

KENYA-UGANDA CROSS-BORDERS COMMUNAL CONFLICTS: AN INTERROGATION**Ojinnaka Ify Evaristus PhD**

Research Scholar, Geopolitics, Peace and Conflicts Studies, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

einndoprojects@gmail.com**Ozor Cyril Ositadima PhD**

Department of Political Science, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study is an interrogation of communal conflicts across the Kenya-Uganda borders. It examines the dynamics of the conflicts and how it has impacted on the Karamoja cluster areas. The Karamoja-Turkana communities also known as Karamoja cluster areas has history of cross border communal conflicts that span over decades and is characterized by large-scale livestock raiding, natural resources and environmental related conflicts. The conflict poses serious challenge to peace and stability of the East African sub-region, and has had serious impacts on the socio-economic and political development of Kenya and Uganda. Secondary sources of data collection were used and data was contently analyzed. Cross-border conflicts management theory is used as the intellectual framework of analysis. The study finds that the conflict is driven by a complex interplay of factors including resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and inter-communal tensions. The paper posits that several approaches have been employed in trying to resolve and manage the conflicts without positive results. And recommends the application of cross-border conflicts management approach which would include: collaborative efforts of the governments of Kenya and Uganda, concerned local stakeholders and relevant Civil Society Organization. The paper argues for security operatives of both countries to synergize and share intelligence information to enable them stem the spread and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the area, to strategically monitored, evaluated and prevent further escalations of the conflicts.

Keywords

*Cross Border Conflict Management,
Civil Society and Non-Governmental
Organizations,
Conflict Mitigation Institutions and
Comprehensive Peace Agreement.*

1. Introduction**Background to the Study**

The border region between Kenya and Uganda is home to a large population of several pastoral communities that depend heavily on a traditional lifestyle rooted in nomadic pastoralism. These border communities of Karamoja-Turkana are also known as 'Karamoja cluster'. These communities rely on herding livestock as their primary source of livelihood, which influences their economic activities, social structures, and cultural identities (Climate Diplomacy, 2025). However, their way of life contributes to heightened tensions and conflicts among different ingenious communities in the area, as competition over grazing land and water resources do lead to disputes and violent conflicts among them (Climate Diplomacy, 2025).

The Karamoja cluster' has history of cross border communal conflicts that span over time, and have been ongoing for decades (Ojinnaka, 2025). The conflict usually plays out in the Karamoja and Turkana regions of Uganda and Kenya. According to climate-diplomacy (2025) the conflict is driven by a complex interplay of factors including resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and inter-communal tensions. It is economically rooted and pastoral in origin and character. It has the character of cross border criminality and poses serious challenges to peace and stability of the region, and has had serious

impacts on the socio-economic and political development of both countries (Mukwe, 2011).

The key actors to the conflicts are the governments of the Republic of Kenya and the government of the Republic of Uganda, several mutual antagonistic and opposing groups from Kenya and Uganda, such as the Pokot community, Rendile community and Turkana from Kenya; and the Dodoth community, Jie community, Esabiny community and other Karimojong communities/ groups from Uganda. The Karamoja region of north-eastern Uganda, populated by fierce warriors and war mongers have since the later decades of the last century, been infamous as a place of violent cattle raids and road ambushes. Irregular rainfall, harsh and unstable environmental conditions made these communities and groups to be regularly engaged in violent conflicts over livestock, water and grazing resources (climate-diplomacy, 2025; B-Saharan Africa, 2026).

However, the profound and decisive changes that have taken place in the security environment in the past two decades have engendered large-scale livestock raiding (Stites and Kimberly, 2019) and opportunistic economic terrorism, as groups use violence to dispose of others' means of livelihood. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) statistics highlight that in 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.

However, for the first time in the past decade, the combination of a top-down sustained disarmament campaign and grassroots peace initiatives championed by the Kenyan and Ugandan authorities have created relative stability (Stites and Kimberly, 2019) that have had positive impact on the social, economic and political development of the area. For now, the peaceful approach initiated by the authorities of the two countries have to some extent achieved temporary cross border peace and stability, as the expansion of markets, investments by national and international actors has led to the rejuvenation of livelihoods for many residents (Stites and Kimberly, 2019).

Nevertheless, while large-scale violent cattle raids and violence among pastoralist groups in the Karamoja cluster seems to have been brought under control, violence and insecurity is now manifesting in the domestic space.

