Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution in Karamoja-Uganda.
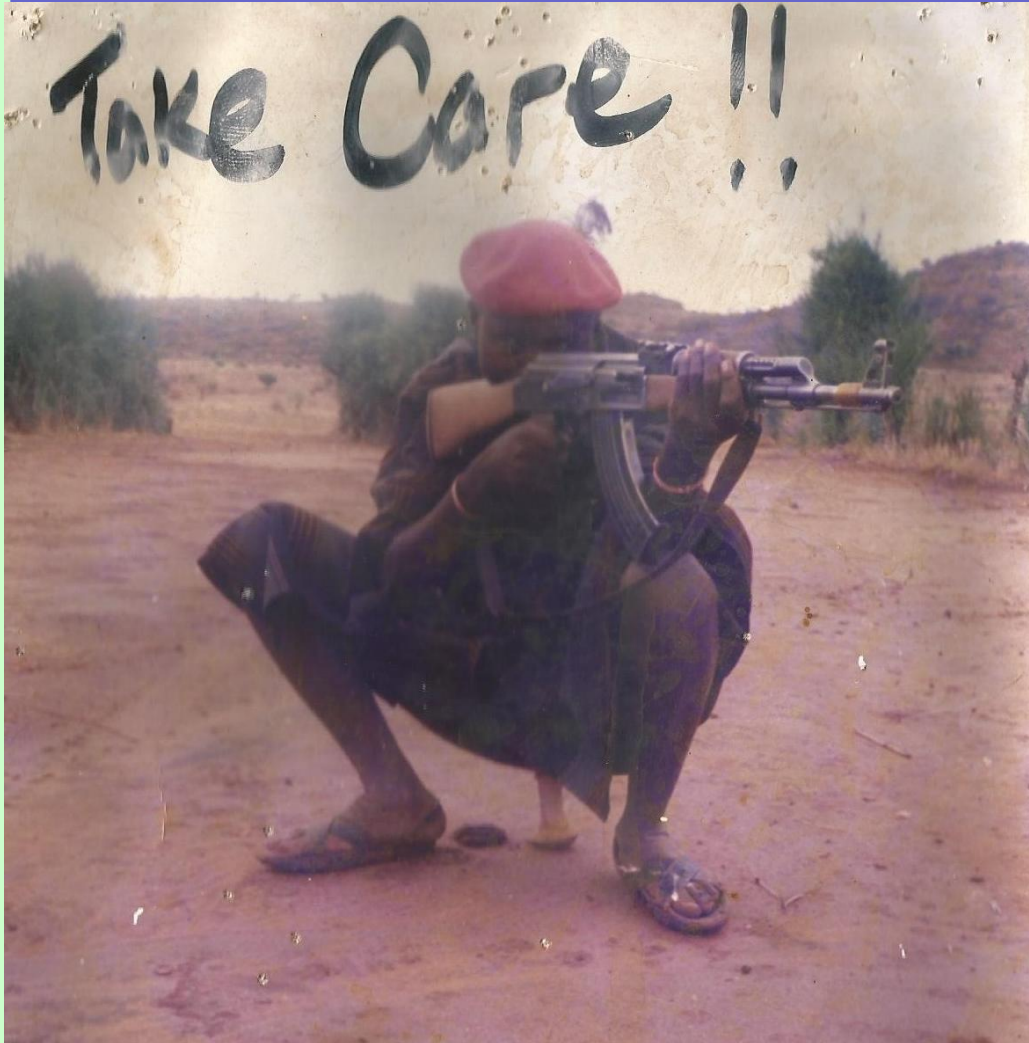
Biography and Session Introduction

- **Biographical Information**: Ambrose Toolit, Consultant, Karamoja, Uganda, is a governance and policy specialist with over 10 years of professional experience implementing, human rights, and conflict management, development and humanitarian emergencies, at all levels. He holds an MA in Development Studies from Kimmage Development Study Centre, Dublin, Ireland, and a PGD in Social Justice from Makerere University.

- **Session:** Ambrose will share from his experiences in reconciliation and conflict resolution working with a broad range of stakeholders, background to conflicts, strategies, results and challenges.

Setting the scene.

