



EKOI!

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Etem and Akiriket

"The cure of all problems which occur is an etem [community meeting]. The best way to solve conflicts and taking Karamoja forward is through etem. People should stop demanding for food or drinks and attend etem with no excuse" Loluk Paul, Elder Lobanya

In the months of July and August we have been concentrating on taking action on three themes – peace, relations between herders and cultivators and relations with the Uganda Wildlife Authority. We also continue to research - we ask questions, learning more about each theme, documenting and giving *eko*i (news and analysis) to all interested groups. In this issue of *Eko*i we present our findings on these three areas. Next month we will publish a book of our full research findings.



'Let all the Jie Respect the Cow'

In July we visited a kraal in Nakapelimoru and the kraal leader said "hai! Just a few days ago a group of people came here saying 'you have put your kraal on the place of our cultivation.' They beat us. Some had to go to hospital. We are very angry about the beating and the animals that were eaten. We had come to Nakapelimoru from near Dodoth because it is safer here. We know that Jie is one place. The land is for all of us. We know that we can go anywhere in Jie to graze, but the people of Nakapelimoru have mishandled us."

That story spread across Jie and there was a lot of concern, everyone was talking about it and asking "why are people of Jie beating other Jie?" So the elders held an *etem* of the six sub-counties. They met at Lokorok. The elders found the people of Nakapelimoru in the wrong. One old man from Nakapelimoru, who was worried, said "Eh the whole of Jie is talking about us! And curses are being put on us! Let us admit that it is really very bad that we beat those people when they came to graze here."

"The meeting at Lokorok handled delicate and complex issues. If people did not meet, relationships would have been hurt. Karimojong ways of doing things are effective" – Nyanga Paulina, Team Member

But the meeting in Lokorok did not resolve the matter because the ones who had done the beating had refused to come there. The elders at the *etem* announced that Nakapelimoru is against cows.

The *akiriket* (parliament) of four sub-counties of Jie met at Lomuth in August and the team were invited to attend because we have been researching and giving *eko*i on the issue of conflict between herders and cultivators. The elders from Nakapelimoru stood up at the *akiriket* and said, "forgive us, people of Jie. It was small ignorant people who made the mistake of beating the herders. Can you forgive us?" The answer came: "you had annoyed the law of Jie 25 years ago and now you want to annoy us again! But now that you have accepted the mistake, we will not punish you."

And then the elders of the *akiriket* made a pronouncement that is the law for Jie: "Let all the Jie respect the cow. A Jie herder may put his kraal in any part of Jie." This law is at the top. If communities are not already organised, each one will hold *etem* to put in place a system of protection of the grazing land, the trackways and the cultivated areas.





An old man called Koryang Timothy said “we have a group of young Karimojong here who have come to remind us about being mindful of the animals. Let us bless this group and pray their work bears fruit.”

When we consulted our elders in Moroto, Napak and Kotido on this story, they pointed out that such land disputes can be managed through *ekokwa* or *etem* (community meetings). Decisions are made strong by the decisions of *akiriket*, which are formal Karimojong parliaments. It is not necessary to take the governance of Karimojong land beyond the *akiriket*. The team agreed with the elders that we should spread the information to elders and communities all around the three districts.



Apalopma stood and addressed the Dodoth. “For me I want peace. I am peaceful. My kraal is about 15 kilometres away from here. I am near you. Where are your kraals? You are hundreds of kilometres away, inside Dodoth. It means you are the ones who still want to fight.” The discussion went on and on and on until they reached the time when they agreed.



Many things were resolved in that meeting. We will mention a few. They agreed to bring the kraals of Jie and Dodoth and Turkana and settle together. “To begin it,” they said, “the Jie who are visiting here and the Dodoth who are staying here should spend the night and eat together in the same place. Tomorrow you Jie should take these Dodoth to your kraals and do the same. That will be the beginning of our peace.”

On the criminals who tend to break our peace, they said that a system is needed to make sure thieves and raiders who are caught stealing cows do not destabilize the peace. If a thief is taken to the police, the peace committee must see that he is not released because of a bribe. The RDC Kotido confirmed at the meeting that the police should be guided by the peace committees in this.