2. Statement of the Problem

The struggle for scarce natural resource, pastoral conflict, and cattle raiding among the people in Kenya-Uganda border areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities known as 'Karamoja cluster' has been fueled largely by the problem of lack of appropriate communication channel and proliferation of rumors. Lack of timely and relevant information has destroyed trust between the stakeholders and different groups which has led to cross border criminality, and has posed serious challenges to peace, stability and economic development of the area.

Studies executed by EINNO Project Nigeria (EPN), a Peace and Conflict research Group in Nigeria, in collaboration with the South-East Nigeria Political and Geo-Strategic Information Network (SEPGSIN) posit that irregular rainfall, harsh and unstable environmental conditions have overtime made these groups be frequently engaged in violent conflicts over livestock, water and grazing resources (EPN, 2023; SEPGSIN Report, 2023). Thus, Livestock raiding and competition for water and pastures have over the years led to cycles of reciprocal violence between pastoralist groups in the Kenyan-Ugandan border regions (climate-diplomacy, 2025). This is in addition to the problem of insecurity caused by the unmanned and permeability of the international boundaries or border facilitates in the Kenyan-Ugandan border areas, which made it possible for opportunistic livestock raiders to continue in their nefarious activities, as they often escape across the border and evade prosecution (climate-diplomacy, 2025).

Matthysen et al (2008) in their paper "The Karamoja Cluster of Eastern Africa: Arms transfers and their repercussions on communal security perceptions" observes that on several occasions, Pokot groups moved across the border to avoid disarmament by the Kenyan Army. It is on record that the problem has further aggravated the cross border illicit transit of weapons across the Kenyan-Ugandan border and engenders the proliferation of Small Arms and Light weapons from war-torn neighbor countries (climate-diplomacy, 2025).

Of critical importance to this dimension of the conflict is in the context of natural resource management. Studies have acknowledged that the geographic scale of natural resource management programmes (Bond, 2014) can influence the social dynamics of the conflicts. This highlights the importance of viewing natural resource conflicts as part of a larger system, just as the ecosystems themselves should, where a holistic approach should be taken to the conflict which in this case has crossed political boundaries (Bond, 2014). Bond (2014) argue forcefully that the critical issues of the conflicts are related to natural resource management, cultural practices and governance, all of which impinge on people's freedoms, leading to the cases of human insecurity. He further maintains specifically,

that each conflict type compounds the impacts of the others on farmer and pastoral economic, food, environmental, personal, health and political security (Bond, 2014). In this context, all these factors that influence the dynamics of these conflicts have posed serious challenge to peace, stability and economic development of the area.

Against the background of the foregoing, this study tend to examine the complex interplay of dynamic factors responsible for Kenya-Uganda cross-borders communal conflicts and its impacts on the peace, security and socio-economic development of the two countries.

The Cross-Border Conflicts Management Theory

The theory of cross-border conflicts management is used as analytical tool (the intellectual framework of analysis) in this study. The theory represents an emergent approach in the management of cross-border conflicts. This theory is chosen among other existing theories of cross border-conflict management because of its applicability and effectiveness in the management of cross-border conflicts. As a qualitative approach to conflict management, the theory help political leaders and policy makers to make workable and informed decisions to achieve peaceful resolution of cross-border conflicts through cooperation and collaboration of the cross border conflicts actors (Ojinnaka, 2023), which enhances their capacity to overcome the challenges and problems posed by cross border conflicts including conflicts created by artificial colonial boundaries. The application of cross border conflicts management theory helps to avoid escalations of cross border conflicts (Ojinnaka, 2023).

However, the highlight of the theory anchors on its postulation that inter-state conflict can be managed through cooperation in political-economic and socio-cultural aspects instead of defense and security concerns (Sandy et al, 2024). To this end, the theory argues that Legal and traditional cross-border cooperation can play important role in conflict management by reducing violence and the practice of transnational crimes, increasing the welfare of transnational communities, and building good relations among cross-border actors((Sandy et al, 2024). Sandy et al, posits that several factors such as prominently cultural proximity and trade interdependence encourages Diasporas and business networking between neighboring countries and helps the application of this theory to achieve positive results in the management of cross-border conflicts. Nevertheless, the scholars maintain that illegal cross-border activities have negative impacts on conflict management by increasing tensions and disrupting regional stability.

According to Ohanyan Ann in her book "On money and memory' weak cross-border governance can undermine constructive engagement between the conflicting parties. This underscores the importance of effective Cross-border conflict Management approach in cross border conflict resolution. Ohanyan argues that weak cross-border governance capacities in the developing world can influence abilities to utilize, leverage and manage globalization and, further, in politically divided regions (like East Africa), they can undermine prospects of constructive engagement between the conflicting sides. Ohanyan argues that the promotion of liberal statehood in developing countries characterized by small governments does little to assist the development of cross-sectoral links between the public and private sectors within a region, such cross-sectoral links being important ingredients in the promotion of cross-border regionalism (Ohanyan, 2007) which will engender peaceful co-existence among states, thereby eliminating cross-border conflict.

