

**The Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism
(CEWARN)**

in the

**Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
Region**

CEWARN Regional Report

3rd Regional Report on the Karamoja Cluster
January – April 2004

CEWARN, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

I. Executive Summary

This 3rd Regional Report of the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) in the IGAD region seeks to provide member states, policy makers, development partners and other stakeholders with a coherent and informed understanding of the nature, characteristics and dynamics of the national and cross-border pastoral conflicts in **three (3)** IGAD member states of the Karamoja cluster. The report has been compiled using information from field reports and the CEWARN Country Updates from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda from **January to April 2005**. It constitutes an ongoing effort by CEWARN to provide and share information on Conflict Early Warning in the Karamoja cluster.

The report provides insights on CEWARN's information gathered in the three countries of the Karamoja cluster for the reporting period (It does not cover the Sudanese side of the Karamoja cluster). It is based on three CEWARN Country Updates that critically examine the socio-economic context and the socio-cultural causes of pastoral conflicts in the "Karamoja cluster". It provides an assessment of the structural influences and constraints in the prevention of pastoral conflicts and is an attempt to inform and advocate the adoption of response strategies to conflicts in the Karamoja cluster.

The Karamoja cluster which covers the cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda is a region affected by seasonal patterns of drought and famine, seasonal movements of armed pastoralists and livestock within and across national borders, a continuing degradation of the environment leading to food insecurity and increasing competition for scarce resources mainly water and pasture. The characteristic feature of the Cluster are marked by underdevelopment when compared to regions within each country, high levels of insecurity and violence leading to lack of investment and a dependency on relief supplies from governments and civil society.

The pastoral communities that inhabit the region live in poverty and insecurity due to the proliferation of small arms. In addition the poor state of infrastructure makes it difficult for governments and civil society to provide social services thus curtailing the capacity of security forces to respond to the increasing violence and cattle rustling that have such a devastating impact on the livelihood of pastoral communities.

Since July 2003 up to April 2005 CEWARN has documented a total of 1,211 deaths and 84,242 herds of livestock raided. If this trend continues it not only presents a high number of human lives lost but also losses in vital resources and livelihoods in an area that exhibits resource scarcity. This will lead to greater internal displacement of pastoral communities and continued reliance on relief assistance that is bound to have a negative impact on development in the Karamoja cluster.

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this regional report is to inform decision makers on the nature of cross-border pastoral conflicts in three countries in the Karamoja Cluster and on regional response options that would de-escalate pastoral conflicts along the border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. It focuses on the analysis of cross-border pastoral conflicts in the Karamoja cluster using a scientifically oriented approach in the gathering and analysis of information.

The temporal scope of this report covers the period January-April 2005. The report relies on information gathered from the Areas of Reporting (AORs) in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda and the analysis provided in the three CEWARN Updates from January-April 2005. The Country Updates are based on field data gathered from the areas of reporting on a weekly basis using specific data collection tools developed by CEWARN in collaboration with all the National Research Institutes (NRIs) in the three countries.

This report will contribute to early warning on potential conflicts to decision-makers on a timely basis so as to initiate actionable responses that reduce the number of violent incidents and intensity of conflict in the Karamoja cluster.

II. Background

The term “Karamoja cluster” is commonly used to describe the pastoral and agro-pastoral ethnic groups, some who share a common language and culture, occupying a landmass that encompasses Southwestern Ethiopia, Northwestern Kenya, Southeastern Sudan and Northeastern Uganda. CEWARN’s use of the term Karamoja cluster refers to the conflict system encompassing four IGAD member states. More specifically the Karamoja cluster in this report covers:

- Four districts in Uganda; Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Kapchorwa.
- Three districts in Kenya; Turkana, West Pokot and TransNzoia in Rift Valley Province.
- One Woreda in Ethiopia; Kuraz Woreda of the South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations & Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS).
- Two counties in the Sudan; Kapoeta and Budi in the Eastern Equatoria Province in Southern Sudan **(the Sudanese side of the Karamoja cluster is not included in this report).**

While the dry lands of the Karamoja Cluster have a diversity of ecosystems dependent on seasonal patterns of rainfall, the predominant mode of food production and livelihood is livestock keeping and subsistence agriculture mainly millet and sorghum. A characteristic feature of pastoral food production is the degree of movement associated with livestock in search of water and pasture. Until colonialism in the 19th century boundaries among the ethnic groups of the Karamoja cluster were not rigid and limiting but rather were fluid and dependent on the relationships of the pastoral groups inhabiting certain areas. An intricate web of relations developed among pastoral communities to provide for the sharing of resources, these relationships were shaped by conflict and cooperation as adaptive strategies for survival by pastoral groups in an otherwise harsh environment.

