



STRATEGY FOR ACCOUNTABILITY
TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS IN
KARAMOJA, UGANDA (2025-2030)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy is an outcome of a consultative process with diverse stakeholders and an analysis of the challenges and opportunities of community-based structures for effective community participation in humanitarian and development programmes. It is a response to delivering assistance in the challenging context of the humanitarian, peace, and development nexus in Karamoja. Addressing the capacity gaps of community-based structures and their associated structural problems becomes more necessary as the challenges grow in scope, scale and complexity. Additionally, there is a need for a change in the way partners tackle community accountability. It is also necessary for the referral mechanism to shift from an individual-based system to a collective system that works in harmony with the government and other NGOs and is capable of fostering the commitment of all key stakeholders to strengthen community engagement and programmatic impact.

These challenges require a collective response and mutual responsibility. Oxfam, UN Women, and Communication for Development Uganda (CDFU) have committed to a collective mechanism to strengthen Accountability to the Affected Populations (AAP) in all the nine districts of Karamoja. Other partners and the District Local Governments are expected to join in the efforts to implement a collective AAP mechanism. The rationale behind UN and partners continuing and deepening involvement in the AAP is key to achieving the humanitarian, peace, and development nexus in Karamoja, and it is based on two arguments. First, without an effective system for accountability to affected populations, it is impossible for the UN and its partners to engage effectively with how aid is delivered and impacted. Second, barriers to accountability to affected populations are not being addressed to the scale necessary, and tackling those barriers through existing community-based structures is necessary to sustainably ensure local structures' functioning.

The proposed strategy is built on an analysis of the progress, challenges, and opportunities of working with community-based structures for accountability. It identified and committed to four strategic objectives to chart a path forward to a collective and stronger AAP in Karamoja in the next five years, from 2025 to 2030:

- a. Strengthen the capacity of community-based structures and the affected populations for a collective and sustainable programme impact;
- b. Improve access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints and feedback;
- c. Strengthen the systems and procedures for mainstreaming community perspectives in project cycle management; and
- d. Reinforce organisational efforts to strengthen community engagement and programmatic impact.

The four strategic objectives correspond to four Core Humanitarian Standards, namely 1, 3, 5 and 6. They will guide collective efforts to meaningfully engage the affected populations to better contribute to decision-making, increase their influence over programme design and quality, raise concerns and provide feedback, and ultimately improve their strategies and capacities for a collective and sustainable impact. To assess the progress against the four strategic directions, the strategy commits to regular monitoring, meetings, and annual reviews to document AAP practices and to improve delivery and programme impact.

A risk-mitigation plan and management structure will complement the strategic set of actions, which will handle a collective AAP and the layers for decision-making and oversight. The strategy also outlines a sustainability plan focusing on the sustainability of impact and the basic principles guiding the quest for the sustainability of AAP activities. Finally, the document makes recommendations to strengthen AAP principles and practices. The strategy acknowledges no “one-size-fits-all” approach and recommends a flexible approach adaptable to unique district circumstances. It also calls for a collaborative effort of the UN and its partners, NGOs, the private sector, community-based structures, and the Government of Uganda to attain the strategy's objectives.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CARM	Community Accountability and Referral Mechanism
CFRM	Community Feedback and Referral Mechanism
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDFU	Communication for Development Foundation Uganda
CDO	Community Development Officer
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
ELA	Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FIDA	Uganda Association of Women Lawyers
GARD	Grassroots Alliance for Rural Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
KOPEIN	Karamoja Peace Initiative
KII	Key Informants Interview
LC	Local Council
DLG	District Local Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDM	Parish Development Model
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PWD	Persons with Disability
SACCO	Savings and Credit Co-operatives
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
VHT	Village Health Team
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND KARAMOJA CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

AAP is an active commitment of aid workers to ensure that the voices of the people they serve are at the centre of everything they do within a programme cycle management framework. The intervening agencies have been working with community-based structures and enjoy the comparative advantage of cooperating with those structures to engage with communities. To strengthen community engagement in decision-making, accountability, and feedback mechanisms in Karamoja, Oxfam, UN Women, and Communication for Development Uganda (CDFU) have committed to the AAP strategy for all nine districts of Karamoja.

The commitment aligns with the 2011 Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) decision to make AAP the core of its emergency policy and practice. Similarly, the commitment is in line with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) 1, 3, 5 and 6 and the associated quality criteria¹ and draws on lessons from past efforts and experiences to demonstrate the agencies' commitment to accountability and to hold their team members to account as representatives of the agencies.