- This presentation focuses on reconciliation and conflict resolution strategies and personal experiences within - without the Karamojong communities and its neighbors – the Pokot and Turkana of Kenya; the Teso, Acholi, Langi and Sabiny. However, scholarly references will be considered as well.

- For the purposes of this presentation, I will provide an indepth view on :
  - Background information on Karamoja – socially, political and economically.
  - local understanding of some key concept (of course this may vary or used interchangeably without changing its meaning).
  - the Karamoja conflict – an introduction, the corridors of no return, what went wrong.
  - attempts by different stakeholders – reconciliation and conflict resolution.
  - conclusion and take home ratio.

Take Care! –

Scary images of conflict

Background:

KARAMOJA REGION

UGANDA

Kaabong
Kotido
Abim
Moroto
NAPAK
Nakapiripirit
Amudat

© KARAMOJA: Changing the Lens

- The Karamoja region – has currently 7 districts with a possibility of increasing to 9 by 2020.

- Cattle have been an integral part of the Agro - pastoralist economy for decades.

- Relative calm has returned in the region after the successful disarmament in 2009-2010.

- The region boast of a huge un tapped potentials of mineral deposits, virgin tourism industry, livestock investment opportunities, proximity to two international boarders, unique cultural diversity and human development capacity for any meaningful development.

- However, the region is prone to environmental vagaries such as drought, famine, floods, and disease epidemics.

Understanding Key Concepts

- **Conflict:** - disagreements between two or more people, groups or communities e.g. over the use of natural resources such as water, pasture and grazing land or disputes over ownership of livestock, land etc. (*Its normal and part of everyday life and it is not always bad as it can expose a wrong that needs correcting – Pian elder Nakapiripirit June 2009*).

- **Cattle rustling:** - denotes the struggle among the pastoralists over the possession of cattle, which have been stolen, and re-stolen so many times, that no modern court can determine who justly owns the animals. **(Cattle in Karamoja has no permanent owners as it can change ownership within space and time – Aramtori a Pokot elder – Loroo April 2009*)

- **Conflict resolution**: A variety of ways aimed at resolving conflicts from reoccurring as well as mitigating conflicts.

- **Peace building:** Policies, programs, and associated efforts to restore stability and the effectiveness of social, political, and economic institutions and structures in the wake of a war.

Understanding Key Concepts

- **Reconciliation:** A process that attempts to transform intense or lingering disagreement among parties previously engaged in a conflict into feelings of acceptance and even forgiveness of past animosities or detrimental acts.

The Karamoja conflict – *an introduction*.

- Conflicts among the Karamojong are the trademark of the vast marginalized, rugged terrain, poverty, underdevelopment, and pervasive insecurity.

- Conflicts centers mainly on livestock and the exploitation of the limited resources such as land, natural resource rights, water, and boundaries. This took place at a variety of levels, from within the household to local, regional and societal scales.

- Key drivers of conflict included:
  - limited access to water and pasture resources,
  - loss of traditional grazing land,
  - cattle raiding/rustling,
  - lack of alternative sources of livelihood from pastoralism,
  - diminishing role of traditional institutions in conflict management,
  - political incitement, and non-responsive governments policies,

The Karamoja conflict – *an introduction*.

- intertribal animosity and economic despondency.
- limited government presence in many areas in the region,
- marginalization of marginal farmers and agro-pastoralists from natural resource management decisions
- proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)

- Also, the complexity of the conflicts is heightened by the presence of international and regional boundaries that have affected agro-pastoralism through creation of administrative units, which split communities that once lived together.

The Karamoja conflict – the *corridors of no return.*

- Analysis of the Karamoja conflict and the relevant primary actors shows that the nature of conflict took the shape and form of temporal and strategic alliances involving one or more pastoral ethnic group against the other or one ethnic group against the others from the either side of the divide as shown below:

- **Kalapata- Kamion- Nawountos Cross-Border Corridors:** Key players include the Dodoth, Jie, Matheniko, Turkana, Toposa and Didinga.
  - Dodoth Vs Jie
  - Dodoth of Uganda Vs Turkana of Kenya
  - Dodoth/Jie of Uganda Vs Toposa or Didinga of South Sudan
  - Turkana/Jie/Matheniko Vs Dodoth

