



Journey of Peace and Transformation in Karamoja: Disarm and Protect the Gain

A Reflection by Adupa John Robert Akiiki

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“Disarm and Protect the Gain”



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KARAMOJA PEACE AND
TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY
(KAPATU) PROJECT

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The Awakening of a Region

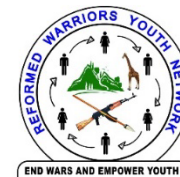
Karamoja Reborn: From Conflict to Courage



- Once Uganda's most fragile frontier, Karamoja stood as both a symbol of resilience and hardship.
- The sound of gunfire has given way to the hum of markets, the rhythm of classrooms, and songs of peace.
- Transformation driven by reformed warriors, mothers, and visionary youth who chose **dialogue over division**.

“Peace begins with one heart transformed — and that heart can transform a community.”

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From Warrior to Peace Ambassador

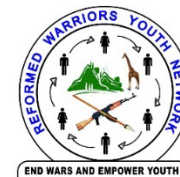
My Journey: From Gunfire to Harmony



- At 15, Adupa became part of the *karachuna* warrior culture.
- A near-death ambush while in a cattle raid mission in Kotido became the turning point.
- Redemption through compassion and mentorship from **Sr. Christine Akiiki**.
- Transitioned from the bush to the classroom — now earning a Diploma in Social Work and Social administration, leading community transformation.

“A gun may silence a man, but opportunity transforms him.”

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The Genesis of Conflict

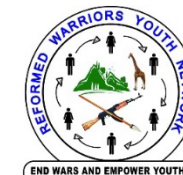
Understanding the Pain Behind the Peace



- Conflict born not of hatred but of survival — cattle as life, wealth, and identity.
- Colonial “Closed District” policies deepened poverty and resentment.
- The gun replaced the spear — and with it, honor gave way to fear.
- Traditional leadership weakened; revenge replaced reconciliation.

“The gun replaced the spear, and with it, honor was replaced by fear. But even in the ashes of war, the spirit of Karamoja refused to die.”

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The Turning Point: Disarmament and Reform

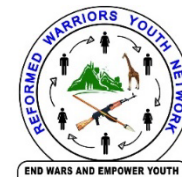
When a Nation Listened and a People Believed



- The **Government of Uganda** and **UPDF** launched a community-centered disarmament.
- Fear turned into trust through dialogue and partnership.
- Over **50,000 illegal firearms** recovered by 2010.
- Disarmament restored dignity — the foundation of lasting peace.

“True peace was not brought by the gun being taken away — it was brought by the courage of those who chose to believe in life again.”

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Building Peace Beyond Karamoja

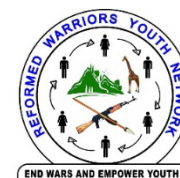
The Ripple of Renewal



- Karamoja's peace inspired **Teso, Lango, Acholi, and West Nile**.
- Youth-led peace clubs and cultural dialogues spread the model.
- Cross-border *Ateker Peace Dialogues* fostered unity among Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom, and Jie communities.

““The same roads that once carried raiders now carry traders. Peace has become our new border.”

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RWYN: End Wars and Empower Youth

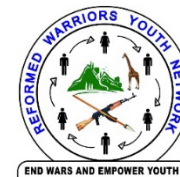
From the Ashes, a Movement Was Born



- RWYN began with reformed warriors meeting under trees to share stories of hope.
- Evolved into a multi-district youth movement: “End Wars and Empower Youth.”
- Empowering youth with skills — farming, mechanics, crafts, entrepreneurship.
- Cross-border caravans and peace festivals turn warriors into builders.

“We were once called warriors because we took life. Now we are called warriors because we protect it.”

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Challenges and the Road Ahead

Peace Is a Journey, Not a Destination

1. Persistent poverty and limited market access.
2. Youth unemployment and idle potential.
3. Climate change — the new battlefield.
4. Cross-border insecurity and porous boundaries.
5. Unhealed psychological trauma.

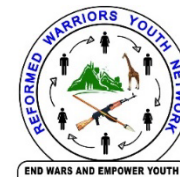
Vision:

Transform herders into entrepreneurs, borderlands into trade corridors, and pain into productivity.

“The road ahead is long, but we no longer walk it in fear. We walk it in faith — step by step, together.”



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Partnerships for Peace

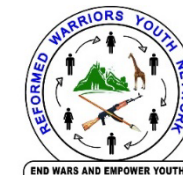
Many Hands, One Mission



- **Government of Uganda:** Operation Livelihood Initiatives For Transformation-LIFT in Karamoja, Parish Development Model.
- **Faith & Civil Society:** OWC, AFLI, Safe Child Uganda, Caritas Moroto, TPO Uganda, KHH, DRC
- **Development Partners:** UNDP, GIZ, EU, USAID.
- **RWYN:** The youth-led heart of grassroots change.

“Partnerships are the bridge between hope and sustainability — the reason why Karamoja’s peace is not a miracle, but a shared achievement.”

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Lessons for Uganda and the World

Karamoja: A Classroom for Humanity

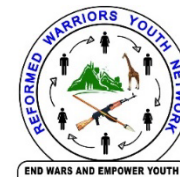
Eight Key Lessons:

1. **Community ownership** sustains peace.
2. **Empowerment, not disarmament alone**, ends conflict.
3. **Culture heals** when it is embraced.
4. **Youth inclusion** is transformative.
5. **Women** anchor recovery.
6. **Climate resilience** is peace resilience.
7. **Partnerships** multiply progress.
8. **Transformation begins in the heart.**

“The people of Karamoja — once defined by conflict — now define peace.”



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Conclusion and Voices from the Field

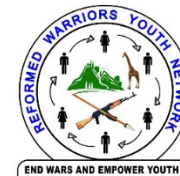
Disarm and Protect the Gain — The Journey Continues



- *"I lost my sons to raids. Today, one builds houses."* — Mother from Moroto.
- *"I was a warrior; now I trade goats and peace."* — Youth leader, Napak.
- *"The spear once defended life — now words do."* — Elder, Kaabong.
- *"We no longer run; we lead."* — Women's SACCO, Nabilatuk.

"Our peace is not perfect, but it is ours — born from the ashes, sustained by unity, and carried forward by the faith of a reformed generation."

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Call to Action

Protect the Gains, Empower the Future

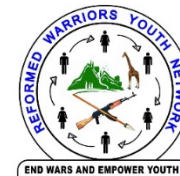
- Invest in **youth employment** and **peace economies**.
- Strengthen **cross-border cooperation** through IGAD and AU platforms, Bilateral MoUs and Cross-border Resources Sharing Agreements (RSA)-schools, health centres and Water points
- Turn raiding routes (Corridors) into Trade Routes (Corridors)-Cross-border Markets
- Support **RWYN's next phase** — expanding youth-led peace and enterprise centers.

“We once fought to survive. Now we live to build.”



END WARS AND EMPOWER YOUTH

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Contact and Acknowledgements

With Gratitude

- Government of Uganda — Office of the President, UPDF, and ministries (MGLSD, MOLG, MOFA).
- Development partners and NGOs.
- RWYN members and volunteers.

Contact:

📍 *Lotisan Sub-County, Matheniko County, Moroto District*

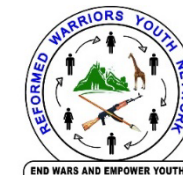
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Motto: *End Wars and Empower Youth*



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