

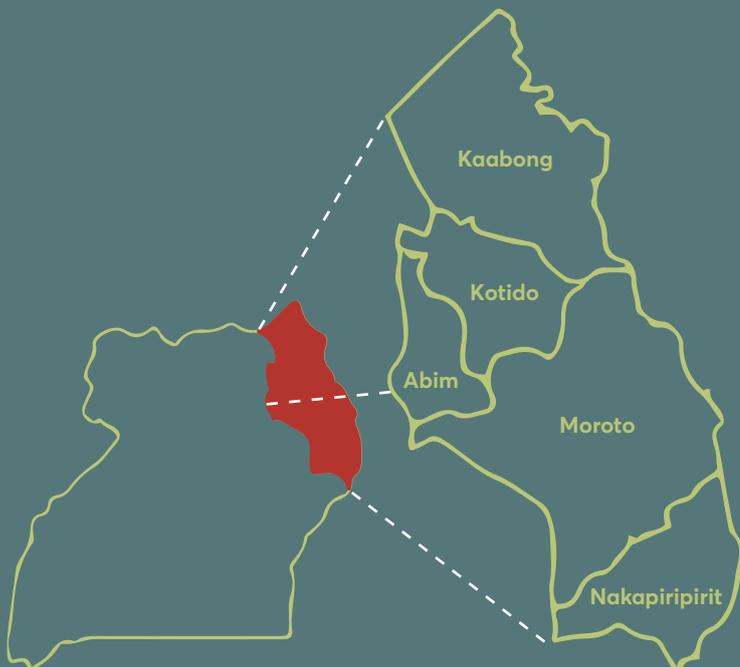
# Localised Climate-Related Security Risk Assessment:

A Case Study: Kaabong, Karamoja Sub-Region, Uganda

An overview of climate-related security risks with concrete solutions and recommendations on how to address them.



# OVERVIEW



Map of the Karamoja Region and Districts, Uganda

Districts of Karamoja

Karamoja Region  
Uganda

**K**aabong district is part of the Karamoja region in north-eastern Uganda. It is a semi-arid district characterised by changing weather patterns, dry spells, and competition over water and pasture. Kaabong district further has a history of armed cattle rustling within and across the border with its fragile neighbouring pastoral communities of Kenya and South Sudan.

Recognising the links between climate change and fragility, local actors<sup>1</sup> in Kaabong used the present climate-related security risk assessment (henceforth, the risk assessment) to identify and develop a roadmap to address climate-related security risks at the local level. During the assessment, the Resident District Commissioner of Kaabong affirmed the need to localise climate, peace and security action and stated that 'the effects of climate change and conflicts are felt daily, and therefore local actors need to understand how to respond.'