Placing the needs, preferences, and views of the affected populations at the centre of all interventions throughout the programme cycle is crucial. It enables organisations to provide a protective environment, empowers individuals and communities for decision-making, and increases their influence over programme design and quality. It also allows the affected population to raise concerns, and receive relevant and appropriate assistance, which is useful in improving the communities strategies and capacities for a collective and sustainable impact. Therefore, the strategy calls for a collective response and mutual responsibility to deliver assistance in Karamoja.

This strategy results from a consultative process with diverse stakeholders and an analysis of the challenges and opportunities of community-based structures for community engagement in decision-making, accountability, and feedback mechanisms in Karamoja. It is based on evidence generated through literature review, consultative meetings with key stakeholders, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving groups associated with community-based structures and other community members. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and a survey focusing on community perceptions of, and experiences with, current community structures, community needs, preferred communication strategies, and mechanisms for reporting sensitive matters (e.g., Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Gender-Based Violence (GBV)).

Consultations with local communities sought to establish the latter's level of influence over, and the nature of, their participation in programme design and implementation. Similarly, the consultations captured stakeholders' perspectives on enhancing the effectiveness of aid delivery, as well as existing mechanisms for complaints and feedback. A total of 24 FGDs involving 288 people, 20 interviews, and 17 KIIs were conducted. While the FGDs were conducted with members of community-based structures and other community members, 20 interviews were conducted with group leaders of various community-based structures, local leaders and ordinary members of the community, and KIIs were conducted with staff of UN partners, Abim NGO Forum, and district local governments. Finally, through the Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops and consultations with leaders of various community-based structures, participants helped to clarify and validate the findings. Their perspectives helped to identify

¹ Core Humanitarian Standards. <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS-Guidance-Notes-and-Indicators.pdf>

common elements that helped generalise the strategy for all the districts of Karamoja. A breakdown of the data-collection methods, participant categories, and the number of participants per category and district is presented in Annex 1 (Methods and process for the AAP strategy development).

The consultations focused on an analysis of the capacity and practices of the established community-based structures being used by the UN and its partners to deliver on the AAP commitment. Based on this analysis, a collective AAP strategy was developed. The strategy focuses on localized approaches to AAP, especially regarding how such approaches can be utilized to engage meaningfully. In particular, the capacity of community-based structures to refer cases, enhance their means to report, provide information and referrals through the established GBV and child protection referral pathways, and ensure better access to protection and assistance. Additionally, the strategy captures efforts to strengthen established complaint and feedback mechanisms and recommends how different stakeholders can meaningfully engage with and empower communities through the strategy.

1.2 Context

The Karamoja region, which comprises nine districts,² is located in northeastern Uganda and is home to an estimated 1.4 million Karimojong.³ The complex humanitarian situation in Karamoja is driven by decades of illegal firearm possession, which the Karimojong exploited over the years to protect their livestock, raid cattle, conduct highway robberies, and sometimes kill innocent people.⁴ The historical

conflict, which has persisted to date, is further complicated by cross-border raids and violence, which extend to Kenya and South Sudan, impacting the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people.

The multi-layered and complex situation, aggravated by competition over the management of natural resources, especially pasture and water, in a communally-controlled land-tenure system, has resulted in disruption of livelihoods, food insecurity, increasing rates of severe, acute malnutrition, violations of human rights, protection and justice issues, and severely weakened basic social services and protection mechanisms.⁵ The other challenge is the prevalence of different forms of violence, including banditry, petty theft, rape and alcohol abuse.⁶ In addition, the affected communities face constant threats of violent conflict, exacerbating issues, such as gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

In the face of climate change and environmental challenges, the quest for resilient communities in Karamoja remains challenging.⁷ In particular, climatic shocks, including prolonged droughts and overstocking, have resulted in environmental degradation, necessitating a search for water and pasture outside Karamoja. The water and pasture crisis breeds competition for pastoral resources and the destruction of food crops, intensifying anxieties among the different groups in Karamoja and neighbouring districts. These challenges put animal life, the centerpiece of the Karimojong economy,⁸ in danger, destroying lives and livelihoods and undermining communities' ability to build resilience.

² Karamoja consists of nine districts: Kaabong, Kotido, Abim, Karenga, Nabilatuk, Moroto, Napak, Amudat and Nakapiripirit.

