Communal Conflicts Across the Kenyan-Ugandan Border

Type of conflict | Sub | Intensity | 3
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Conflict Locality | Eastern Africa | Time | 1944 – ongoing
Countries | Kenya, Uganda | Resources | Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

Livestock raiding and competition for water and pastures lead to cycles of reciprocal violence between pastoralist groups in the Kenyan-Ugandan border region. More frequent and severe droughts as well as the proliferation of weapons from war-torn neighbour countries are further aggravating this situation.
Conceptual Model

**Climate Change**
- More Frequent / Intense Extreme Weather Events

**Environmental Change**
- Natural Resource Scarcity

**Intermediary Mechanisms**
- Change in Access / Availability of Natural Resources
- Grievances between Societal Groups

**Fragility and Conflict Risks**

**Social and Economic Drivers**

**Context Factors**
- Water-stressed Area
- History of Conflict
- Low Level of Economic Development
- Weak Institutions
- Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water
Conflict History

The border area between Kenya and Uganda, also known as ‘Karamoja cluster’ is home to several pastoralist groups. As a way to cope with erratic rainfall and generally harsh environmental conditions, these groups have frequently engaged in violent conflicts over livestock, water and grazing resources. In recent times, these have been exacerbated by the increased availability of modern weapons from war-torn neighbour countries, as well as a series of particularly serious droughts. Due to the porousness of international boundaries in the Karamoja cluster these conflicts often oppose groups from different countries, such as the Pokot and Turkana from Kenya and the Dodoth, Jie, Sabiny and several Karimojong groups from Uganda. Between 1998 and 2008, cross-border attacks between these groups amounted to more than 800 human deaths, with about 450 fatalities reported for the year 2000 alone (UCDP, 2014).

Drought, automatic weapons and porous borders

Increased availability of modern weapons, the gradual erosion of customary conflict mitigation institutions, the lack of adequate state protection as well as frequent droughts and the general vulnerability of pastoralist communities are among the main factors contributing to communal conflicts in the Karamoja cluster (Powell, 2010; Stark et al., 2011; Huho, 2012).

Yet, the porousness of the Kenyan-Ugandan border provides additional opportunities for livestock raiding, as raiders are able to escape across the border and evade prosecution. On several occasions, groups such as the Pokot have also moved across the border to avoid disarmament by the Kenyan Army. Moreover, the permeability of the border facilitates the illicit transit of weapons (Leff, 2009; Matthysen et al., 2008).

Challenges of cross-border peace-building

Both, the governments of Kenya and Uganda, as well as numerous NGOs, church-based organisations and grassroots initiatives have engaged in various strategies to curb violence across the Kenyan-Ugandan border. Yet, the effectiveness of these measures has been put in doubt and fear of attacks from groups across the border remains an ongoing concern among local communities. Especially the projected increase in drought frequency over the next years could lead to a renewed flaring up of cross-border violence.

Resolution Efforts

In the past, the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have adopted heavy handed military disarmament strategies in the cross border region, which have been criticised for excessive brutality and for making disarmed communities susceptible to attacks by other groups, which were able to avoid disarmament by crossing the border (Powell, 2010; Stark et al., 2011).

Towards more participatory approaches to conflict prevention

More recently, both governments have begun working more closely with civil society in resolving cross-border disputes. Conflict prevention through sensitization campaigns, mediation interventions and
negotiations for the safe return of stolen cattle are core elements of this strategy. For instance, local organisations such as Riam Riam (in Kenya) and KOPEIN (in Uganda) have acted as intermediary between communities, local government, military and police forces, Human Rights Commission and other NGOs (Oxfam and SNV), representing the interests and security needs of local communities, whilst promoting dialogue and peaceful resource sharing. Most notably they helped Turkana and Dodoth communities from Kenya and Uganda reaching a provisional peace agreement in 2005 (Leff, 2009).

Cross-border peace-building initiatives
The International Rescue Committee is supporting cultural activities and other grassroots initiatives that promote peace across the Uganda-Kenya border. The Karamoja Cluster Project (KCP), a collaborative project between the University for Peace (UPEACE), Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) and Children Peace Initiative (CPI-Kenya), the Pian-Pokot-Sabiny Cross Border conflict Programme, as well as the Turkana-Pokot-Sabiny Cross-Border Conflict Management Initiative, engage local communities across the border and promote cooperative sharing of pastoral resources (Stark et al., 2011; Leff, 2009).

ACTED is building pastoral field schools and training communal animal health workers so as to link and involve different communities from both sides of the border. These organizations have helped improving the situation of communities in the region. Yet, in most cases, their activities have remained small in scope and thus not received much attention from the international and donor community (Lambroschini, 2011).

Need for further coordination and cooperation
Main challenges to cross-border peacebuilding initiatives remain. The implication of multiple stakeholders and the coordination of multiple actions across the border entail high organisational costs, whereas most local organisations and leaders lack the necessary capacities. Disregard of traditional conflict mitigation institutions and lack of active community involvement further compound these problems. Most importantly, disarmament needs to be better coordinated across the border and the security of disarmed communities needs to be improved (Lambroschini, 2011; Powell, 2010).

Despite increasing peacebuilding efforts, the continuation of violent livestock raiding, increasingly frequent droughts and the resulting disruption of social and economic life continue to impede efforts to reduce vulnerability and conflict in the Kenyan-Ugandan cross-border area.
### Intensities & Influences

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<td>Violent Conflict</td>
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### Resolution Success

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<td>There was no reduction in violence.</td>
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<td><strong>Reduction in geographical scope</strong></td>
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<td>There has been no reduction in geographical scope.</td>
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<td><strong>Increased capacity to address grievance in the future</strong></td>
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<td>The capacity to address grievances in the future has increased.</td>
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<td><strong>Grievance Resolution</strong></td>
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<td>Grievances have been partially addressed.</td>
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<td><strong>Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity</strong></td>
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Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

**Cooperation**
Both the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have begun working closely with civil society in resolving cross-border disputes, through sensitization campaigns, mediation interventions, and negotiations for the safe return of stolen cattle.

**Promoting peaceful relations**
Several cross-border peace-building initiatives are engaging local communities and promoting cooperative sharing of pastoral resources.

Resources and Materials

References with URL
Lambroschini, S. (2011). Using cross border programming to address cross border dynamics in Karamoja (Uganda) and Pokot (Kenya)
Powell, J. (2010). Karamoja: A literature review
UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia. Kenya [accessed 2014-12-12]
UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia. Uganda [accessed 2014-12-12]

Further information
https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/karamoja—kenya-uganda-transboundary