From the three CEWARN Updates the major cross-border issues that emerge are: the restriction of movement across of state boundaries; continuing marginalization of pastoralists and the pastoralism in national policies; the nature of traditional pastoralist communities; the proliferation of small arms among pastoral groups; ineffective and inappropriate responses to pastoral conflicts; the breakdown of law and order leading to a “culture of impunity” among pastoralists; and the provision of relief assistance at the expense of development.

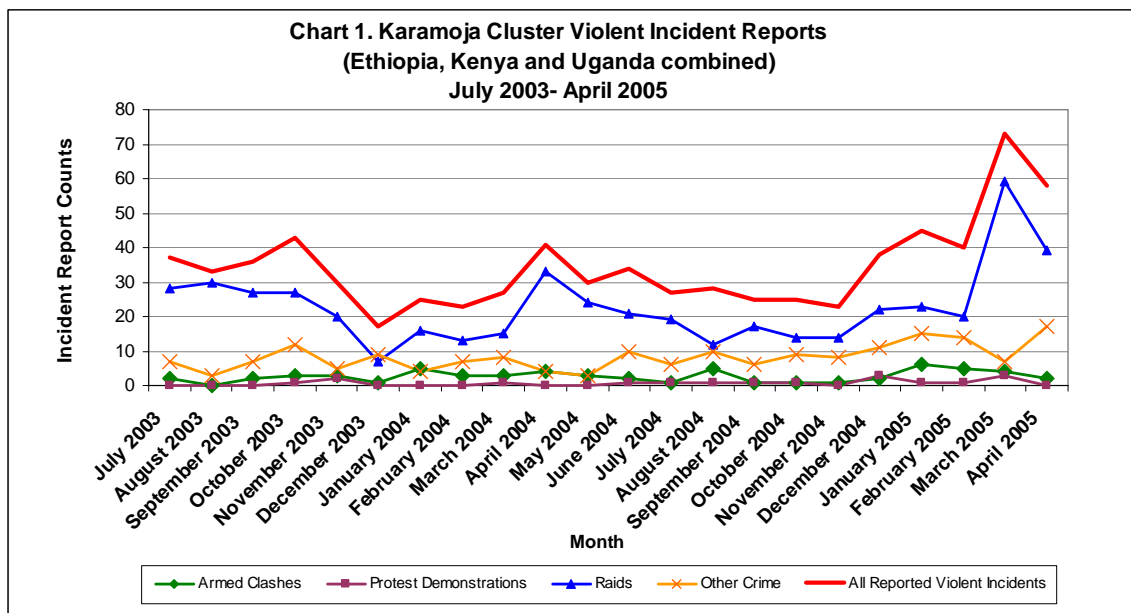
III. Current Situation

All three CEWARN Updates indicate a decrease in the number of violent incidents reported i.e. raids and crime (compared to the previous reporting period of September-December2004 which had 223 violent incidents and 61% cross-border conflicts.). The poor harvests, the looming drought and famine, increased competition for resources, the acceptance of raiding as a survival strategy, the inability of governments to respond to violent incidents; and seasonal rainfall patterns were all factors that help explain the rise and fall of tensions and violence in the cluster.

For the reporting period there were 141 Raids, 17 Armed Clashes, 5 Protest Demonstrations and 53 Other Crimes¹ leading to a total of 294 deaths and 15,582 livestock raided. The high number of incidents (138) from the Ugandan side of the Karamoja cluster is still unabated but does not indicate that Uganda is more violent than the other two Countries – Ethiopia and Kenya.

¹ For a full description of Indicators see Appendix 2

Chart 1 below presents the frequency of all Violent Incident counts combined for Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda sides of the Karamoja cluster from January through April 2005.