³ UBOS. 2024. "National Population and Housing Census 2024: Preliminary Results." Accessed? <https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/National-Population-and-Housing-Census-2024-Preliminary-Report.pdf>

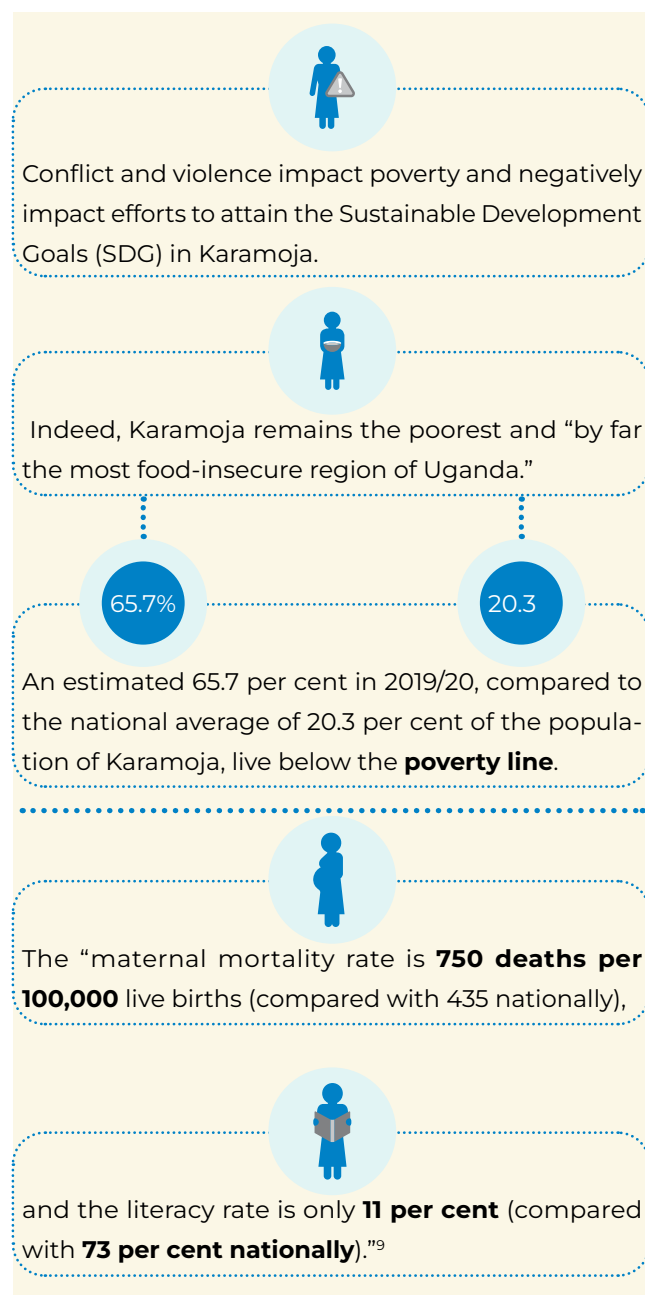
⁴ Gelsdorf, K., Maxwell, D., & Mazurana, D. 2012. Livelihoods, Basic Services and Social Protection in Northern Uganda and Karamoja (Vol. 4, pp. 1-55) <https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/7781.pdf>

⁵ Uganda Human Rights Commission, Karamoja, Special Report, 2004.

⁶ Gelsdorf, K., Maxwell, D., & Mazurana, D. 2012. Livelihoods, Basic Services and Social Protection in Northern Uganda and Karamoja (Vol. 4, pp. 1-55) <https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/7781.pdf>

⁷ Al Keyhani, A., India Belgharbi, A. G., & Szoke, M. Food for Peace: Reducing Climate Security Risks and Sustaining Peace Through Food and Agricultural Interventions. <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2023-03/ARP%204.8%20Food%20for%20Peace%20FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20Martin%20Nikolaus%20Szoke.pdf>

⁸ Novelli, B. 1999. Karimojong Traditional Religion: A Contribution. Kampala, Comboni Missionaries.



Unfortunately, the livelihood and food security challenges outweigh those of young people faced with multi-dimensional poverty. Karamoja faces an uphill task to recover and develop.

Efforts to end cattle rustling and to disarm the Karimojong have led to a reduction in the possession of illegal weapons. However, humanitarian

needs continue to exist, and other challenges mount. Intervening agencies in Karamoja partner with established community-based structures to ensure better outreach, assistance, access to protection, and response to unique risks and requirements. The structures were set up by UN agencies and different non-government organizations (NGOs) to improve the assistance programming. The UN Women and its partners wish to consolidate the existing structures and connect them to decision-making structures for the Karamoja response.

