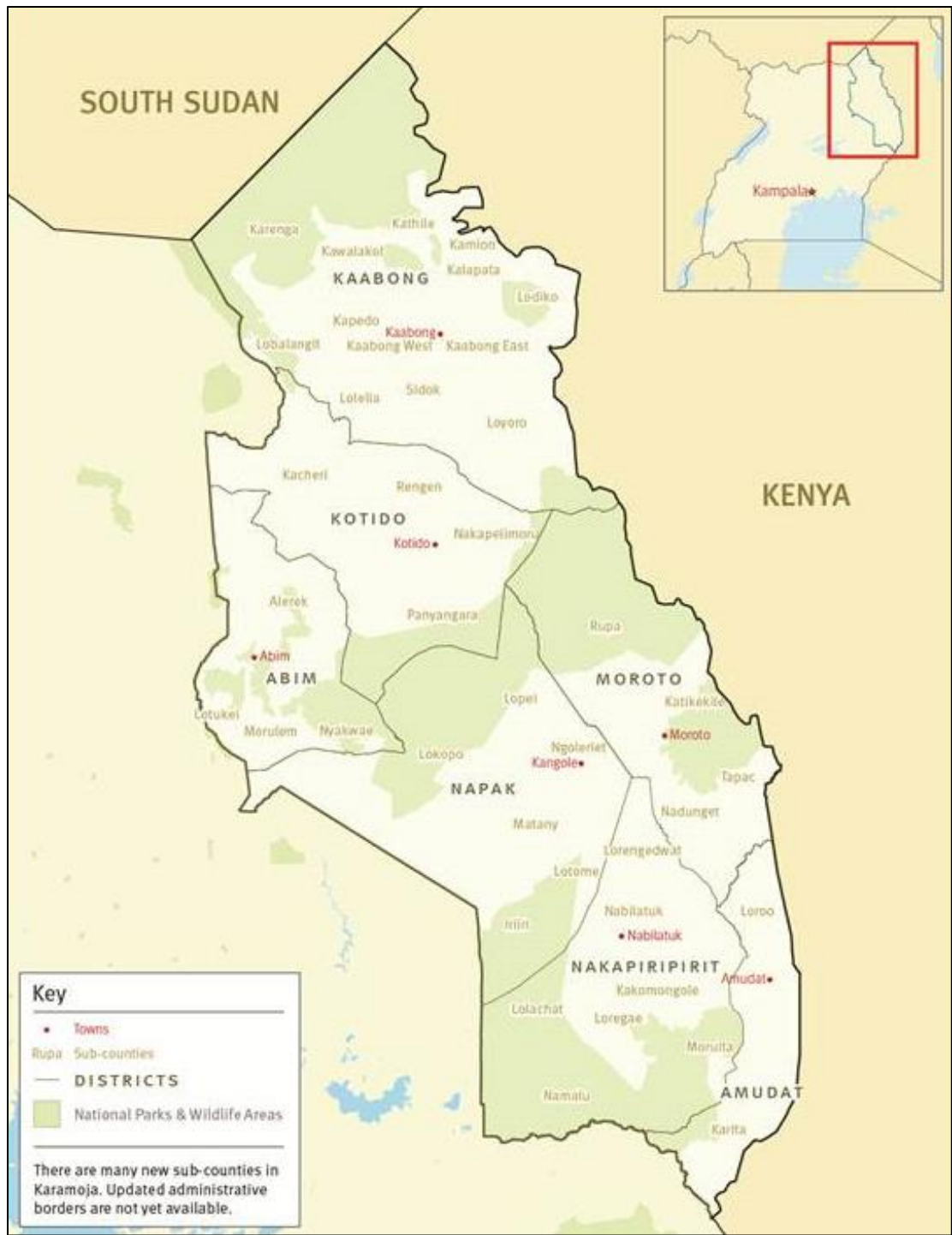


Figure 2: Districts and Sub-Counties in Karamoja, HRW (2014)²⁰

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. (2015, June 16). "How Can We Survive Here?". Retrieved September 06, 2017, from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/03/how-can-we-survive-here/impact-mining-human-rights-karamoja-uganda>