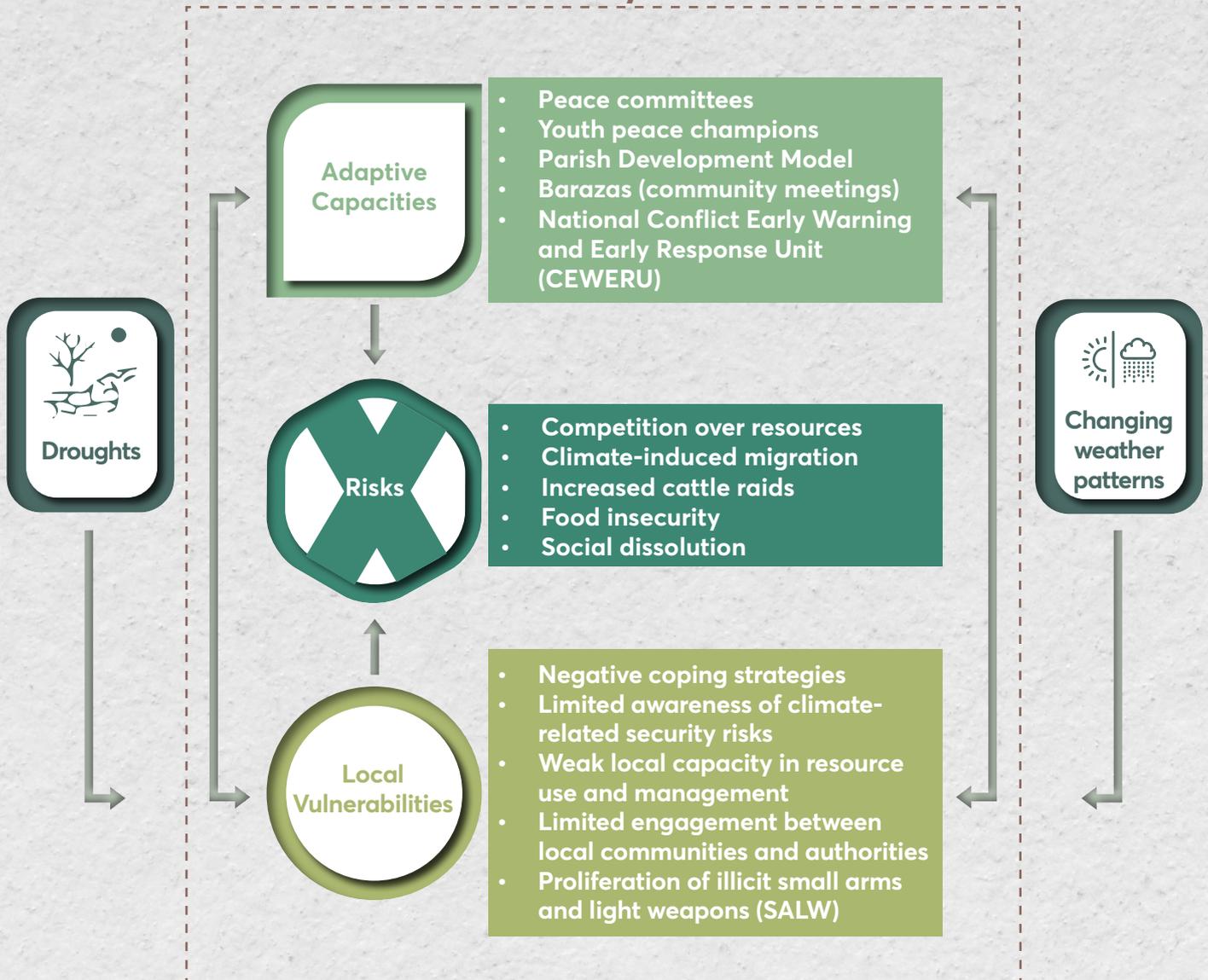
The risk assessment applies GPPAC's Step-by-Step Guidance Note for Localising Climate, Peace and Security<sup>2</sup> in Kaabong. It outlines the key climate-related security risks and shares concrete recommendations on how local peace actors, donors, and policy-makers can adjust their responses to climate-related security risks in order to improve peace and security in Kaabong.

1. Local actors are understood as civil society organisations (CSOs), peace committees, local governments, security organs, women and youth groups, cross-border peace committees, conservancy groups, among others.

2. The Guidance Note was developed on the basis of the toolbox developed by the UN Climate and Security Mechanism (UN CSM). See more, UN Climate and Security Mechanism, 2020, 'Checklist to help climate-proof political analysis'. Available at: [https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/csm\\_toolbox-4-checklist.pdf](https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/csm_toolbox-4-checklist.pdf)

# Interlinkages between Climate Change and Insecurity in Kaabong

## Local Community Risk Scenario



## Solutions:

- Support community's adaptive capacities in resource use and management
- Ensure that all interventions are informed by existing work of local climate and peacebuilding experts
- Promote and facilitate inter-ethnic and community dialogue
- Fully integrate indigenous and local knowledge on climate, peace, and security in the existing early warning mechanisms
- Scale up climate-related security risk assessments at the local level
- Develop a cross-border climate, peace, and security strategy

# The Climate-Related Security Risk Assessment Process: Opportunities and Challenges

In Kaabong, the *inclusive and participatory design of the risk assessment* enabled local actors to develop a context-specific risk assessment that builds on existing local realities. The *multistakeholder co-creation process* further assisted in obtaining community buy-in and placed local actors at the centre of decision-making - particularly regarding what needs to be done and when.