Many things were talked. Women and men were exchanging. When they began they were quarrelling and annoyed, they were all given the opportunity to speak. They spoke and spoke until they were exchanging good words. Then the women started ululating, things have come to normal now, they came from high, high, high anger and now they are ok. Aha we are alive! Then they saw things are ok.

“People of Jie must know that the cows were not in Nakapelimoru for pleasure, but because of insecurity from Dodoth. The answer is to bring peace with Dodoth.” Elder, Lokorok

The People's Peace

Many men and women elders, youth and organisations went to the Jie-Dodoth peace meeting at Loyoro on August 9th. The organisations were introduced at the start, including our team and others who had supported the process up to that day, the government, ADRA, Kopein and many more. Then everything was left in the hands of the people. It was the men and women of Dodoth, Turkana and Jie who were the ones who spoke that day.

On arrival to the meeting place some people from Loyoro were worried. They said ‘we don’t see the people of Jie, Apalopama and Apaloputh our neighbours, people we fight with.’ The meeting started when Apalopama and many other elders from both Jie and Dodoth arrived. The Dodoth were the first to speak. Later a young boy from Jie stood up and the people cried “sit down! We want Apalopama, the elder, to speak on this occasion!”

Then they ended the meeting there and they had to transport the old men back to their places. The youth remained there eating together as had been agreed.

When we consulted our elders in Moroto, Napak and Kotido on this story, they pointed out that akirket will always manage peace most effectively and this can

be supported, but not led, by government and NGOs. They added that peace can be maintained if punishment and compensation for theft and murder is organised through the peace committees in liaison with the police.

People of Rupa meet UWA

On the morning of 30th July we went Rupa for the meeting called by the elders with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). We found elders and other community members. UWA was represented by Okello Sam, the Warden for Law Enforcement. The elders began by saying "we have called you here because we want to know why government has refused for us to go to Lotisan, the place that is currently the reserve. The bones of our ancestors are all buried there. It was our sub county and we were chased by insecurity from there." Okello thanked the people present for inviting him to share with them. He asked them to be patient because the issue has not yet been resolved since it is with the President's office. "You can keep your animals in the reserve but do not cultivate there yet until this is resolved" he said. Then he read the Uganda Wildlife Act.

In September, when we met elders in Rupa to follow up, they said "we appreciate that you tried to help us to meet the UWA people, but sadly we have never come to an agreement of something physically done, so we are not very satisfied yet." It shows that these difficult issues involving non-Karimojong and Karimojong need continued dialogue between people and government.

"Kobebe is our ancestral land and we used to stay with these animals. They gave us our initiation names. Some of us are giraffes, some are leopards, some are lions. For us Karimojong we are from animals."

Elder, Rupa





Our analysis of the three themes of the research shows that since issues of herder-cultivator conflict and of making peace are internal to Karimojong, they are being dealt with without delay through *etem* and *akiriket*. When it comes to issues that are the result of forces external to Karamoja, such as people's relationship with the Uganda Wildlife Authority over the issue of gazetted areas, we find that resolution of problems is more complex, as it involves two different systems. We are committed to continuing to research both internal and external issues.



About us

We are the Karimoja Action Research Team. We investigate matters raised by the people by travelling far and wide, staying in kraals, new settlements (ngakambi) and villages. We share our analysis with the people and elders, take part in *etem/ekukwa* and *akiriket* (councils) and we agree with the people and elders what may be done to resolve problems and strengthen Karamoja. Our team of young people is advised by 24 men and women elders.

As Karimojong working for Karamoja, we have been supported with funds from Irish Aid through the Institute

of Development Studies, UK. Our current funding comes to an end in October 2013. We are in negotiations for new funding and if you'd like to become a partner, please get in touch with us or visit us in one of our offices in Moroto and Kotido or see below for our mobile numbers and email. We are very friendly.

We have done this research since 2011. We have published "*Strength, Creativity and Livelihoods of Karimojong Youth*" and our bulletin, "*Ekoi*". We are now producing our full research findings for this year. This book will be published in November 2013.



We are supported by Restless Development, the Institute of Development Studies, Pastoralist Communication Initiative and Irish Aid. If you'd like to know more about our work, please contact us at our office in Moroto or Kotido or on youthresearchteam@gmail.com or Moses (Moroto) +256 (0)773967065 or Jane (Kotido) +256 (0)779216100.