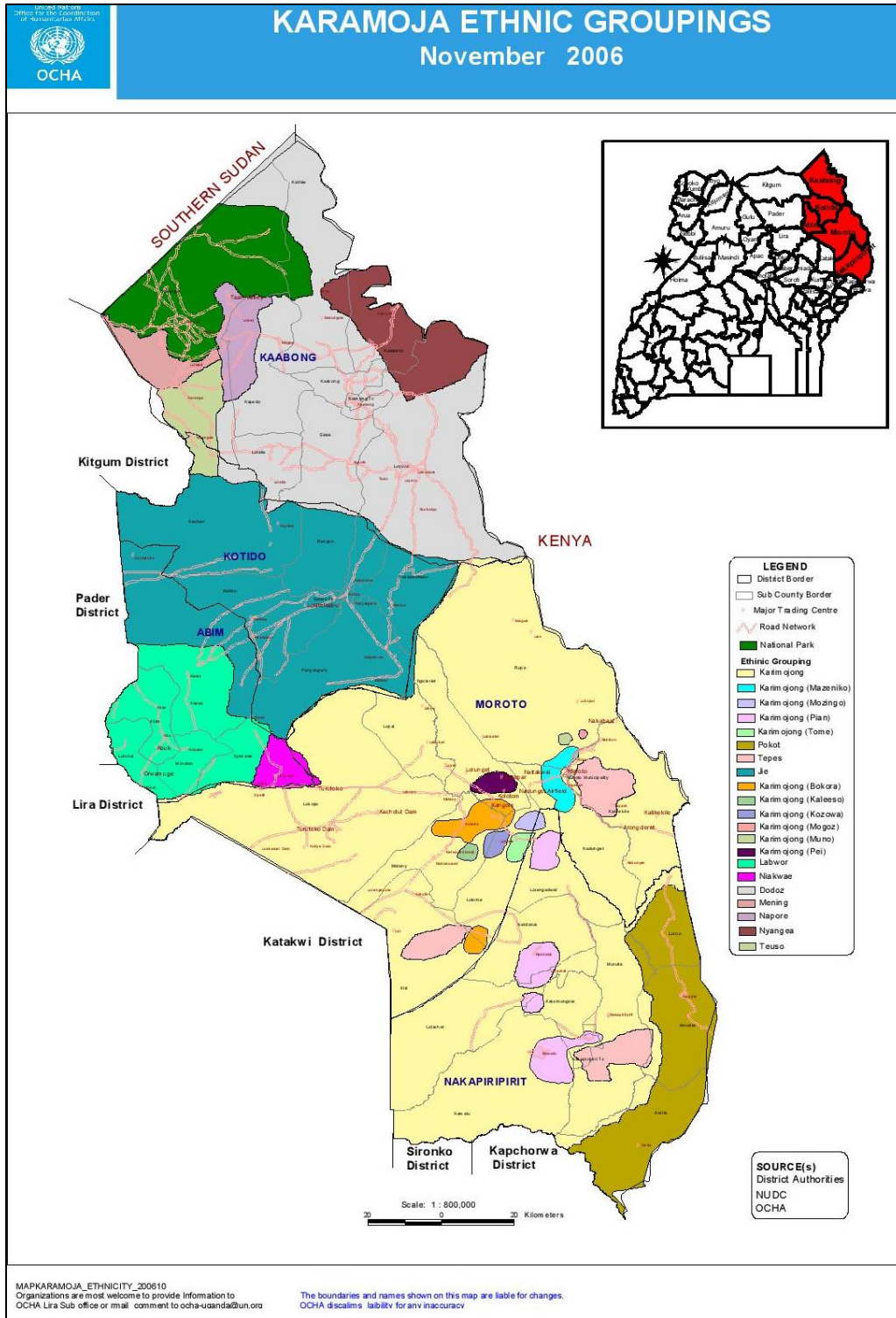


Figure 3: Map of Karamoja Ethnic Groups²¹

²¹ Akabwai, D., & Ateyo, P. E. (2007, December). The Scramble for Cattle, Power and Guns in Karamoja. *Feinstein International Center*. Retrieved from http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/The_Scramble_for_Cattle1.pdf

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