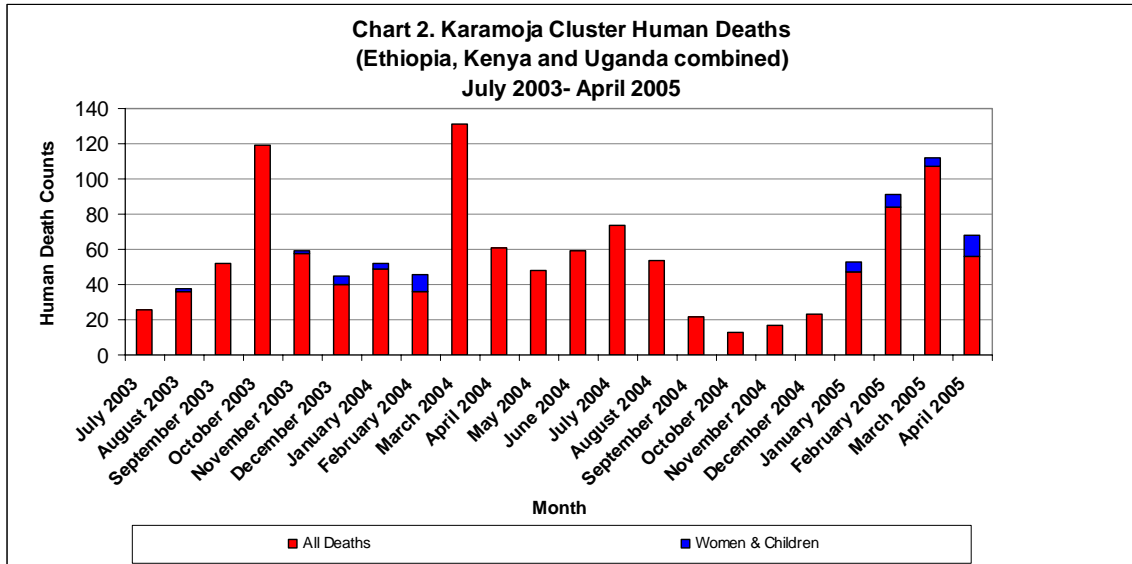


March recorded the highest violent incident counts which totaled 73. Violence was lowest (40) during February and January (45). Among the 216 incidents reported in the three countries 17 were Armed Clashes, 141 were Raids, 53 were Other Crimes, and 5 were Protest Demonstrations. From the combined violent incident reports on the cluster, Raids alone accounted for 65% of all violent incidents in the reporting period. All these violent incidents involved communities within each country and across their borders, and from Sudan.

The general trend for “All Reported Violent Incidents” appears to be influenced by different factors whereby sometimes a decrease in Other Crime is found with an increase of Raids in the reporting period. In addition there appears to be general pattern of correlations between Other Crime, Protest Demonstration and Armed Clashes. Despite the general associations drawn above it is difficult to clearly define patterns of relationships between the violent incidents.

In the reporting period of January through April, Violent Incidents were high compared to the previous period of September –December 2004. The increase in Violent Incidents for the reported maybe attributed to various factors including competition between pastoral groups over water, pasture and land, counter reprisals for raid attacks, Governments security operations and interventions i.e. banning cross- border access to pasture and disarmament programmes (in Uganda and Kenya) that increased tensions among communities.

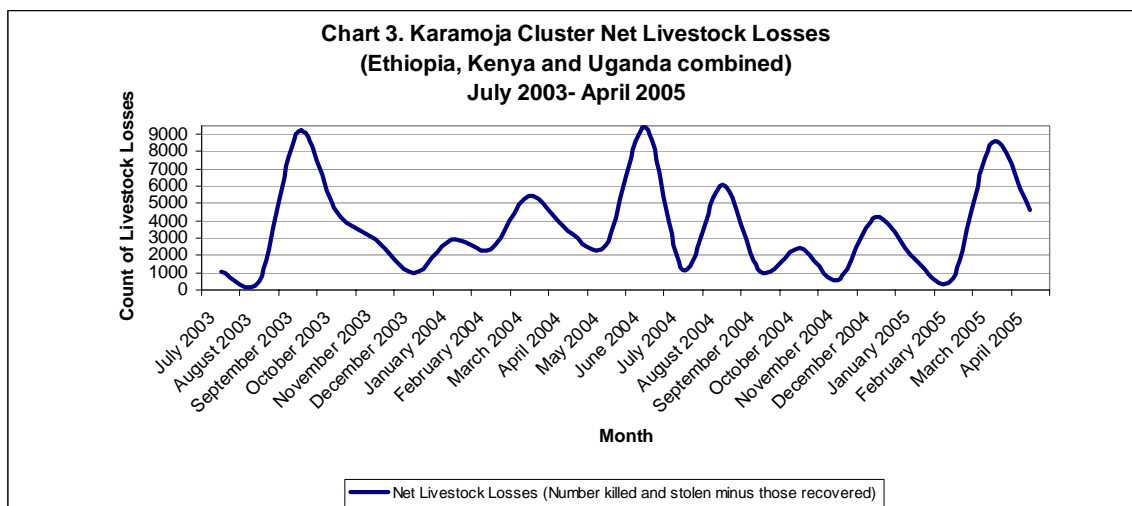
Human deaths for the reporting period are presented in **Chart 2** below.



A total number of 294 deaths were reported from January – April 2005 in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda sides of the Karamoja cluster. Of the 294 deaths, 30 were women and children which accounted for 11% of the deaths. The highest deaths were reported in March (107) while the lowest numbers were in January (47). Although a direct relation could not be drawn between Violent Incidents (Chart 1) and Human Deaths (Chart 2), for the reporting period both the highest number of violent incidents (73) and deaths (107) occurred in March.