- **Jie/Dodoth – Apan-Loyoro- Lobeel Corridors:** Main players include the Dodoth, Jie and occasionally the Turkana.
  - Dodoth Vs the Jie
  - Dodoth/Turkana Vs the Jie
  - Jie/Turkana Vs Dodoth

- **Moroto/Loima Cross-Border Corridors**: Key players include the Matheniko, Tepes, Turkana and occasionally the Jie.
  - Matheniko of Uganda Vs the Turkana of Kenya;
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Tepes
  - Matheniko/Tepes of Uganda Vs Turkana of Kenya
  - Tepes of Uganda Vs the Turkana of Kenya
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Tepeth/ Pokot of Uganda and Kenya

The Karamoja conflict – *the corridors of no return.*

- **Matheniko/Bokora – Kautakou Corridors:** Main players include the Bokora, Matheniko and occasionally the Jie, andPian.
  - Matheniko Vs Bokora
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Bokora
  - Bokora/Jie Vs Matheniko
  - Bokora/Pian Vs Matheniko
  - Matheniko/Pian Vs Bokora

- **Bokora/Pian/Pokot/Matheniko - corridors:** Main players include the Bokora, Pian, Pokot and the Matheniko.
  - Pian Vs Bokora and vise versa
  - Bokora/Matheniko Vs Pian
  - The Pokot Vs Pian

- **Pokot/Pian/Matheniko – Corridors:** Main players include the Pokot and Pian and occasionally the Bokora, and Matheniko.
  - Pokot/Pokot of Uganda and Kenya Vs the Pian of Uganda
  - Pokot/Pokot/Tepes Vs the Pian of Uganda
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Tepeth/ Pokot of Uganda and Kenya

The Karamoja conflict – *the corridors of no return.*

- **Bokora/Jie/Matheniko – Tooror – Lopeei Corridors:** Main players include the Jie, Bokora, Matheniko and occasionally the Turkana.
  - Pokot/Pokot of Uganda and Kenya Vs the Pian of Uganda
  - Pokot/Pokot/Tepes Vs the Pian of Uganda
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Tepeth/ Pokot of Uganda and Kenya

- **Matheniko/Bokora – Kautakou Corridors:** Main players include the Bokora, Matheniko and occasionally the Jie, andPian.
  - Matheniko Vs Bokora
  - Matheniko/Turkana Vs Bokora
  - Bokora/Jie Vs Matheniko
  - Bokora/Pian Vs Matheniko
  - Matheniko/Pian Vs Bokora

The Karamoja conflict – *the corridors of no return.*

- **Bokora/Pian/Pokot/Matheniko - corridors:** Main players include the Bokora, Pian, Pokot and the Matheniko.
  - Pian Vs Bokora and vise versa
  - Bokora/Matheniko Vs Pian
  - The Pokot Vs Pian

- **Karamoja Vs Acholi, Lango, Teso, Sebei and other road users corridors.** Main players include the Karimojong, traders, politicians, security agents and key individuals (racketeers from Acholi, Lango, Teso, Sebei regions)
  - This groupings are affected by 20% of the spillover of the Karamoja conflict

Reconciliation and conflict resolution – *who are the primary and secondary actors in the conflict nexus?*

- **The traditional/cultural leaders system (male/women elders, Foretellers).** Consciously, this traditional institutions/assembly continue to perpetuate and preside over belief systems, prejudices, practices and stereotypes some of which undercut the peace and conflict sensitive efforts in the region.

- **The Youth groups (15-35 years)**: these categories are both perpetuators and victims of their own actionsas they are easily conscripted into the process of warrior-ship as a social norm into manhood thus unleashing deadly terror and violence to its victims.

- **The post youth group (35-45)** locally referred to as **Ngikosowa – buffalos** they are the masters of this conflict full of war lords (**Ngikaruok) – Celebs or medalist**. Often they are forgotten as they are neither youth or elders.

- **The Women (young and old):** silent fuel and burners of the conflict, as their influence reaches far beyond the emotions physically and emotionally.