The republics of Kenya and Uganda have similar historical, socio-economic, political, cultural and developmental backgrounds. Both countries were colonized by Britain. The sad historical memories of the British colonial rule in the two countries and the artificial boundaries it banqueted to them like in many other African countries have continued to create cross-border conflicts in the Kenya-Uganda boarder areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities, also known as 'Karamoja cluster', which is home to several pastoralist groups. The Karamoja cluster' has history of cross border communal conflicts that span over time, and have been ongoing for decades after the colonial rule. These conflicts have escalated in the recent times, a situation that calls for application of cross-border conflicts management approach. Thus, it is the position of this paper that if the theory of "crossing-border" conflict management is applied to Kenya-Uganda Karamoja-Turkana communities border conflicts, it will help to resolve bilateral problems and challenges between the two countries. Not only that the approach will engender cross-border economic activities, it is the position of this paper that the theory will ensure efficient cross-border conflict management.

The paper argues that it is imperative to adopt cross-border conflicts management approach as mechanism for managing the border conflicts in Kenya-Uganda Karamoja-Turkana communities' border areas. Because the approach is based on mutual cooperation and collaboration in political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts, it is efficient in solving conflict oriented problems in the border regions.

Galina, Serik & Madeniet (2023) contends that the problem of insufficient cross-border cooperation resides in outdated methods of vertically constructed management that are currently being used, where the government authorities play the main role, while the local communities and businesses are poorly involved in solving common problems. The scholars posit that cost-effective, flexible and application-oriented mechanism like cross-border conflicts management approach is required to solve this problem. According to Galina, Serik & Madeniet (2023) an important advantage of cross-border conflict management mechanism is its consistency with the strategic goals and priorities of the border regions, because their support is required to participate in the cross-border cooperation program to ensure peaceful resolution of conflicts.

This paper states that cross-border conflicts management approach as time tested mechanism for conflict management would ensure cross-border cooperation among border actors in Karamoja-Turkana communities, and would lead to timely resolution of the cross border conflicts.

3. Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative research. There are different types of data used in research and each type requires a separate type of data collection strategy (Asika, 1991). Plano and Creswell (2015) argues that research design is a methodical plan for collecting and analyzing data that is used in execution of a research, with the intent to provide a structure for data collection and analysis that is consistent and reliable, allowing for the development of meaningful and valid results (Gorard, 2001). Thus every research is influenced by the methods of data collection and data analysis used.

Nevertheless, the data used for the execution of this study was obtained from secondary sources. As a qualitative research, secondary sources of data collection provided us with abundant information and clear details of the Kenya-Uganda Karamoja-Turkana communities' cross-border conflicts. Data obtained from reference books, publications, Published and unpublished materials, articles from peer-reviewed Journals, periodicals, occasional academic papers, information from online sources and conference and official documents which includes government publications was used. It helped us to understand and explain the factors responsible for the Kenya-Uganda Karamoja-Turkana communities' cross-border conflicts, and reinforces the theoretical basis for the study.

In the same vein, the data obtained was contently analyzed. The use of content analytical approach helped us to carry out thorough and in-depth analysis of the causes and implications of Karamoja-Turkana communities' cross-border conflicts for the peace, stability and socio-economic developments of the areas. Furthermore it enabled us to appropriately analyze the dynamics of the complex communal conflicts across the Uganda-Kenya borders particularly in the Kenya-Uganda border areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities.

Kenya-Uganda Communal Border's Conflicts

Cattle raiding in Karamoja-Turkana communities have been constant practice from the pre-colonial to post-independence and present era. And the practice has become increasingly driven by economic incentives and external actors (Fleisher, 2002). In the main time, studies carried out by some Climate scholars in relation to climate and seasonality, have linked to cattle raiding and drought or rainfall and arms and disarmament (Dave 2008). In this vein, the Kenya-Uganda border areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities, also known as 'Karamoja cluster' have seen many fighting associated with access to natural resources and cattle raiding and access to grazing land with water. According to Climate-Diplomacy (2025) this situation has been further aggravating by natural causes like more frequent and severe droughts, but persisted due to factors like politicization of the conflicts, erosion of customary conflict mitigation institutions, increased availability of modern weapons and its proliferation (Huho, 2012), which have increased the vulnerability of the pastoralist Karamoja-Turkana communities. A situation that badly advertised the incapacity of the state to protect them (Einno Projects Nigeria (EPN) Report, 2023).