As field reports indicated the availability, through different means including banditry and commercialization, use of small arms was a major contributing factor to the high death and injury rates in the Karamoja cluster. Nearly all-violent incidents involved the use of firearms. Most guns are available in the Cluster because pastoral communities use them for personal and livestock protection/security.

Livestock Raided for the reporting period are presented in Chart 3 below

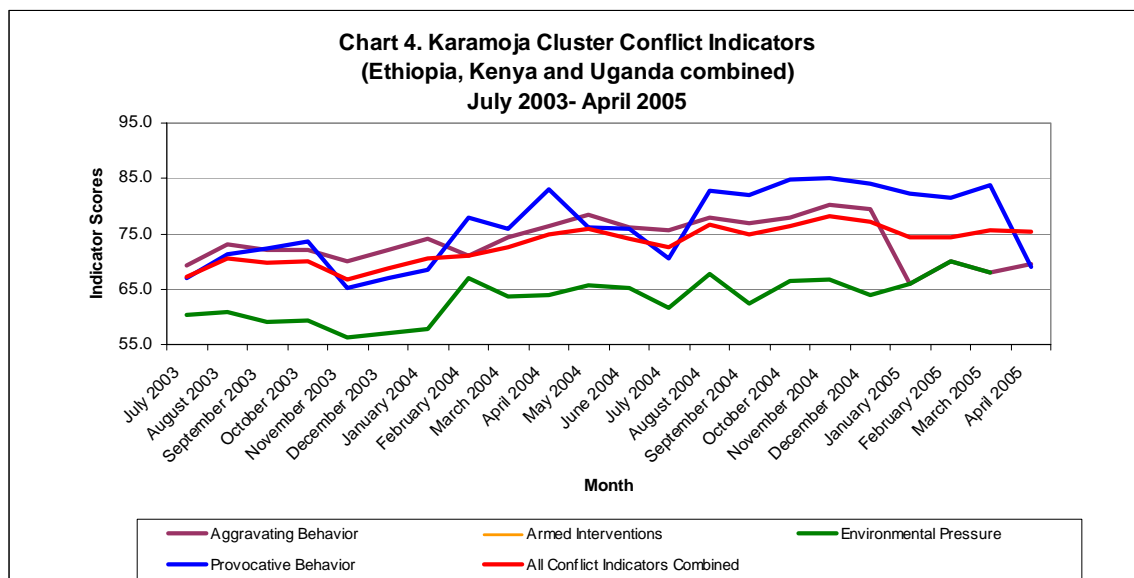


A total of 15,582 heads of livestock were reported as raided during the reporting period. March recorded the highest number (8550) of livestock raided for the reporting period; this accounted for 55% of the total number of raided livestock.

The increase in livestock losses particularly in March and April was as a result of internal (within countries) and cross-border livestock thefts and raids between various communities including the Toposa (Sudan), Turkana and Pokot (Kenya), Dassenech and Nyangatom (Ethiopia), and Matheniko, Bokoro, Pian, Jie and others (Uganda). Moreover, reduced rainfall and the scarcity of pasture and water may in part explain the high numbers of livestock raids.

An interesting correlation was noted in March whereby Violent Incident Counts (Chart 1), Human Deaths (Chart 2) and Livestock Raided (Chart 3) were all highest for the reporting period. In this case as Violent Incidents increased more human deaths and livestock raids occurred.

Chart 4 (below) presents Conflict Indicators for the Karamoja Cluster in the reporting period.