## STEP 01 UNDERSTANDING THE LINKS BETWEEN CLIMATE AND SECURITY:

**Capacity building for local communities supports the sustainability of climate, peace and security action in the long-term:** At the start of the risk assessment, the capacity to articulate the links between climate and fragility was limited among local actors. While they had a contextual understanding of the situation, they often found it difficult to draw parallels between climate change and fragility at the local level that could have effectively informed their adaptive capacities. Some of the effective awareness methods used were radio talk shows, door-door sensitisation campaigns, and community forums (i.e., Barazas (community meetings)<sup>3</sup>, village meetings, traditional ceremonies, and church service). This work was organised by climate experts together with security actors to talk about issues of climate change and security and educate communities on how to engage with and address the two issues in an integrated manner. The risk assessment process showed that when properly equipped and empowered, local community actors can effectively utilise existing mechanisms<sup>4</sup> and optimally engage all relevant stakeholders<sup>5</sup> in localising climate, peace and security. Furthermore, effective awareness-raising methods inspired local communities to develop new sustainable tools and processes, allowing them to lead responses, inform relevant stakeholders, and encourage joint action. See Step 1 in the *Guidance Note* for additional information.

Specific examples of action informed by risk assessment:

- The risk assessment spearheaded *conflict-sensitive community initiatives*. One woman trainee started an innovative and easily adaptable practice

3. See more, Uganda Human Rights Commission (n.d), 'Human Rights Baraza'. Available at: [https://www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/library/crisis\\_prevention\\_and\\_recovery/publication\\_2.html](https://www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/publication_2.html)

4. Existing mechanisms include door-to-door awareness, local councils, social gatherings (i.e., churches, burials, traditional ceremonies), existing peace and security structures (i.e., peace committees), traditional systems (i.e., elders, foretellers, kraal leaders), army, among others.

5. **Local participating stakeholders included:** Kaabong district's local government, community peace committees, religious leaders, school environmental clubs, cross-border peace committee, youth peace champion groups, range land conservation groups, traditional leaders, women representatives, private sector, the Office of the Resident District Commissioner, and community-based organisations. Then, local experts in the area of climate change and security mapped out external stakeholders. **External stakeholders included:** the agricultural research centre in Karamoja, national early warning and early response coordinators, national focal points under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, SDG Secretariat under the Office of the Prime Minister, thematic national-level experts, and regional actors like the Inter-Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD).

of using drip irrigation<sup>6</sup>. She also trains other women to do the same under the auspices of St. Monica Women's Centre and Kaabong Catholic Church<sup>7</sup>.

- The St. Joseph Peace Champions Group established *nursery beds for drought-resistant trees*<sup>8</sup>. The group gave out 50 per cent of the seedlings to communities, with the other 50 per cent sold to provide a source of income to disarmed youth former combatants.
- During the training organised as part of risk assessment, the National Forest Authority offered to provide *free seedlings to school environmental clubs and community conservancies* that were present.
- Communities developed a contextualised '*community early action*' approach<sup>9</sup>. For this, they used the information gathered during the risk assessment to share rainfall predictions for May and June 2022 and facilitate community action to plant fast-maturing crops. As a result, for the first time in many years, community members in Kaabong testify that they had a relatively good harvest from August to October 2022. Community early action also enabled security alerts that minimised the damage to crops by migratory animals (like elephants) and prevented a number of armed cattle raiding missions by neighbouring communities.

## STEP 02 UNITING KEY ACTORS AROUND A COMMON GOAL:

**H**orizontal and vertical partnerships encourage joint coordination and planning: During the risk assessment, existing structures, capacities, resources, and interventions were mapped out to identify what processes can be utilised to sustain comprehensive climate, peace and security action at the local level. *Horizontal* collaboration of actors within the local government departments has improved as a result of the joint discussions on the context in Kaabong. Local data collectors worked with the natural resource officer (in charge of environment and climate-related issues) and the District Internal Officer (in charge of security) to discuss how each stakeholder's work connects to issues of climate, peace and security and the ways to better support one another. Experts working on climate, peace and security respectively jointly built a comprehensive understanding of the climate-related security risks in Kaabong. This further helped joint coordination and planning among the stakeholders. Furthermore, the participatory and multistakeholder design of the project fostered *vertical* information sharing between the community, local government, and national and regional actors – especially between informal, traditional actors and formal government structures. Government actors now recognise the value of Kaabong's indigenous and local knowledge. From July 2022, Nabuin – the zonal centre of the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARO)<sup>10</sup> consulted with the traditional foretellers to harmonise their findings before releasing information and advising communities on when to plan for rain. See Step 2 in the *Guidance Note* for additional information.