Deliberate miscommunication and political incitements have engendered the rise of in-group/out-group biases between the rival communities and groups and have prolonged the conflict situation in Kenya-Uganda border areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities (Bond, (2014). This is aided by cultural and psychological factors which plays a critical role in the context of natural resource conflicts. In the same vein, the conflict has taken new dimension, as there has been increasing tension and conflict between farmers, pastoralists across the border. This farmers-pastoralists conflict narrative has reached new violent levels. And researchers' reports that political and economic power imbalance between the rival communities has been one of the major causes of the conflict (Einno Projects Nigeria (EPN) Report, 2024).

The case of Buyengo Parish in Uganda and Mayenje in Kenya are significant to understanding of the social dynamics of these conflicts. Buyengo Parish in Uganda and Mayenje in Kenya are Separated by a stream of water in the middle of a swamp, The two communities living at the extreme end of the border in Busia district, have been living in peace for a long time as they have the same ancestral origin, with the Balanda clan members residing on both sides of the border, and they share the same ecosystem, activities of pastoralism, agriculture and trade (Oduma and Apio, 2023). However, due to the increasing population pressure on the available land things started to change in 2017. The two communities expanded agricultural activities into the swamp that lies along the border. Such wetlands have, over the years, become a prized commodity because of their fertility and availability of water for agricultural use and grass for animals throughout the year (Oduma and Apio, 2023).

These wetlands also provide an opportunity for the two communities to produce crops like yams, sugarcane and rice, which rarely grow in upland areas. Also, due to their accessibility to the swamp wetlands, the farming communities are able to grow maize and vegetables all-round the year thus given them additional economic values. An eye witness and documentary account by Mr Nagwala Alfred, an affected Buyengo Parish community member highlights that the width of the disputed piece of land between the current borderline and the original borderline is 25 meters and covers a stretch of 3km. Nagwala posits that the aggrieved members of the community are mostly people who had abandoned their pieces of land a long time ago, and widows who have no strength to fight back against the intruders/encroachers as cite in Einno Projects Nigeria (EPN), (2024).

Following some unnatural encroachment by some elements resulting from the expanded agricultural activities, there were deliberate efforts by some residents to change the original boundary, and the ecosystem was tampered with, causing diversions in the flow of the stream, which separates the two communities and making the previously established boundary demarcation unclear and contentious (Oduma and Apio, 2023). Thus in 2017, tensions arose between the two sides as a result of disagreement over the actual boundary. A conflict ensued in which crops were destroyed, and many people were injured, necessitating the intervention of both Kenya and Ugandan governments. The Authorities called for calm and pledged to find a permanent solution to the conflict (Oduma and Apio, 2023). Ironically, years after the incidence no solution has been made found so far, as the dispute have continued to raise anxiety among the two parties in the conflict, particularly, those who are aggrieved for losing their land and disruption of their agricultural activities.

According to the Office of the chairperson of Malomba village-Uganda, five members of Malomba village-Uganda has filed complaints that villagers on the Kenyan side have diverted the stream and encroached on their land. However, all effort made to follow up on the matter with the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) in Uganda has yielded no result. At this point, the situation is very delicate and might explode if no effective effort is made to address the problem (Sanya, 2023). A random conflict analysis points to the fact that if the situation is not properly handled, it will in the nearest future destroy the harmonious relationship between the two cross-border communities: Buyengo Parish in Uganda and Mayenje in Kenya Uganda.

Though the conflict is often misconceived as been caused by resource access and scarcity, today's modern cattle raiding is engendered by economic and market based complexities (Kennedy, 2011).

Causes of Kenya-Uganda Cross Border Communal Conflicts

The Kenya-Uganda border areas of Karamoja-Turkana communities has history of cross border communal conflicts that span over time, and have been ongoing for decades (Ojinnaka, 2025). The conflict is driven by a complex interplay of factors including resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and inter-communal tensions. It is economically rooted and pastoral in origin and character (Climate-diplomacy, 2025). It has the character of cross border criminality and poses serious challenges to peace and stability of the region, and has had serious impact on the socio-economic and political development of both countries (Mukwe, 2011).