- **The local leaders including political and opinion leaders.** They play a bigger role in defining the scale of conflict through sentimental and utterances triggers conflict (CEWARN/IGAD 2004),

- **The business men/women and traders:** they are considered the new players who have been sucked into the criminality and commercialization of cattle raiding who purchase the spoils of raids and   loaded them onto trucks and transported to faraway markets from the conflict scene. They operate from remote areas or neighboring regions of Lango, Teso, Acholi, Sebei, Bugisu, including government institutions.

The Karamoja conflict – *historical perspectives.*

- The Karamoja' conflict predominantly is the result of traditional cattle raiding/restocking incidents, plus violent competition over access to scarce pasture and water.

- Raids were a result of an attempt to maintain optimal herd sizes in order to ensure communal survival or to replenish lost stock as a result of huge livestock losses to disasters resulting from cattle diseases, drought, famine and hazards propelled by social disruptions.

The Karamoja conflict – *historical perspectives*.

- Conflict in Karamoja has traditionally been managed by elders, who comprise the customary authority. Through the traditional structures and institutions, cattle raids were sanctioned by the elders of respective communities.

- Elders of a given community have their own internal hierarchy organized to varying degrees; they played the role in promoting social harmony, disseminating information, and identifying criminals in the community, disciplining errant youth, mediating disputes, and negotiating peace

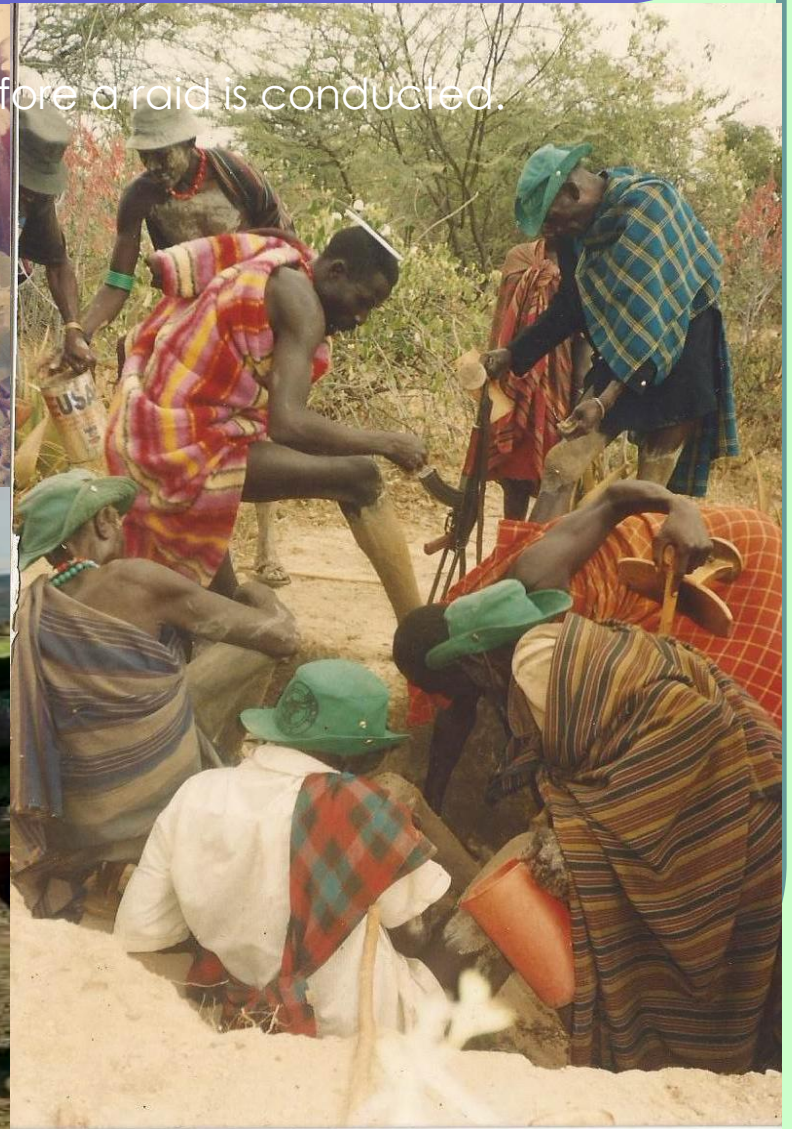# The Karamoja conflict – *historical perspectives.*

- Elders and seers also would play a major role in the planning and execution of battles and also in conflict management and reconciliation.