6. Specifically, the trainee watered trees such as mango trees by burying a small waterfilled jerrycan pierced with a hole at the bottom in the soil near a tree - to drip and feed the tree slowly, potentially over an entire week.

7. Cecore Uganda 2023, 'Climate Change & Conflict Nexus'. Available at: <https://youtu.be/57vV80V1Xok>

8. Id.

9. Community actors actively participate in data collection and therefore can more effectively utilise the information collected in a form of early action. The 'community early action' approach is premised on the notion that the community would collaborate with the government on early response and not simply wait for the government to act. .

10. Nabuin oversees meteorological issues in the Karamoja sub-region.

## STEP 03

### DEVELOPING DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS:

**B**uilding on existing local structures, capacities, resources, and interventions ensured the sustainability of efforts: Putting in place measures to continue the process of regular assessing and responding to climate change risks at the local level after the project phases out has been imperative to the risk assessment in Kaabong. See *Step 3 in the [Guidance Note](#) for additional information.*

The following are specific examples of integrating the climate, peace and security analysis in existing action:

- Local data collectors integrated climate-related localised indicators based on indigenous and traditional knowledge and alternative climate-related incident reporting into the *National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU) system*<sup>11</sup>.
- *Kaabong's youth peace champion structures*<sup>12</sup> have easily incorporated climate, peace and security messaging in their ongoing community peace sensitisation work.
- Local government structures incorporated interventions required by the risk assessment in the *government's 'Parish Development Model'*<sup>13</sup>– which uses Parish structures to disseminate information and encourage action on climate change and security at the community level.
- The risk assessment enabled *community groups*<sup>14</sup> that applied for support under government financial schemes to incorporate climate change and peace awareness into their proposals, inspiring climate-security analysis to become a part of the everyday fabric of Kaabong district and sub-county planning processes.

## Climate-Related Security Risks in Kaabong

## STEP 03 & 04

The following climate-related security risks and solutions are based on local perceptions and experiences<sup>15</sup> brought together by the community data collectors using a locally-developed data collection tool. The data was then shared with the project staff, community elders, and relevant local government authorities on a monthly basis for analysis.

See *Steps 3 and 4 in the [Guidance Note](#) for additional information.*

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11. Read more about the National Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit (CEWERU) of Uganda at: [https://ceweru.mia.go.ug/?page\\_id=67](https://ceweru.mia.go.ug/?page_id=67).

12. Read more about Kaabong's Youth Peace Champions at: <https://www.cecore.or.ug/projects/youth-peace-champions-project-phase-ii-2022/>

13. The Parish Development Model is a government bottom-up approach to community economic development and transformation. The approach was launched by the President of Uganda in May 2022. Read more about the Parish Development Model at: <https://molg.go.ug/parish-development-model/>

14. Some community groups include St. Joseph youth peace champions group (in the Kalapata sub-county) and Lois (in the Kathile south sub-county) reintegrated warriors group.

15. The project reached 372 people through direct engagements (such as during the training of trainers and community Barazas) over a period of 12 months – 257 male and 115 female, including 147 youth (109 male youth and 38 female youth).

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## DROUGHT → COMPETITION OVER RESOURCES

**Droughts increase competition over scarce resources resulting in armed fights among pastoral communities.** Armed cattle raids by neighbouring communities and those across the border in Kenya and South Sudan are prevalent within the Karamoja region. The practice of armed cattle raids was initially a traditional way of restocking, but now the trend involves revenge attacks and stealing animals for sale as a source of livelihood during prolonged droughts. The increase in armed fights further leads to the high proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Kaabong and subsequently increases the frequency of SGBV. Sub-counties like Kamion and Timu (occupied by an ethnic minority group, the Ik) regularly suffer from attacks, looting of household items, rape of women, and armed fights between armed cattle raiders. As a result, the Ik have abandoned animal rearing as a coping mechanism to minimise raids.