The border area between Kenya and Uganda is home to several pastoralist groups. The erratic rainfall and generally harsh environmental conditions leading to serious droughts make these pastoralist groups to frequently engage in violent conflicts over livestock, water and grazing resources. Thus, some scholars suggest that incessant livestock raiding and competition for water and pastures is the major cause of the cycles of reciprocal violence between pastoralist groups in the Kenyan-Ugandan border region. Moreover, the unchecked proliferation of weapons from war-torn neighbour countries is further aggravating this situation (Climate-diplomacy, 2025). The increased proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons due to the porousness of international boundaries engenders sub-regional conflicts (Ojinnaka and Uhuegbu, 2025), as some conflict actor and criminal elements easily access arms and weapons that

fuels conflicts. In the Karamoja cluster areas; these conflicts often involve groups from different countries, such as the Pokot and Turkana from Kenya and the Dodoth, Jie, Sabinu and several Karimojong groups from Uganda. According to the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia Uganda (2014), between 1998 and 2008, cross-border attacks between these groups in Kenya and Uganda amounted to more than 800 human deaths, with about 450 fatalities reported for the year 2000 alone ([UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia Uganda, 2014](#); UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia. Kenya, 2014).

Powell, J. (2010) in his work: Karamoja: A literature review agree with [Stark \(2010\) view in his work Climate change and conflict in Uganda: The cattle corridor and Karamoja](#), that the problem created by the increased availability of modern weapons, particularly, SALW was made worse by the gradual erosion of customary conflict mitigation institutions, the lack of adequate state protection, well as the general vulnerability of pastoralist communities which are among the main factors contributing to communal conflicts in the Karamoja cluster area.

To say the least, the key factors that fuel Kenya-Uganda communal border conflicts are both climatic, security and institutional factors which centers on drought, automatic weapons proliferations and porous borders. In this vein, the porousness of the Kenyan-Ugandan border, in addition to drought and automatic weapons proliferations provides further opportunities for livestock raiding, as raiders are able to escape across the border and evade prosecution [Matthysen et al \(2008\) in their paper the Karamoja Cluster of eastern Africa: Arms transfers and their repercussions on communal security perceptions](#) contends that on several occasions, groups such as the Pokot have also moved across the border to avoid disarmament by the Kenyan Army, hence the permeability of the borders facilitates the illicit transit of weapons. There are disturbing tendencies in the Karamoja Cluster area, where cattle raids, illegal firearms are trending, while education is been neglected in favour of herding. (B-Saharan Africa, 2026).

It is the position of this Paper that because these communities at the border region of Kenya and Uganda depends on traditional nomadic lifestyle and rely on herding livestock as source of livelihood, it has influenced their economic activities, social structures, and cultural identities. The dynamics of the social structures, cultural identities and economic activities of the people contributes to the delicate tensions and conflicts among them. Thus scarcity of resource and the competition over grazing land and water resources eventually results in violent conflicts. Therefore, the governments and Kenya and Uganda needs to collaboratively and collectively evolve a workable human relations approach to the conflicts.

The Management of Cross-Border Communal Conflicts by Kenya and Uganda Authorities

Kenya and Ugandan authorities has made several efforts to stem the tide of conflicts in their border communities. According to [Powell \(2010\)](#) the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have in the past adopted heavy handed military disarmament strategies in the cross border region, which have been criticized for excessive brutality and for making disarmed communities susceptible to attacks by other groups, which were able to avoid disarmament by crossing the border.

However, in the recent times, the Kenya and Ugandan authorities has change their approaches and strategies in resolving the conflicts. To promote cooperation and peaceful relations several cross-border peace-building initiatives are engaging local communities and promoting cooperative sharing of pastoral resources ((B-Saharan Africa, 2026).The Kenya and Ugandan governments adopted more participatory approaches to conflict prevention. Recently, through this same framework both the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have begun working more closely with civil society, community stakeholders and non-interests groups 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 (Climate Diplomacy, 2025).

Accordingly, some institutional and community organizations: Riam Riam (Kenya) and KOPEIN (Uganda) have played mediatory role 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 (Climate Diplomacy, 2026). In 2005, a provisional peace agreement was reached between Turkana and Dodoth communities from Kenya and Uganda through the strategy of participatory approaches to conflict prevention ([Leff, 2009](#)).

As part of participatory strategy, senior security officials and community leaders from Uganda and Kenya have met severally, to strengthen peaceful coexistence and shared natural resource management during a cross-border dialogue. Not too long ago, senior security officials and community leaders from Uganda and Kenya met to strengthen peaceful co-existence and shared natural resource management during a cross-border dialogue in Kaalae Village, Kotido District. The meeting, which

brought together leaders from Nakapelimoru in Uganda and Nakitongo in Turkana County, Kenya, focused on fostering community-led initiatives to address climate challenges and conflict while promoting regional cooperation (Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF), 3 May 2025). Charles Ichogor, the Kotido Resident District Commissioner (RDC) urged communities to embrace unity under the East African Community (EAC) framework and stated thus:

"I call upon you, as the Ateker community, to live harmoniously and continue enjoying the peace and cooperation fostered by the EAC. Let's work together for the prosperity and development of both Uganda and Kenya" (Ichogor, 2025, as cited in EINNO, 2024).