- While women played the **catalysts roles** through: songs, provocation, dancing, dressing of the hero warriors and preparation of the required food supplies for the raid.

- Notably, during this raids, the fatalities were not huge; even women and children used not to be harmed by the raiders in comparison to those days when the AK 47 rifles - the favored weapon of choice for cattle raiders.

The Karamoja conflict – *historical perspectives.*

The Karacunas raiders would receive blessings before a raid is conducted.

The Karamoja conflict – *historical perspectives*.

- Raiding had rules to be followed and any violation of such would tantamount to punishment, fine and even death.

- Traditional rituals like cleansing and reintegration ceremonies would be conducted if for example one person kills a woman, child or disable etc.

- Despites retrogressive cultural practices, over the past 10-15 years, the era of the gun within the Karamoja and elsewhere saw a breakdown of the traditional governance system and redefined the conflict dynamics including key drivers, accelerants, and relevant primary actors, changed in size, including scale and magnitude in space and time.

The Karamoja conflict – *what went wrong?*

- The conflict was out of hand as raids took a form of violent **survival response** by social organizations to kill or maim any human they come across in the course of their survival

- Consequently severe food insecurity, economic vulnerability and despondency fueled by the unregulated and widespread availability of small arms among the impoverished youth transformed cattle rustling into an **economic activity**.

- Moreover this factor has also been reinforced by bad leadership and poor governance especially the formal system. (**easily compromised**)

The Karamoja conflict – effects

The Karamoja conflict – *what went wrong?*

- Increasingly, **cattle raids became commercialized and criminalized** creating gangs of Ngikaruwok (celeb warriors) that exist for purposes of stealing cattle for sale (Mkutu K, 2000).

- To further complicate the whole issues, **there emerged new players** who have been sucked into the criminality and commercialization of cattle raiding; this includes politicians, traders and gangs among others (Rabuogi Ahere, 2011) who purchased the spoils of raids, loaded animals onto trucks and transported to faraway markets from the conflict scene (CEWARN/IGAD, 2004).

- Evidently, the apparent increase in inter/intra-pastoralist conflict as a result of the above factors deprived the customary institutions particularly elders in conflict management and reconciliation experience.

The Karamoja conflict – *what went wrong?*

- In contrast **the position, authority and role of elders in planning, blessing, execution and eventually conflict management** overtime was undermined by commercial, political, educational and administrative changes.

- Moreover, the central government employed a divide-and-rule strategy, encouraging mutual resentment between different ethnic groups Instead of strengthening the traditional dispute management and conflict resolution mechanisms to foster community safety and protection.

- As traditional power structures got eroded, social norms that once moderated raiding dissolved; raids in Karamoja increasingly was carried out by young men for their own personal gain. Thus the displacement, conflict and growing tensions and violence, as well as rivalry with state authorities, combined to weaken the capacity of traditional leaders to resolve conflicts.