Working with community-based structures is an approach within AAP. It is aligned with the 2011 IASC key pillars and the CHS. The IASC commits humanitarian organisations to demonstrate leadership and transparency, ensuring complaints and feedback, participation, and monitoring and evaluation are part of its emergency policy and practice. Moreover, the CHS outlines key commitments and quality standards. The strategy is built on those key pillars and quality standards.

Therefore, in developing this strategy, the UN and its partners intend to ensure that programmes and interventions are routinely adapted, based on new information from communities, to allow people to meet their differential needs, address their vulnerabilities, and build on their pre-existing capacities. The strategy will also ensure timely, accurate, and reliable information and effective feedback mechanisms, enabling communication and decisions taken from the Humanitarian Country Team Light (HCT-light) and the UN Area Coordinators (UNACs) structures to be given back to communities through community-based structures. The strategy uses community-based structures to enhance those efforts. The situational analysis section below discusses the limitations and opportunities for using the common structures for engagement.

⁹ Gelsdorf, K., Maxwell, D., & Mazurana, D. 2012. Livelihoods, Basic Services and Social Protection in Northern Uganda and Karamoja (Vol. 4, pp. 1-55) <https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/7781.pdf>

2.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Community-based Structures for Community Engagement

The UN, its partners, and other organisations have been working with community-based structures to engage with the people they assist, aligning with their accountability commitments. These community-based structures can be categorized into formal and informal ones. The formal structures include the Local Councils (LCs), the politically elected representatives, and the district-service departments, which comprise the technical staff of the District Local Government. Meanwhile, the informal structures, which evolve organically or are formed by NGOs and/or the government for particular causes, include community volunteers and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). The broad volunteer category includes paralegals, Village Health Teams (VHTs) and volunteers representing organisations and committees/associations, such as GBV and Peace committees.

Intervening agencies enjoy the comparative advantage of using community-based structures to communicate with community members based on the nature and level of their engagement. Five categories of community-based structures were deemed appropriate for communicating with community members on government and NGO programmes. Communities cited community volunteers, the community development service department of the DLG, Local Councils, VSLAs, and religious institutions as common structures through which intervening agencies engage and can continue to engage with communities.

2.1.1 Community volunteers

The community volunteer model draws on context-specific experiences and is used by many organisations and local government districts to link intervening agencies and communities. The volunteers have diverse backgrounds, which is characteristic of the communities they come from. However, the common thread that cuts across them is that they are from local communities, knowledgeable about their environments, speak local

languages, are trusted, and are a useful entry point to the community on different issues. Whether VHT, legal volunteers/paralegals, mentors, PDM Team Leaders, or focal points for accountability platforms, community volunteers mobilise, inform, sensitise and train communities, mediate simple disputes, refer cases, and identify advocacy issues for organisations and government entities. Finally, they relay information to NGOs about their different projects, services, and conduct of NGO and government staff.

Volunteers have multiple links to issues affecting communities and are used by different organisations to perform multiple tasks and target different categories of people served. For example, some of FIDA's legal volunteers are religious leaders (Sheik), and others are VHTs. While religious leaders sensitise communities around their rights and obligations, VHT provides a link and a guide to NGO staff, such as community perceptions and responses to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH).

In addition to volunteers' roles, groups and community members indicated using volunteers to report sensitive cases, including childcare, custody, and neglect issues. The same information was confirmed in interviews with a local leader and a legal aid service provider. Community members and NGO staff believe using volunteers is cheaper, more accessible, and considered relatively anonymous when reporting sensitive issues, depending on the volunteer's personality and integrity. Moreover, decisions arising from reporting to volunteers are deemed more likely to be enforced and yield justice.

However, some community members fear that if the information provided by a volunteer with potential bias is relied upon in decision-making, the decisions may not be fair. Others are worried that organisations risk recycling ideas and potentially using information not representative of the prevailing situations in the community. As a remedy, it was proposed that NGOs should, in addition to their agents, work with relevant community members to cross-check their information and ensure active engagement with community members through community dialogues, meetings,

training, spot visits, and monitoring and evaluation.

2.1.2 Community Development Services Departments of District Local Governments

The community development services department is a formal service delivery structure. Through this department, districts and sub-counties engage communities, capture their perspectives on their felt needs, and coordinate and enhance the implementation of government programmes, especially development grants. The department uses parish chiefs to engage communities in project cycle management and budget-allocation processes from parish to sub-county levels directly through community barazas.