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## CATTLE RAIDS → NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES

**Armed cattle raids and fights contribute steadily to worsening the impacts of climate change hazards.** The communities are forced to cut down thousands of trees to fence-off households or burn bushes as a safety measure to protect themselves from attackers. Between October and December 2022, for example, a number of Kaabong community members migrated to a sub-county called Morungole, which was relatively safe and had viable pasture resources. This not only sparked fights among the different grazing communities but also made several places completely bare<sup>16</sup> as a result of cutting trees to fence off new manyattas (local settlements). Raiding and animal disease outbreaks also lead to the loss of animals, which are often a source of livelihood in the pastoralist Kaabong<sup>17</sup>. The loss of livelihoods forces communities to venture more into survival alternatives that are harmful to the environment, like charcoal burning. During community meetings in Kaabong and through local dialogues, local actors concluded that the community's capacity to respond to these intertwined risks is weak due to 1) the lack of channels to obtain inclusive and practical information about climate-related security risks, 2) weak local capacity in resource use and management, and 3) limited engagement between local communities and authorities mandated to respond to climate change hazards and insecurity. Ultimately, this confluence leads to overgrazing, increasing environmental degradation, and worsening the impacts of climate hazards like flooding by destabilising the local soil.

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16. Thousands of trees need to be felled to fence-off each local manyatta.

17. Out of the 52 kraals that Kaabong used to have, over a nearly three-year period only 2 are remaining – representing 94% loss due to cattle raiding, based on local government data.

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## DROUGHT → CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION

### **Droughts lead to the movement of people into Kaabong.**

*People from neighbouring pastoral communities, including Turkana of Kenya and sometimes Toposa and Didinga of South Sudan, come to Kaabong in search of pasture, water, and artisan mining. This climate-induced migration further increases high competition over already scarce resources. Droughts also facilitate the internal movement of people as a result of insecurity and lack of resources. For example, from October – December 2022, a number of community members of Turkana (Kenya) and sub-counties from within the Kaabong district moved to the sub-county of Morungole for relative safety and comfortable pasture, sparking fights among the grazing communities.*

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## CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS → FOOD INSECURITY AND SOCIAL DISSOLUTION

### **Shifts in wildlife animal migratory routes due to changing weather patterns and water availability destroy crops, worsen animal attacks, and contribute to food insecurity:**

*According to local experiences in Kaabong, the migratory periods for animals have changed. For example, elephants' migratory periods used to be between August and October; however, now they are unpredictable. Changes in weather patterns and water availability disturb wildlife and alter their natural habitats, leading to animal interferences with crops and human life, destroying crops and thus contributing to insecurity. In 2022, major physical destruction was caused by wild animals like elephants in sub-counties within the Kaabong district, including Loyoro, Lobongia, and Kathile. Although Kaabong district and the rest of Karamoja region are prone to food insecurity due to prolonged droughts, the hazards that arise from the animal destruction of crops further expose communities to risks – such as hunger, thefts, road ambushes, an increase of practices like cutting down trees for charcoal, inability to get enough seeds to plant in the next season, among others. Affected communities tend to kill protected wildlife out of frustration and claims of no support from the local and national government to compensate for the loss. They subsequently engage in conflicts with wildlife authorities as a result of social dissolution.*

# Local Solutions and Concrete Avenues to Address Climate-Related Security Risks in Kaabong

## STEP 04

The following solutions are based on the local analysis of climate and security risks, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities and provide concrete recommendations to specific actors best positioned to address respective risks. The list of solutions is not exhaustive, and some solutions require further feasibility studies. See Step 4 in the *Guidance Note* for additional information.