Reconciliation and conflict resolution - *different players, one goal*
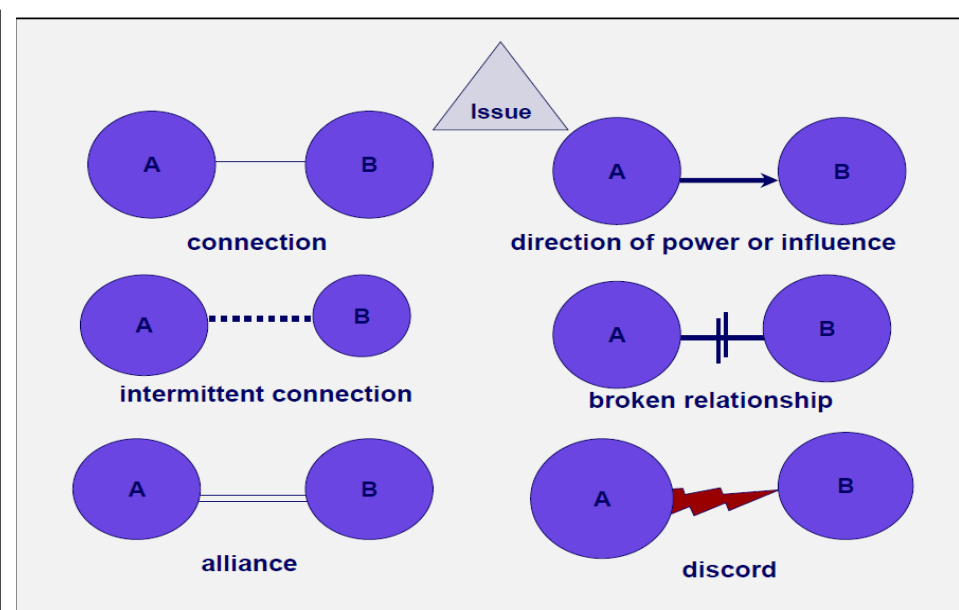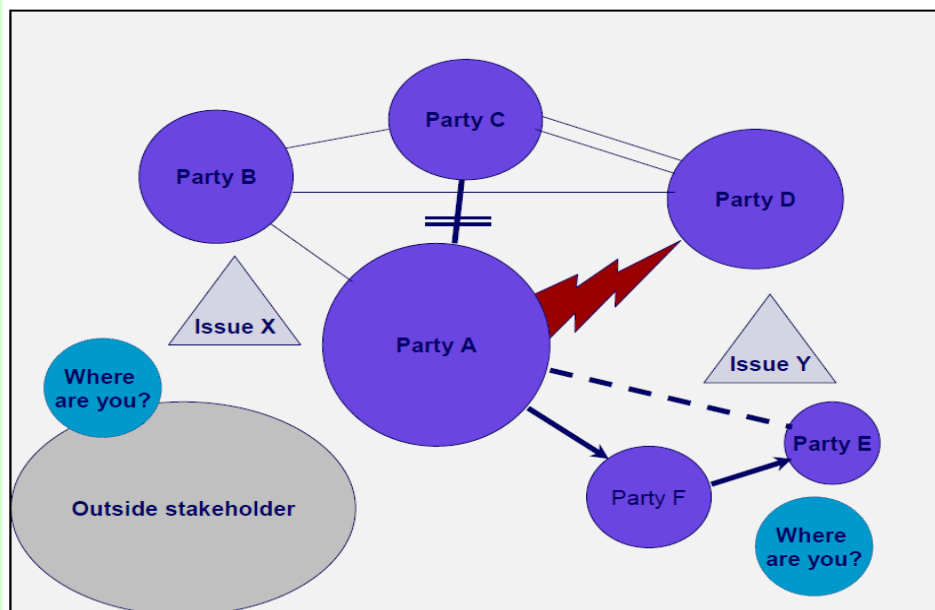
- Various strategies have been adopted by different stakeholders - government and development partners to address and resolve the Karamoja conflict and insecurity; increase development opportunities and improve human security.

- I will highlight personal experiences and local community initiatives including experiences of other development partners that has worked. I will also provide key lessons learnt and challenges in reconciliation and conflict resolutions.

First things first

- First allow me to recognize the efforts of this partners in enhancing reconciliation and conflict resolution in Karamoja:
  1. **Local NGOs/CBOs:** KADP, WAPIK, CoU-KDDS, OCODI, Riamriam, MADEPO, MONARLIP, DADO, KOPEIN, KAPDA, Warriors Squad Foundation.

  2. **International/National NGOs:** IRC, CONCERN, Caritas, SCiU, Oxfam, ADRA, PAG,

  3. **UN Agencies:** UNDP,OHCHR, Unicef, WFP, FAO, UN Women, WHO, UNFPA,

  4. **State Agencies:** the UPDF, and other security agencies

  5. **District Local Governments:** all districts of Karamoja.

  6. **Religious bodies:** Anglican church, Catholic church, Moslem and Pentecostal churches.

  7. **Individuals** (dead or alive) who laid their lives for peace in Karamoja.
  8. **Among others**

Reconciliation and conflict resolution - *different players, one goal*

- For reconciliation and conflict resolutions to be effective, binding and sustainable, one need to map and analyze the different parties involved, including understanding the conflict dynamics including key drivers, accelerants, shared resources and relevant primary actors before any intervention is thought.