Together with district standing committees, the community development services department oversees and monitors NGO programmes and projects, ensuring they yield results for the intended beneficiaries. The department also brings together the political and technical teams to provide oversight and to implement programmes. For example, the Parish Development Model (PDM) is a government programme known for group formation and activities.

The department engages with various issues, including training, seed distribution, and family welfare. Community members engage CDOs, mainly university graduates familiar with civil matters, to handle issues such as GBV and related cases. Community members prefer CDOs to mediate some cases instead of taking matters to the courts or the police. Both are perceived as costly and sometimes ineffective in delivering justice. Some participants also reported walking into the different offices at the district and sub-county levels to get information about NGO and government programmes. The CDOs have supportive departments that handle various issues and advise people on the right channels.

2.1.3 Local Council 1 Chairpersons

The LC 1 Chairperson acts as an intermediary among the community, government and NGOs, and they mobilise, inform, and link communities to intervening agencies. Additionally, community members acknowledge the role of the LC 1 Chairperson in addressing security concerns, such as cattle rustling and banditry. For such issues, community members

prefer the LC 1 Chairperson because of his/her proximity to the people and his/her concomitant ability to offer support in building evidence for cases. However, it was revealed that some LCs 1 Chairpersons are not well-informed about NGO services, the target groups and selection criteria of NGO projects, and project durations, and lack the connection, knowledge, and confidence to seek clarification, speak about the programmes, and provide timely and accurate feedback. The challenge was partly attributed to their work style, characterised by selective targeting of community members, paying more attention to issues that result in immediate material benefit to their families, and poor coordination and networking skills. While most communities believe in the ability of the LC 1 Chairperson to bring about positive change in service delivery, some community members expressed limited faith in the ability of some of the LC 1 Chairpersons. Indeed, some participants cited the weak leadership of some LC 1 Chairpersons as responsible for some of their losses of cattle to rustlers and fraudsters. Lack of integrity and transparency were cited as the biggest challenge of LC 1 Chairpersons in playing their role as the link between communities and intervening agencies.

2.1.4 Village Savings and Loan Associations

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are so ubiquitous across the districts of Karamoja that no intervening agency can ignore them. They are formed either out of a community initiative or with support from government or NGOs. Whether formed to champion specific causes, like disability and youth employment, or to promote development generally, the groups have integrated savings into their operations. They are, therefore, eligible for government and private grants. With or without any external support, most VSLAs have the potential to continue operations.

VSLA have become the means through which intervening organisations reach different categories of people. For example, a number of organisations are working with youth groups and Persons with Disability (PWD) and supporting them with training and business grants. FGDs revealed that, in addition to groups formed for the youth and PWD, both categories prefer to receive information from volunteers, NGO representatives, their associations at various

levels, or technical staff or government representatives. For example, some of the groups have been supported by their group leaders or organisations at the district level and by the technical staff at the sub-county level to register and access PDM, the Youth Livelihoods Fund (YLF), and capacity-building initiatives; and others have been linked to other partners and private sector actors. Some notable facilities to work with include Postbank to access loans, adapting the WENDI approach, which allows for savings in banks, and digital access through mobile phones.

However, groups formed merely to access grants, to meet basic needs or to fund non-essential activities, such as alcohol consumption, are not sustainable channels of communication and engagement. Therefore, in selecting VSLA structures for communicating with intervening organisations, such groups should be vetted for their ability to sustain their initiatives and deliver on AAP commitments.

As a long-term strategy, any new interventions could, as a matter of priority, build on the gaps and opportunities in existing groups. Similarly, NGOs and the PDM should consider linking the groups to financial institutions and government grants to enable the groups to sustain and expand their businesses. Sensitization and training on protection and other issues should be integrated into normal group activities as an ongoing initiative.

2.1.5 Religious institutions

In FGDs, some community members cited religious institutions, like churches and mosques, as effective in relaying information on government and NGO programmes and community mobilization. In a number of FGDs and interviews, participants cited having received information about new government and NGO programmes, such as PDM, scholarships, and announcements about free health services targeting the general public from churches or mosques. However, using religious institutions to relay development information has the intrinsic risk of excluding groups and individuals who do not subscribe to any particular religion. Therefore, measures have to be taken to target the excluded groups. The other challenge is the weak link between NGOs and religious institutions regarding coordination and integrated community programmes.