Ichogor stated the needs for joint security efforts to prevent cross-border crime and discourage armed herders from entering Uganda and acknowledging that cross-border security and stability is necessary for the socio-economic development of Kenya and Uganda (Ichogor, 2025). In the same vein, Brig Gen Wilberforce Sserunkuma, Commander of the Ugandan People Defence Forces (UPDF), 3 Infantry Division, reaffirmed the military's commitment to sustained peace through disarmament operations under Executive Order No. 3. Gen Sserunkuma contends that Peaceful co-existence should not be seasonal, but sustainable, built on the foundation of East African brotherhood, and guaranteed Turkana pastoralists of access to Ugandan grazing land, but stated the needs for compliance with laws and hygiene standards of the host communities to avoid conflict (Sserunkuma, 2025). To this end, reducing the illicit spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons through disarmament and government-led development programmes was considered as a viable approach to ensure everlasting peace and security of the border communities.

However, the dialogue between the border communities was well attended by civil society groups and local residents, government agents and stakeholders and representatives of the international community. It marked another concerted effort by the Kenya and Uganda governments' effort to strengthen communal ties between the Ateker communities across both Kenya and Uganda borders. The dialogue was indeed, a source of Confidence Building Measures (CBM), and emphasis was made to ensure sharing of water and pasture resources as a measure to ensure the people are united, for business to thrive and peace to prevail (Namuya, 2025).

Also, the government of Kenya and Uganda evolved Cross-border peace-building initiatives. In this approach, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is supporting cultural activities and other grassroots initiatives that promote peace across the Uganda-Kenya border (Stark et al., 2011; Climate-diplomacy, 2025). 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 (Leff, 2009).

The reports of Policy briefing by Karamoja-Turkana Community Research Team (KTCRT) published by Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and supported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), as cited in EINNO Projects Nigeria & South East Geo-Political and Strategic Information Network (SEGPSIN) (2023). (2023), proposes Local Community Solutions (LCS) to insecurity along the Uganda-Kenya borders. It is hoped that cultural dynamics mixed with grassroots initiatives can promote peace across the Uganda-Kenya border (EINNO Projects, 2024). Accordingly, a number of Public, Private and Social institutions and initiatives have engaged local communities across the border, with the view to promote cooperative sharing of pastoral resources (Stark, 2011) which is believed to be the most serious cause of the problem.

Another bold step at the management of cross-border communal conflicts between Kenya and Uganda was the June, 2001, inauguration East Africa's first United Nations Peace Support Operations (PSO) training centre in Kenya (Redfern, Mwamunyang, & Oduol, 2001, as cited in EINNO Projects Report, 2024). This additional landmark development occurred at the moment of tension between the two countries (Uganda and Kenya) and was a demonstration collective sub-regional and international commitment at enhancing sub-regional regional capacities and capability for peace and security. This international efforts offered hope for resolving the conflicts that have historically affected the borders of this troubled region (Ng'etich, & Tanui, 2025). The initiative and bold establishment of the Peace Support Operations (PSO) training centre played a crucial role in the support and management of communal cross-border conflicts throughout the East African region. The PSO training Centre have secured the East Africa's geostrategic landscape from unnecessary conflicts among border communities and have actively been providing human resources capacity to bolster peacekeeping missions coordinated by East Africa Commissions.

Equally, [Lambroschini \(2011\)](#) agree that the strategy of using cross border programming to address cross border conflict dynamics in Karamoja (Uganda) and Pokot (Kenya) is a viable approach to cross-border communal conflict management. Lambroschini contends that as ACTED is building pastoral field schools and training 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](#)).

In this light, it is evident that collaborative approach is required among the stakeholders to address the problems emanating from both natural resource management, arms proliferation and sub-regional dichotomy, as some systemic, socio-cultural and political issues are known to have influenced these conflicts, and do not recognize the political boundaries of individual counties (Bond, 2014). This underscores importance of looking beyond the natural, economic and political systems towards the cultural dynamics that underpins the society which also influence the manner in which conflict is played out (Bond, 2014).