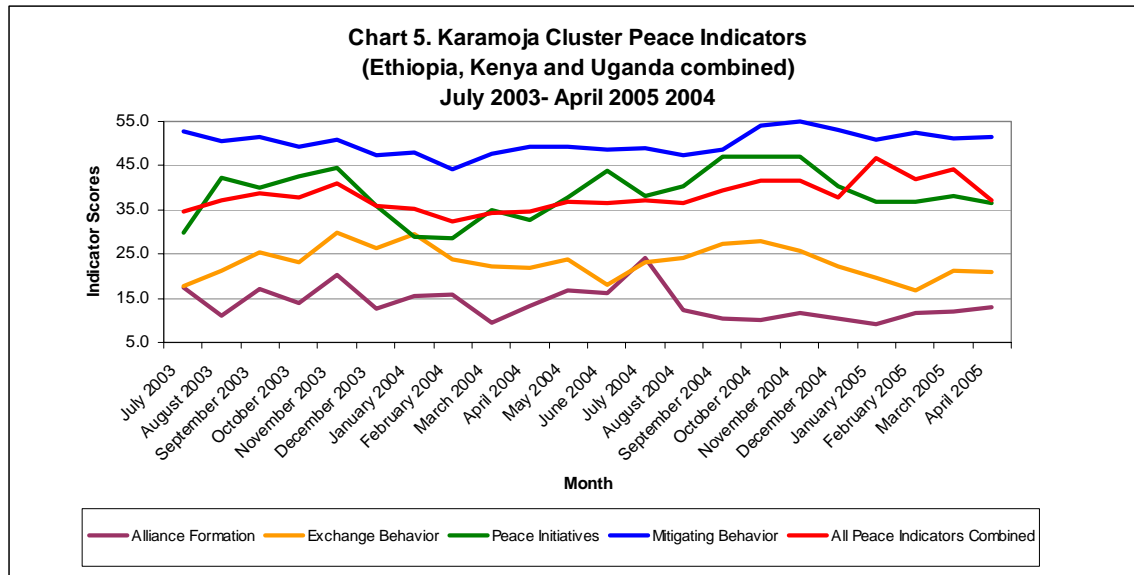


Conflict Indicators describe Aggravating Behavior, Provocative Behavior, Armed Interventions, Environmental Pressure and the Combined Conflict Indicators². The Combined Conflict Indicators remained fairly constant high. Both Aggravating Behavior and Environmental Pressures was low in January but was slightly high in February and remained constant in the next two months. Provocative Behavior remained constantly high from January through March but was low in April.

Although Environmental pressures remained low in the reporting period, Provocative Behavior remained constantly high from January to March but was low in April, the month where it had reported high incidents (58) next to March (73). And this explains that there is no always-direct relationship/correlation between violent incidents and environmental pressure as observed from this reporting period (See: **Chart 1** and **Chart 4**).

² No Armed Interventions were documented for the reporting period. For the full list of Indicators see Appendix 1

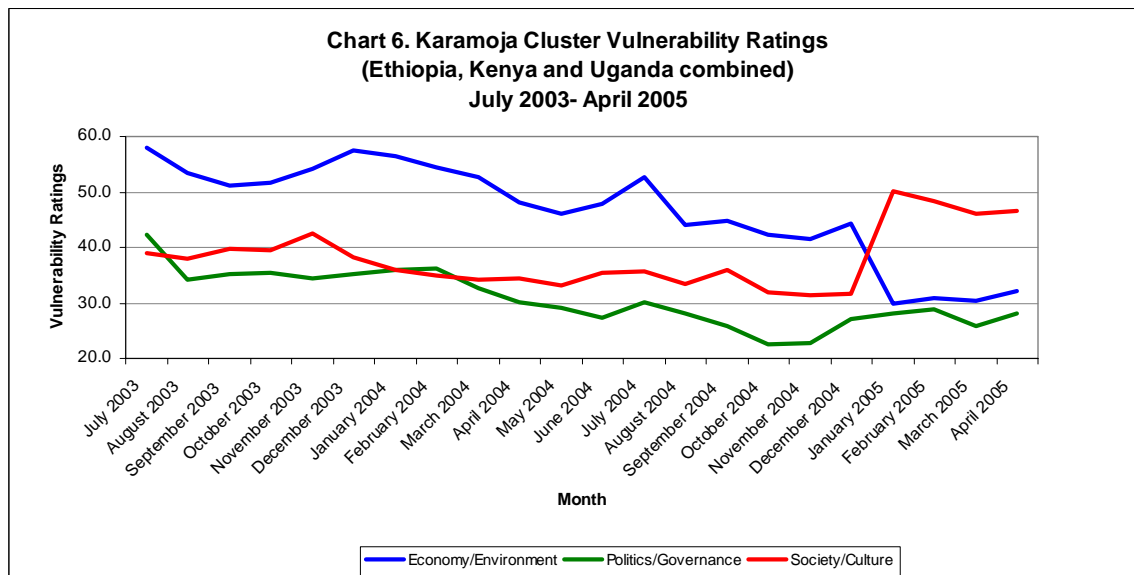
Chart 5 (below) presents Peace Indicators for the reporting period in the Karamoja cluster.



Alliance Formation was low in January and had a slight rise in February through April. Exchange Behavior was low in January and February but had shown slightest increase in March and April. Peace Initiatives was constantly moderate during the reporting period. Mitigating Behavior constantly remained high throughout the reporting period.

All Peace Indicators Combined remained moderate and constant for January through March but decreased in April. During the reporting period Peace Indicators were slightly moderate in January and February but the level of violence was average, and while Peace indicators was low in April the level of violence was high in the same month (see in **Chart 1**).

Chart 6 (below) presents Vulnerability Ratings for the reporting period in the Karamoja cluster.