**Development partners and the national government should financially and technically support adaptive capacities of local communities in resource use and management.** Continuously developing local capacity will not only enable local actors to assess and respond to climate-related security risks, but also strengthen local ownership. Some examples include:

- Communities should *choose live fences and protect their properties via propagation and planting drought-resistant indigenous trees*. Local actors identified thirty-three (33) tree species that can survive in the semi-arid environment of Karamoja, including acacia, neem and kay-apple, among others. While these species reduce risks of environmental degradation, some of them, including kay-apple, are thorny trees that can deter and/or protect properties from burglary and looting. Living fences also serve as a more dynamic alternative to cut-wood fencing that requires downed trees. Interspersing fruit trees that are good for the environment and also a source of food, like mangoes and oranges, which have proven to do well in Karamoja, can help alleviate food insecurity.
- Financial resources and land use regulations are required to *support community actors in establishing demonstration farms for community learning*. Such farms increase awareness and dissemination of measures to strengthen adaptive capacity,<sup>18</sup> through raising awareness on the interlinkages between climate change and fragility, and sustainable resource use and management practices, such as growing live fences and strengthening the soil biome using cattle manure. Such farms are additionally a good source of employment and income for community members (such as St. Joseph's Peace Champions Group). For example, each fruit or kay-apple tree seedling is sold for 2,000 Uganda Shillings (approximately 60 USD).
- The local government should *develop strategies for water harvesting*. Communities should be incentivised and provided the capacity to harvest water and increase water collection techniques as well as efficiency in water use. Locally, this could be done by desilting and digging water dams and storing water in water tanks (from seasonal rivers).
- The local government should *use indigenous and local knowledge systems* to predict rains and inform community plans for planting crops during heavy rains.

18. One of the campaign messages developed in the project cycle is 'cut one plant two'. This will enable communities to obtain the basics of life (fire wood, use of wood for crafts, etc) while sustaining the environment.

**Development partners should ensure that all interventions are informed by existing work of local climate and peacebuilding experts.**

It is often the case in Kaabong that climate-related interventions do not consider the existing work done by peacebuilding actors or local community leaders. Local structures, however, often capitalise on integrated approaches that do not differentiate between various agendas, while local peacebuilders work to address climate change hazards through conflict-sensitive means. Therefore, any new intervention in Kaabong should build on existing local structures, knowledge, resources, and adaptive mechanisms, promoting effective local and indigenous knowledge and approaches while also involving relevant traditional and formal structures to promote information sharing and joint action on climate, peace and security.

**The local government should promote and facilitate inter-ethnic and community dialogue.**

The responses to insecurity caused by the influx of people from cross-border communities to Kaabong and internal movements of people can be improved by having community resource-sharing agreements in place to guide a mutual use of water and pasture without heightening tensions and fights. Such agreements can be reached through inter-ethnic and community dialogues that the government can facilitate, with the support of local peace actors. Similar dialogue methodologies can be useful to address fights among various ethnic groups over artisan mining in mineral sites near the border areas (i.e., Lopedo and Lodiko sub-counties).

**The Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU) in Uganda should fully integrate indigenous and local knowledge on climate, peace, and security in the existing early warning mechanisms.**

All early warning and early response systems (EWEs) must integrate storytelling and risk indicators developed by local actors and indigenous communities<sup>19</sup>. Where EWEs do not exist, other traditional mechanisms and new local structures can be utilised to directly inform national, sub-regional and regional prevention and response processes. Doing so will address the concern of local actors about the lack of channels to exchange learning and information, the lack of attention to local needs, and the limited engagement between local communities and authorities mandated to respond to climate change and fragility. This will also enable communities to take 'early action' and allow governments to plan and timely respond to climate-related security risks.

**Development partners should scale up climate-related security risk assessments at the local level and develop a cross-border climate, peace, and security strategy.**

Conducting risk assessments only in Kaabong is not enough to truly systemically systematically address climate-security risk on the

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19. Some example of localised indicators include: 1) how to sounds and direction of some birds is indicative of rain; 2) how the concentrations of footprints, especially in busy areas, may indicate the presence of cattle raiders; or 3) how the fact that men are sleeping in the kraals may indicate risk of raids.

ground. Resources must be available and coordinated to expand the risk assessment methodology across Karamoja and neighbouring cross-border communities to create a climate, peace and security structure that can enable relevant stakeholders to exchange knowledge, tools and resources. Experiences in Kaabong indicate that while a number of the climate-related security risks are internal (i.e., food insecurity), a number of them are external (i.e., climate-induced migration). This context calls for a climate, peace and security strategy that could bring together local districts and cross-border communities around joint action.



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