- E.g. shared resources, weapons used, passive players, influential players, internal and external factors, beliefs, taboos, etc.

Dialogue enhances reconciliation.

- Dialogue is a fundamental component of peacemaking that draws participants from as many parts of the community as possible to exchange information face-to-face, share personal stories and experiences, honestly express perspectives, clarify viewpoints, and develop solutions to community concerns.

- Due to the breakdown of traditional systems, a number of peace actors organized community dialogues like peace meetings between rival pastoral groups to promote good relationships and confidence building. As a result there was:
  - Improvement among neighboring groups building bridges of unity and reconciliation.
  - new relationships where it was broken was re-established.
  - Warring people who were not typically talking to one another wre brought together.

- Government agencies and development partners roles acted the facilitative roles with resources.

- While a dialogue process may not necessarily lead to a peace process or eventual settlement of a conflict, it is a necessary pre-requisite for it. Of equal importance is the fact that a dialogue process can often have positive effects such as a reduction of violence, even if the eventual solution still remains out of reach.

Dialogue enhances reconciliation.

- Effective dialogues do the following:
- ***Move towards solutions rather than continue to express or analyze the problem.*** An emphasis on personal responsibility moves the discussion away from finger-pointing or naming enemies and towards constructive common action.

- ***Reach beyond the usual boundaries.*** When fully developed, dialogues can involve the entire community, offering opportunities for new, unexpected partnerships. New partnerships can develop when participants listen carefully and respectfully to each other. A search for solutions focuses on the common good as participants are encouraged to broaden their horizons and build relationships outside their comfort zones.

- ***Unite divided communities through a respectful, informed sharing of local racial history and its consequences for different people in today's society***. The experience of "walking through history" together can lead to healing.

- ***Aim for a change of heart, not just a change of mind***. Dialogues go beyond sharing and understanding to transforming participants. While the process begins with the individual, it eventually involves groups and institutions. Ultimately, dialogues can affect how policies are made.

Enhance and support cross border peace initiative that promote dialogue.

- One of the effective ways of the most effective ways of enhancing reconciliation is through enhancing connectors to bridge the broken relations between two parties.

- To enhance peaceful coexistence, deliberate efforts were put in place to support cross border activities that bring two or more communities together.

- For example:
  - Joint market have contributed to peaceful co-existence, while at the same time improving economic opportunities.

  - Joint resettlement areas like Moruiti between the Jie and Dodoth, were opened.

Examples:

- A number of road network (security roads) were opened using labor intensive means as means of easing movement between communities as well as a livelihood enhancer. (Kacheri – Lobalangit road, kalapata – Kamion road; Kakomongole – Lolachat road; Karenga – Biira; Lolelia – Kacheri among others.

- A number of shared Dams (water point) were opened up as a means of bringing pastoralist together e.g. Moruita Dam was opened with support from UNDP to bring the Pian, Chekwi and Pokot together
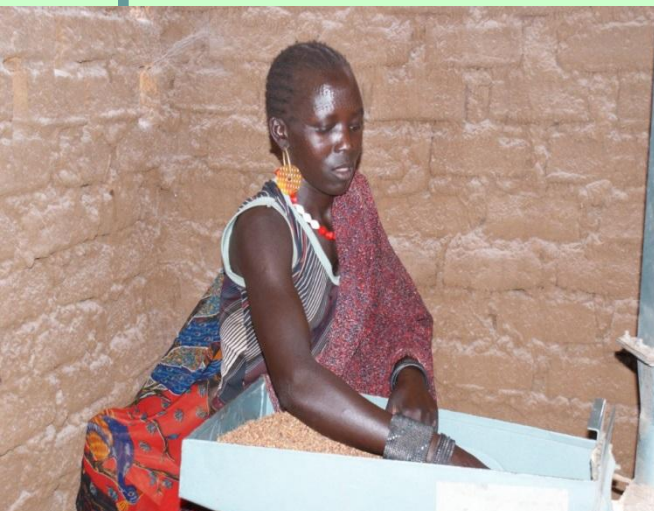
The power of women and youth groups

- The use of groups in reconciliation and conflict resolution has been proven successful. Groups within the local communities exist and are largely modeled and or anchored on the respective communities' traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and approaches.