The Challenges of Cross-Border Peace-Building

According to [Ng'etich, & Tanui \(2025\)](#), the dynamics of cross-border movements between border communities in Kenya and Uganda have catalyzed into convergence of competing interests over scarce resources, leading to a complex web of security challenges. These challenges include severe overgrazing, facilitating the rapid spread of both animal and human diseases, and the alarming proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the region. The issues of cattle rustling and cross-border grazing have intensified, contributing to the rise of armed militias and increasing instances of famine and inter-ethnic conflicts. It should be noted that the border region between Kenya and Uganda is home to a large population of pastoral communities that depend heavily on a traditional lifestyle rooted in nomadic pastoralism. These communities rely on herding livestock as their primary source of livelihood, which influences their economic activities, social structures, and cultural identities (Climate Diplomacy, 2026). This way of life no doubt contributes to heightened tensions and conflicts among different governments in the area, as competition over grazing land and water resources do constantly lead to disputes, sometimes violent conflicts (B-Saharan Africa, 2026).

Again, there are insightful and significant changes in the security environment in the Kenya-Uganda border region that have fuelled economic terrorism. The new security environment have engendered large-scale livestock raiding, as group of criminal elements in the area uses violence to dispose others their means of livelihood. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (2014) highlights that in 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.

The Kenya and Uganda authorities together with numerous stakeholders in East Africa: NGOs, faith-based organizations and grassroots initiatives have hitherto, made several multidimensional efforts to overcome the challenges of management of Karamoja-Turkana communities' cross-border communal conflicts. They have engaged in various strategies and policy approaches, conventions have been held and communiqués issued, in addition to some holistic and systems approach to curb cross-border communal violence (Climate Diplomacy, 2025). Examples of these efforts are 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 among others. This Cross-Border Conflict Management Initiative has played leading roles in the management of cross border conflicts.

Obviously, the problem of cross-border conflicts requires a collaborative approach among the stakeholders to address the problems emanating from natural resource management, arms proliferation and sub-regional dichotomy. This is because the dynamics of the conflict defies a recognized political boundaries of nation-states and both in content and nature is influenced by a systemic, socio-cultural and political issues (Bond, 2014). This underscores the importance of looking beyond the natural, economic and political systems towards the cultural dynamics that underpins the society which also influence the manner in which conflict is played out (Bond, 2014).

Though these complex factors that account for the endless conflicts in the Kenya and Uganda border communities has been tracked by both governments and Non-Governmental Organizations, and effective Mediations and Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached to prevent further violence and resolve undergoing conflicts. Yet, the effectiveness of these measures and peace strategies to manage and resolve these conflicts has been put in doubt, as fear of attacks from groups across the border remains an ongoing concern among local communities (Climate Diplomacy, 2026).

The major problem lies on the implementation of the various resolutions, as bold initiatives is lacking in detail policy documents which can effectively tackle the root causes of the conflict (EINNO Project Nigeria Report, 2024). Regrettably, the both past and present governments of Kenya, and Uganda, have largely neglected the implementation of any meaningful corrective measures or tailored development strategies designed to address these issues of continued cross-border conflicts (B-Saharan Africa, 2026). The key challenges are the openly lack of policy frameworks to guide peace building, evolve early conflict warning strategy and strengthening of the response structures. Evidently, this has proved to be most challenging to the cross border peacemaking and peace building efforts, and have obviously undermined the capacity of both Kenya and Ugandan authorities, and their allied None-Governmental Organizations to achieve lasting peace and stability in the conflict affected communities. The result is that the efforts made by the governments and the stakeholders have not yielded expected result, as attacks from each side across the border remains an ongoing.

Both [Lambroschini \(2011\)](#) & [Powell \(2010\)](#) emphasized the needs for coordination and cooperation between Kenya and Uganda governments and the stakeholders, as the chief challenges to cross-border conflicts management initiatives remains the logistics and huge financial commitment required by the project. In this vein, the implication of multiple stakeholders and the coordination of multiple actions across the border entail high organizational costs, whereas most local organizations and leaders lack the necessary capacities ([Climate Diplomacy, 2026](#)). Accordingly, scholars of conflict management view that disregard of traditional conflict mitigation institutions and lack of active community involvement further compound these problems ([Climate Diplomacy, 2026](#)). This is added to the fact that disarmament needs to be better coordinated and handled across the border and the security of disarmed communities needs material and civil infrastructural to be improvement ([Lambroschini, 2011; Powell, 2010](#)).

According to B-Saharan Africa (2026) in spite of increasing efforts to manage the conflict, 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.