The Politics/Governance vulnerability rating was constantly low in the reporting period. The overall vulnerability rating for Society/Culture was high in January and was moderate from February to April 2005. Economy/Environment vulnerability ratings was constantly average/moderate throughout the reporting period.

IV Comparative Analysis

The Karamoja cluster as a whole is characterized by underdevelopment, lack of any significant investment by both public/private sectors, and poor infrastructure that makes it difficult to provide services and deliver goods (mainly livestock) to markets outside the cluster. The high insecurity that has become a distinctive feature of the Karamoja cluster is compounded by the instability in some parts of the region, and the availability of small arms usually through banditry and commercialization means, contributes to the intensity and high casualty rates of resource based conflicts in the cluster.

Analysis of Structural Conflict Aggravating Factors

In the reporting period climatic conditions and cultural practices (livestock raiding) are the two most important factors in understanding and explaining the levels and trends of violent conflicts in the Karamoja cluster.

The competition over scarce resources (water, pasture and land) remains unabated, that is a critical factor in explaining the high levels of violence in the Karamoja Cluster. The prevailing climatic conditions also account for the increasing competition over resources, in areas used for dry season grazing as dry condition intensify so do the number of violent incidents which manifest themselves as Raids and other violent incidents.

The traditional cultural practice of cattle raiding is the other important factor that influences the high incidence of violence in the Karamoja Cluster. Livestock raiding remains an important survival strategy in situations of drought and a mode for perpetuating socio-cultural values/practices among pastoralists in the cluster.

Proximate Conflict Aggravating Factors

The Proximate Conflict Aggravating Factors influences on conflict vulnerability in the Karamoja cluster include: economic and political developments in the three countries; the seasonal patterns particularly absence of rain which impact on drought and famine; seasonal migration of pastoral groups, availability of illegal arms and small arms flow, closing of borders to make it inaccessible to traditional grazing areas, disarmament not its obvious rather hindsight effects and the inadequate provision of social services (health, education etc).

Analysis of Structural Conflict Mitigating Factors

The activities of the Joint cross-border Commissions: The Ethiopia-Kenya Border Commission and the Kenya-Uganda border Commission have minimized conflicts from escalating into armed violent conflict on a greater scale. The levels of poverty in the Karamoja cluster, compounded by insecurity, cattle raiding and lack of access to markets are to some extent being addressed in the country Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper(s) and the various interventions by civil society, which seek to improve the livelihoods of pastoralists. Pastoral issues have recently begun to impact on the policy dialogue between governments and pastoral communities

Proximate Conflict Mitigating Factors

There are changes occurring in the three countries, which may have a positive impact on the current conflict situation in the cluster. For example Ethiopia's policy of decentralization to the Woreda level will help ensure adequate local input on governance creating a more locally based administration familiar with pastoral issues.

In Kenya and Uganda the participation of communities and institutions of civil society is leading to productive initiatives as trust and collaboration take root in the transformation of pastoral conflict. Likewise, despite closing of borders to make it inaccessible to traditional grazing areas for pastoralists has created tensions, it has contributed to a decrease in conflicts in some areas of the cluster. The peace efforts facilitated by civil societies for example between pastoral communities of Pian and Pokot and Turkana and Moroto in Kenya and Uganda, has contributed to the decrease of incidents. The disarmament process launched in Uganda in September 2004 minimized cross-border movement of pastoralists, which in turn reduced cross-border raids and other violent incidents.

However, irrespective of the Proximate Conflict Mitigating Factors afore- mentioned, the January- April 2005 has seen an increase of incidents as compared to the immediate preceding periods, that is, May-August and September-December 2004.

VI. Regional Response Options and Recommendations.

There are a number of responses that need to be undertaken to address and minimize pastoral conflicts in the Karamoja Cluster.

Short Term

- Deployment of security personnel to preempt or recover livestock raided
- Timely exchange of information between government and other key actors on impending raids, pastoral movements, and other conflict aggravating factors
- Encourage and strengthen participation of communities and civil society in cross-border peace initiatives to reconcile communities when major violent incidents occur for the purposes of averting counter attacks and de-escalate tensions

Medium Term

- Initiate cross-border mechanisms to mediate access to natural resources (pasture and water) in situations of drought.
- Initiate joint anti-stock theft mechanisms which re-enforce the rule of law to curtail the "culture of impunity"
- Implement coordinated and joint disarmament and arms reduction programs in the Cluster
- Encourage national and international NGOs to be involved in pastoral community development

Long Term

- The need to develop forums that engage pastoral communities in regular consultations and sensitization to diminish and de-legitimize the culture of cattle raiding. This should include government efforts in dealing with stock theft to further de-legitimize and de-popularizing traditional raiding.
- Implement poverty reductions programs aimed at improving pastoral livelihoods including livestock marketing, social services etc...
- Encourage investments through tax incentives in pastoral areas