2.2 Communication and Information Provision, and Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms

Generally, no single channel can effectively reach every affected community in Karamoja. Illiteracy, perceived lack of privacy and confidentiality, limited double-looped communication; and inability to deliver well-packaged messages under a conducive environment are some barriers to effective complaints and feedback mechanisms. Worse still, resources and capacity are so limited that they do not match the overwhelming needs in the field, making it hard for agencies and community-based structures to communicate effectively and to provide information and feedback promptly and efficiently.

Reporting sensitive issues, such as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and gender-based violence, is challenging because people fear the consequences of going against cultural norms and practices, and this makes it difficult for women and girls to reveal some domestic issues to the “public”. It was revealed that some parents do not see a problem in an NGO staff member or an able member of the community having a sexual relationship with their daughters as long as it is materially beneficial to the parents. In addition, limited awareness of reporting procedures and referral pathways and the inability to fund a bureaucratic justice system with money-driven procedures were responsible for the limited responsiveness to the complaints and feedback mechanism.

Despite the above challenges, the affected populations prefer traditional and technology-based communication channels to relay information to key stakeholders and make recommendations on how they can be strengthened for two-way communication with stakeholders. These channels include toll-free lines, direct visits or face-to-face interactions, radios, emails, and suggestion boxes.

2.2.1 Hotlines/Toll-free lines/telephone calls

The affected population prefer to use telephone calls, either through toll-free lines or staff telephone lines, to keep the source of information anonymous. Toll-free lines are relatively safe for reporting sensitive issues (such as corruption, forced child marriage,

GBV) and provide language options for people to choose from. Moreover, toll-free lines allow community members to express their views freely and report any deviations in project plans.

However, toll-free lines pose two challenges: long waiting periods while machines direct calls to the right persons and poor or absent network connectivity. Although some partners clarified that they expected community members to simply flash so that the partners return calls, many community members in need of calling do not have adequate air-time, and Internet connectivity is still weak in many places. Most ordinary community members lack data to communicate on social media. Some participants decried a lack of familiarity with the operations of toll-free lines and uncertainty about the consequences of speaking up. Worse still, delays in responding to issues raised and discomfort with computer-based responses were cited as impediments to reporting.

While most INGOs have at least one dedicated toll-free hotline accessible from MTN and Airtel Telecom networks, some community members do not know the numbers of the lines. If the challenges associated with toll-free lines are addressed, then those with access to phones will enjoy the potential of two-way communication in real-time.

2.2.2 Direct visit to the offices or face-to-face interactions

Participants also reported directly visiting government or NGO offices, mainly at the sub-county level, to report cases or seek information. Such visits provide community members with direct feedback on specific issues of interest. Face-to-face interactions also happen when NGOs or government functionaries conduct field activities, (such as community meetings/barazas and service distributions).

The walk-in option is cheap, first-hand, and accurate because the officials take time to explain the issues at length and in-depth. For example, some community members prefer to report cases (such as GBV and child neglect) to legal aid service providers. Hence, they are able to explain their issues and are attended to promptly. Similarly, community volunteers and members reported visiting the offices of CDOs, Sub-County Chiefs/ Town Clerks, and LC III Chairpersons to

seek explanations of different government and NGO programmes and plans.

2.2.3 Community meeting (barazas)

Community meetings are used to discuss various public issues affecting communities. They can be used with large or small groups, with specific categories of people, and to discuss issues of interest, such as dialogues and information provision. Community dialogues, also commonly referred to as barazas, are the most popular medium of relaying information among participants, local government functionaries, and NGO staff. Community meetings are quick, easy to mobilise communities, and a space to clarify issues.

Generally, most community members and groups believe that NGOs are trustworthy and responsive and use barazas to provide first-hand information regarding issues that concern communities. Politicians and district technical staff (DCDOs, CDOs, and Parish chiefs) use barazas to inform and sensitise communities about government and NGO programmes and other issues.

2.2.4 Technological media (WhatsApp, Facebook, SMS)

The different WhatsApp groups formed in each of the districts offer opportunities for people to discuss specific issues, including politics, fun, general health, sexual reproductive health, cross-cutting, and relevant issues, thus providing space to discuss issues affecting communities in general. While the use of WhatsApp cuts across different categories of the respondents, at least five out of 15 youth had used the platform. Some participants indicated using WhatsApp groups, such as “Hard Core” to interact with policy makers and relay information (including rain patterns; updates on NGO services, accountability issues, farming, beekeeping, and job opportunities) relevant to their groups. Few people use SMS and Facebook. Participants listed social media (WhatsApp) platforms as the least trusted means of communication because they are prone to entertaining fake news. Despite being least trusted, some group leaders deemed social media useful, especially for general updates on key issues affecting society and relevant to their respective groups. Therefore, it would be useful to filter social media,

select what is suitable for a given group, and ignore what is less useful.