- In fact the current stability in Karamoja can be attributed to the women and youth peace groups. They combined theatre drama and songs to appeal to all audience to embrace peace, reconciliation and development.

- A number of women and youth groups were supported with livelihoods enhancement projects by a number of partners e.g. knitting, boda-boda cycles, grinding mills, farming, mechanics, businesses, VSLA etc.
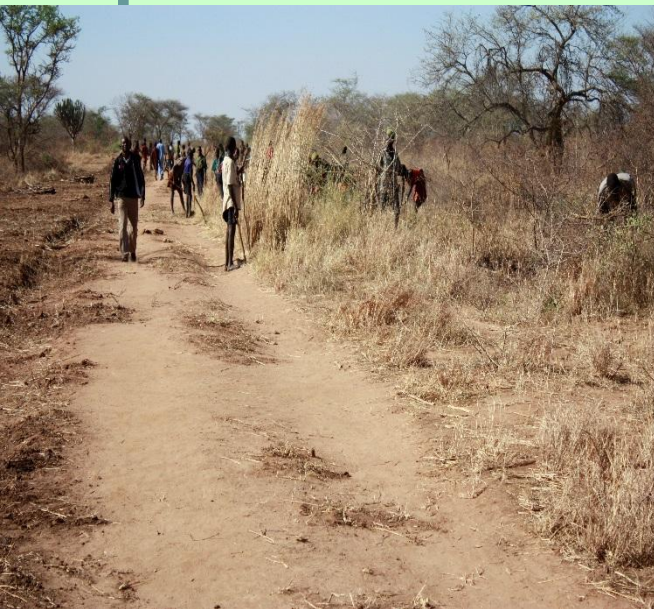
Conflict transformation – livelihoods enhancement.

- One of the most effective ways of addressing resources related conflict is through supporting community owned projects that bring direct incomes to individuals and households involved and affected by conflict.

- All interventions should aimed at transforming and generating opportunities for conflict resolution or conflict management. This should aim at diversify livelihoods options, create new opportunities and dimensions.

- **Remember** an idle mind is the devil workshop. The success of the peace process in Karamoja is that

Sports for peace.

- Sport possesses unique attributes because it is universal popular – transcending cultural, socio-economic and political boundaries. Sport is enjoyable for participants and spectators alike and can be invoked in virtually any community in the world.

- Sport for peace teams (mixed) have been supported with sport powerfully used as a communication platform for social mobilization to reach out to the vast numbers of people to address a broad range of social cultural issues ,

Peace ambassadors – music artists

- A number of former warriors have been supported to put their experiences into educative songs and music used in peace building.

- Through the songs a number of warriors have abandoned the practice of cattle rustling and embraced other livelihoods options. Most of the music artist re former raiders and have become real peace ambassadors reaching out to places not easily reached.

- This has also been reinforced by the use of the FM radios in the region that relay the peace messages in the songs.

Share the story - *testimonies and experience sharing heals*

- At first when testimony and experience sharing was started, it was very emotional and compelling, however, this has proved to be the most effecting way of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing that cut across all age groups.

- When integrated into Christian teaching, the impact is far reaching.

Other strategies includes:

- Recovery of stolen animals by the security forces bridges confidence.

- Strengthening the capacity of various stakeholders in peace building and conflict resolution
  - peace and security committees at sub county and district level
  - District local governments
  - civil society organization
  - Conflict mapping and assessment

- Religious events – peace prayer, ecumenical events, peace match, vigil

- Radio talk shows involving key members, pre-recorded peace messaging.

- Conflict sensitive approach

Take home ratio.

- Although the number of guns has significantly reduced and silent, the adverse development challenge after the disarmament is far reaching since majority of the disarmed youth, including women have not been fully integrated into the formal socio-economic livelihood system.

- The region may slip back to the dark days of conflict if the following are not addressed:
  - Syndicate land grabs using government institutions e.g. Uganda Prisons, UWA, UIA,
  - Loss of traditional grazing land to prospective miner, investors without compensation.
  - Poor service delivery at all levels.
  - Gross and localized corruption and mismanagement of development projects
  - High poverty levels and economic despondency
  - High formal and informal unemployment