Karamoja Cluster - Incident Reports from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda combined

Month & Year	Protest Demost	Other Crime	Organized Raids	Armed Clashes	all incidents
July 2003	0	7	28	2	37
August 2003	0	3	30	0	33
September 2003	0	7	27	2	36
October 2003	1	12	27	3	43
November 2003	2	5	20	3	30
December 2003	0	9	7	1	17
January 2004	0	4	16	5	25
February 2004	0	7	13	3	23
March 2004	1	8	15	3	27
April 2004	0	4	33	4	41
May 2004	0	3	24	3	30
June 2004	1	10	21	2	34
July 2004	1	6	19	1	27
August 2004	1	10	12	5	28
September 2004	1	6	17	1	25
October 2004	1	9	14	1	25
November 2004	0	8	14	1	23
December 2004	3	11	22	2	38
January 2005	1	15	23	6	45
February 2005	1	14	20	5	40
March 2005	3	7	59	4	73
April 2005	0	17	39	2	58
Tot Jan-April 2005	5	53	141	17	256

Note: Of the total Incidents 58% accounted for cross-border in the reporting period Jan-April, 2005

Karamoja Cluster - Human Deaths for Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda combined

Month & Year	Outcomes - Human Deaths Low Estimates	Outcomes - Deaths of Women & Children Low Estimates	percents W&C
July 2003	26	0	0.0
August 2003	36	2	5.6
September 2003	52	0	0.0
October 2003	119	0	0.0
November 2003	58	1	1.7
December 2003	40	5	12.5
January 2004	49	3	6.1
February 2004	36	10	27.8
March 2004	131	0	0.0
April 2004	61	0	0.0
May 2004	48	0	0.0
June 2004	59	0	0.0
July 2004	74	0	0.0
August 2004	54	0	0.0
September 2004	22	0	0.0
October 2004	13	0	0.0
November 2004	17	0	0.0
December 2004	23	0	0.0
January 2005	47	6	12.8
February 2005	84	7	8.3
March 2005	107	5	4.7
April 2005	56	12	21.4
Total Jan-April 2005	294	30	47.2

Karamoja Cluster – Reports of Livestock Raided from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda combined

Month & Year	Livestock Losses, net
July 2003	1034
August 2003	448
September 2003	9157
October 2003	4543
November 2003	2925
December 2003	968
January 2004	2890
February 2004	2342
March 2004	5409
April 2004	3407
May 2004	2562
June 2004	9434
July 2004	1098
August 2004	6098
September 2004	1032
October 2004	2470
November 2004	560
December 2004	4224
January 2005	1779
February 2005	621
March 2005	8550
April 2005	4632
Total Jan – April 2005	15582

Karamoja Cluster – Peace Indicators for Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda Combined

Month & Year	Peace Initiatives	Mitigating Behavior	Exchange Behavior	Alliance Formation	Combined
July 2003	30.0	52.6	17.7	17.3	34.5
August 2003	42.2	50.6	21.2	11.0	37.3
September 2003	40.2	51.6	25.5	17.1	38.8
October 2003	42.7	49.1	23.3	13.9	37.6
November 2003	44.6	50.8	29.7	20.4	41.1
December 2003	35.8	47.4	26.4	12.7	35.9
January 2004	28.8	48.1	29.4	15.6	35.4
February 2004	28.5	44.1	23.7	16.0	32.3
March 2004	34.8	47.6	22.1	9.3	34.3
April 2004	32.8	49.2	21.9	13.2	34.7
May 2004	37.8	49.2	23.7	16.9	36.7
June 2004	43.9	48.7	18.1	16.0	36.6
July 2004	38.0	48.8	23.1	24.1	37.2
August 2004	40.5	47.3	24.0	12.3	36.4
September 2004	46.9	48.6	27.4	10.5	39.3
October 2004	47.1	54.0	27.8	10.0	41.5
November 2004	47.0	55.1	25.8	11.7	41.6
December 2004	40.4	53.2	22.1	10.5	37.9
January 2005	36.7	50.9	19.8	9.2	46.6
February 2005	36.9	52.5	16.8	11.7	41.9
March 2005	38.2	51.1	21.3	12.1	44.2
April 2005	36.5	51.6	21.0	13.0	37.1

Karamoja Cluster – Conflict Indicators for Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda Combined