In this light, scholars and experts in peace-building and conflict management regrets that despite the plethora of Peace-building and conflict management institutions operating in Kenya and Uganda, not much has been achieved, as peace is often elusive in the border communities, with lack of strong conflict management and peace-building processes put in place by the governments (Mkutu, 2007), the violence has continued. Though it has been drastically reduced, due to the peace agreements, there are still isolated incidents of violence between the communities, as attacks from each side across the border remains an ongoing but in lesser scale ([Climate Diplomacy, 2026](#))

4. The Way Foreword

The border communities of Karamoja-Turkana Kenya and Uganda have history of cross border communal conflicts. The communities are pastoral and depend heavily on farming and rely on herding livestock as their primary source of livelihood, which influences their economic activities, social structures, and cultural identities ([Climate Diplomacy, 2026](#)). Their pastoral way of life contributes to heightened tensions and conflicts among different ingenious communities in the cross border conflicts area, as competition over grazing land and water resources do lead to disputes and violent conflicts among them ([Climate Diplomacy, 2025](#)).

In the same vein, the population pressure in these communal cross border conflict areas is forcing these border communities to use wetlands for agriculture, and given the 'artificial' or moveable nature of the colonial boundary demarcation, this have been a serious challenge to Kenya and Uganda authorities, and other concerned stakeholders seeking for permanent solution to the conflicts.

However, the geopolitical changes, indeed, changes in the security environment has made the Karamoja-Turkana Kenya and Uganda cross border conflicts to be driven by a complex interplay of factors: resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and inter-communal tensions.

The conflict is today, economically rooted and pastoral in origin and character. Due to complex security environment, it has taken the character of cross border criminality and economic terrorism, as groups uses violence to dispose others their means of livelihood. The cross border conflicts have indeed, posed serious challenges to peace and stability of the region, and have seriously impacted the socio-economic and political development of area (Mukwe, 2011).

The governments of Republics of Kenya and Uganda, community stakeholders, Non-Governmental Organizations, Churches, relevant Civil Society Organization (CSO), Men and Women of goodwill and Non parochial-interests groups have made several efforts at reaching permanent and

sustainable solution to the conflicts, and have worked more closely in resolving the cross cross-border violent conflicts. Conflict prevention and sensitization campaigns, mediation interventions and negotiations for the safe return of stolen cattle are core elements of this conflict management strategy (Climate Diplomacy, 2025).

Notwithstanding the timeless efforts to manage the conflict, 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 volatile border areas. Thus the dynamics of the social structures, cultural identities and economic activities of the people, particularly, the scarcity of resource and the competition over grazing land and water resources have continued to fuel the violent conflicts.

In this light, based on the findings of the study, this Paper makes the following recommendations for permanent solution to the problem of Kenya–Uganda Karamoja–Turkana cross border communal conflicts:

The governments of Republics of Kenya and Uganda should setup a joint taskforce in the Karamoja–Turkana cross border communities to be made up of senior government representatives, stakeholders to be made up of youths, men and women from every affected border community and representatives of farmers and nomadic pastoralists from the border communities this approach will address the problem emanating from both natural resource management, arms proliferation and sub-regional dichotomy. The Joint Taskforce should work out a sustainable and peaceful management of such trans-boundary natural resources, with the mandate to ensure that the boundaries are clearly marked with permanent features. This will prevent conflicts and ensure good neighborly relations between cross border communities.

Again, since the conflict is influenced by some systemic, socio-cultural and political issues that is beyond recognize political boundaries, the governments of Kenya and Uganda ,and other stakeholders should look beyond the natural, economic and political systems , but focus on the cultural dynamics that underpins the society and influence the manner in which conflict is played out. Thus the stakeholders needs to collaboratively and collectively evolve a workable human relations approach to the conflicts.

Also, the Paper recommends the adoption of Local Community Solution (LCS) strategic approach to address the problem. Local Community Solutions (LCS) to communal cross border conflicts intends to engage local communities across Uganda–Kenya border, with the view to promote cooperative sharing of scares natural and environmental resources. This approach mixed with the cultural dynamics the grassroots initiatives can promote peace across the Uganda-Kenya border. Accordingly, a number of relevant Public, Private and Social institutions will have to engage local communities across the border, with the view to promote cooperative relationship among them.

In the same vein, the Paper recommends that the governments of Republics of Kenya and Uganda should setup permanent military / security presences in the Karamoja–Turkana cross border communities. While ensuring the protection of lives and property in border communities, the military/security operatives will synergize and share intelligence information to enable them stem the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) across Kenya and Ugandan borders. This is strategically important as it would prevent the continued escalation of the Karamoja–Turkana cross border communal conflicts.

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