2.2.5 Emails

NGO representatives commonly use emails, but limited access to computers, smartphones, and Internet data, limited availability of network connectivity, and irregularity in checking emails limit the effectiveness of emails.

2.2.6 Suggestion boxes

Suggestion boxes are among the least used channels because, in most cases, they require one to be literate, and they are usually placed in public spaces that are not private enough to inspire confidence in those who wish to report. Suggestion boxes are fixed at NGO offices, including those of CARITAS and the Red Cross, among others. That is why it is recommended that suggestion boxes be placed in private spaces to afford users the privacy they require and that people be trained to use pictorials to deliver messages.

2.2.7 Radios and related channels

Many participants expressed admiration for radios and wished that radios could be used for real-time communication between intervening agencies and communities. Communities with good network coverage prefer to use radios to communicate about general issues which affect them. Radio talk shows allow for real-time interaction between communities and intervening agencies. Therefore, they provide an opportunity to interact and clarify issues. The platform also offers an opportunity for government officials and NGO staff to discuss and respond to community concerns. Members of neighbouring households without a radio set can gather at a neighbor's home with a radio set and listen to a radio programme on an issue of interest to them.

Moreover, as most radio stations are linked to social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and X, diverse groups can interact and follow issues of concern to their communities. In addition, new ideas/topical issues generated from radio programmes can be taken to communities through community dialogues or barazas and tailored workshops for technical leaders and politicians.

Many radio stations in Karamoja have wide coverage,

except in a few locations (such as Awach in Abim, Karita in Amudat, and Tapac in Moroto). English and native languages in the respective districts are used for news and discussions. Examples of radio stations accessible in the region include Karibu FM in Abim; radio etoile Karamoja (92.7) in Kotido; and radio Kalia 106.5 FM in Amudat, a Kenyan-based radio is accessible and mainly used for news, security updates, PM and politics. Moroto has six FM stations (Radio Maria, Ateker, Akica, Totore, and Karamoja Radio, Niayna). However, none of the waves reaches Thepes due to the blockage of signals by the mountain. Generally, people use their phones to listen to access programmes on radio stations.

2.3 Participation and Information Flow in Project Cycle Management

The findings reveal that UN agencies and NGOs engage directly with affected populations through local structures to deliver humanitarian and development assistance. The direct engagement has been through community scorecards, feedback forms, project meetings, baseline surveys, and midterm/end-term evaluations. Participation of community members in information sharing has, to some extent, resulted in community awareness of programmes and promoted local ownership. Similarly, engagement with local structures, such as local NGOs, CBOs, and CSOs, has focused on supporting and coordinating interventions and ensured effective communication between the population and the agencies. These experiences can be used to scale up and improve AAP practices to enable affected populations to provide feedback and complaints and to amplify their voices in the design and implementation of the projects.

Moreover, new communication technologies can play a vital role in relaying information to intervening agencies, bypassing bureaucratic processes, and overcoming the fear associated with reporting certain issues, and the fear of authoritarian and dominant voices in the community. For instance, UNICEF's U-Report enables young and other vulnerable groups to report sensitive issues that affect them and their communities. However, this approach is limited to literate people, who comprise a small proportion of the

population, and there is limited capacity to scale up the use of communication technologies and make a technology-based system accessible to a greater number of people in the region.

However, some organisations have capacity gaps, which include the absence of clear procedures or institutional guidelines for implementing a participatory system of information flow in project cycle management. Other organisations have neither staff nor a budget line to establish or supervise CARM. Worse still, some others implement projects on an activity-based arrangement and for a short period, without consideration for CARM or having staff physically present in the districts of operation.

2.4 Summary of Limitations and Opportunities for Engaging with Community-Based Structures for AAP in Karamoja

Community-based structures are an essential link through which state and non-state organisations engage with the affected populations in Karamoja. An analysis of the capacity and practices of those structures shows that, despite being a good entry point, most community-based structures do not have an effective programme for two-way communication involving diverse, formal and informal groups of people. Neither do they have any streamlined procedures at different levels. Most of the efforts of the structures are focused on supporting people to access government and NGO programmes, and the positions of Community Development Officer are vacant in some districts, thus limiting the ability of those districts to deliver efficiently. Moreover, there are inherent difficulties related to accountability, and there is a need to address more specific weaknesses in the accountability and feedback mechanism (e.g., procedures and timelines for reporting and feedback, enforcement, referrals, and collaboration among partners).