Month & Year	Armed Intervention	Provocative Behavior	Environmental Pressure	Aggravating Behavior	Combined
July 2003	0.0	67.0	60.4	69.2	67.2
August 2003	0.0	71.3	60.8	73.2	70.6
September 2003	0.0	72.3	59.0	72.2	69.7
October 2003	0.0	73.7	59.3	72.1	69.9
November 2003	0.0	65.1	56.2	69.9	66.8
December 2003	0.0	67.0	57.0	72.1	68.8
January 2004	0.0	68.5	57.9	74.0	70.4
February 2004	0.0	77.9	67.0	71.0	71.0
March 2004	0.0	75.8	63.6	74.3	72.5
April 2004	0.0	83.1	64.0	76.4	74.9
May 2004	0.0	76.0	65.7	78.4	75.8
June 2004	0.0	76.0	65.1	76.1	74.1
July 2004	0.0	70.5	61.7	75.7	72.5
August 2004	0.0	82.8	67.7	78.0	76.6
September 2004	0.0	82.1	62.4	76.9	74.8
October 2004	0.0	84.7	66.5	77.8	76.5
November 2004	0.0	85.2	66.8	80.2	78.3
December 2004	0.0	84.1	63.9	79.6	77.2
January 2005	0.0	82.3	66.1	66.1	74.3
February 2005	0.0	81.5	70.0	70.0	74.4
March 2005	0.0	83.9	67.9	67.9	75.6
April 2005	0.0	69.1	69.4	69.4	75.3

Karamoja Cluster - Vulnerability Ratings for Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda combined

Month & Year	Economy/ Environment	Politics/ Governance	Society/ Culture
July 2003	58.1	42.2	39.0
August 2003	53.4	34.1	37.9
September 2003	51.2	35.3	39.8
October 2003	51.7	35.4	39.6
November 2003	54.1	34.3	42.6
December 2003	57.5	35.3	38.1
January 2004	56.5	36.0	35.8
February 2004	54.5	36.3	35.0
March 2004	52.7	32.7	34.1
April 2004	48.0	30.2	34.5
May 2004	46.0	29.1	33.1
June 2004	48.0	27.4	35.5
July 2004	52.6	30.2	35.8
August 2004	44.1	28.0	33.4
September 2004	44.8	25.7	35.9
October 2004	42.3	22.6	31.8
November 2004	41.6	22.7	31.5
December 2004	44.4	27.2	31.6
January 2005	29.9	28.2	50.1
February 2005	31.0	28.8	48.3
March 2005	30.5	25.9	46.2
April 2005	32.2	28.1	46.6

Appendix 1: Description of Indicators (from the Situation Reports)

<u>Alliance Formation</u>		
Inter-ethnic group alliance	Ethnic group – government alliance	
<u>Armed Intervention</u>		
Internal armed support	External armed support	
<u>Aggravating Behavior</u>		
Interrupt other activities Development aid problems Media controls Migrant laborers New Markets Negative media coverage	Pastoral migration Harmful migration policy Harmful livestock policy Influx of IDPs Security escorts Small arms availability	Bullets as commodities Protest Student attendance interrupted Separation of groups Livestock prices dropped Post-raid blessing Livestock sales increase
<u>Environmental Pressure</u>		
Natural disaster areas abandoned	Land competition Livestock disease	More livestock in secure areas grazing
<u>Exchange Behavior</u>		
Celebration Inter-group sharing	Inter-group marriage Cross-border trade	Gift offering
<u>Mitigating Behavior</u>		
Access to health care Small arms disclosure Access to education	Relief distributions Markets remain open Positive media coverage	Law enforcement Bride price stable Negotiations taking place
<u>Peace Initiatives</u>		
Women peace messengers Religious peace building	Weapons reduction program NGO peace initiatives	Local peace initiatives
<u>Provocative Behavior</u>		
All-male migration	Pre-raid blessing	Traditional forecasting

Appendix 2: Definitions of the Incident Categories

- Armed Clashes
 - Military Battle (Armed hostilities or engagements between an official military unit of a government and an armed party. Includes both civil war and inter-state war battles.
 - Other Armed Clashes (All other armed hostilities or engagements. Includes all communal and inter-communal battles.

- Raids
 - Raids with Abductions (Raids focused around abductions of people or the taking of hostages. May include injuries or death to humans, and/or damage, destruction or theft of other property).
 - Organized Raids (Other organized raids. May include injuries or deaths to humans, and/or damage, destruction or theft of other property).
 - Livestock Theft (Raids focused around the theft of livestock. May include injuries or death to humans, and/or damage, destruction or theft of other property).

- Protest Demonstrations
 - Peaceful Protests (peaceful protest demonstrations or assemblies. May include isolated or low-level violence).
 - Violent Turmoil or Riots (Assemblies or crowds that get out of control. Marked by violence, disorder, damage and/or destruction).

- Other Crime
 - Assaults (Physical attacks and abuse involving the actual use of physical force against individuals, and/or groups. Does not include abductions.
 - Banditry (Commandeering of vehicles, highway robbery, and other similar criminal activities).