Similarly, NGO Forums, platforms, and districts focus on coordinating NGO activities across different districts. However, they lack a mechanism or system for collective feedback and oversight. As a result, each agency depends on its system for accountability as it affects most of the affected population. Some of the

complaints and feedback relate to varying “sitting allowances” for community members, and there is an underlying feeling that an intervening agency needs to offer a hefty sitting allowance to be attractive to the affected community. Feedback from different groups and individuals on the feedback frequency shows that most complaints did not elicit appropriate feedback.

In addition, most community-based structures have capacity gaps. For example, District Local Governments and NGOs do not adequately fund or facilitate the structures to function efficiently and effectively. Additional challenges, including inaccessible locations and poor Internet connectivity and mobile networks, render the structures relatively inaccessible and ineffective in ensuring that stakeholders' views are effectively captured to improve programming and that the most marginalised and affected community members are represented and have influence.

On their part, intervening agencies vary in their approaches and prioritization in meeting the minimum standards. For example, while some organisations have central and functional CFM systems that capture data on various cases, including feedback and complaints, some others, especially local NGOs, rely on project staff or focal persons to deliver and receive feedback and complaints, and the functioning of the systems depends on the nature and size of the organisation and the investment therein. Some organisations lack clear procedures, institutional rules, presence, staff or the financial capacity to implement AAP in a given location of operation.

An analysis of the challenges and opportunities for working with different structures reveals that it is necessary for organisational entities to reinforce their internal systems and capacities and strengthen those of community-based structures to deliver a collective system. That is why, given current and likely technological advances, dwindling donor funds, changing donor priorities, and a renewed commitment to invest in accountability to the affected populations, four key strategic objectives have been identified to realise a collective AAP strategy in the next five years.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE AAP STRATEGY

The main objective of this strategy is to strengthen accountability to affected populations through existing community-based structures, informed by an assessment of limitations and opportunities for effective community participation in humanitarian and development interventions in Karamoja.

3.1 Strategic Objectives

In the next five years, the following four strategic objectives will guide intervening agencies to deliver their commitment to AAP and to improve the delivery of aid:

- a. Strengthen the capacity of community-based structures and the affected populations for a collective and sustainable programme impact;
- b. Improve access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints and feedback;
- c. Strengthen the systems and procedures for mainstreaming community perspectives in project cycle management; and
- d. Reinforce organisational efforts to strengthen community engagement and programmatic impact.

4.0 REALISING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1 Strengthen the Capacity of Community-Based Structures and the Affected Populations for a Collective and Sustainable Programme Impact

We will leverage our work with community-based structures to improve information sharing and evidence based on needs and gaps in services to and from affected communities and intervening agencies. In collaboration with District Local Governments and our partners, we can enhance the capacity of community-based structures through a number of actions:

4.1.1 Provide support to community-based structures

Investment in the capacity of community-based structures is necessary for improving accountability to affected populations on the required scale and sustainably. First, standard operating procedures will have to be rendered more efficient and effective. Secondly, it will be necessary to ensure that the affected populations can use community-based structures to voice their concerns and to protect their rights. The key elements here include improving the quality of procedures and access to relevant

staff; improving the feedback loop and timelines; and ensuring this is achieved sustainably. Support may also be needed in training community-based structures and community members in key accountability issues, using diverse media to disseminate key messages, and in procedures for communicating complaints and feedback.

Much of what needs to change is not factual knowledge but about changing perceptions, e.g., of why procedures matter. The training needs to take seriously the difficulties faced by community-based structures and members, and how to maintain good relations with 'powerful' people in the villages, especially when they are wrong, and help them find solutions rather than simply impart facts. This necessitates a strategy not based on a one-off, mass-training exercise but on more intensive support, more participatory, problem-solving approaches to training, and follow-up. Some training will be delivered to a wider audience, including district officials, sub-county leaders, and traditional authorities. The general public will also be informed using various mass communication media, particularly radio and community barazas.

4.1.2 Provide support to District Local Governments

The UN and its partners can work with the DLGs to help improve the latter's systems and procedures, especially for needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation, complaints and feedback mechanisms; and they can begin by assisting them to conduct their own 'capacity audit'. The UN and partners will support community-based structures through the DLGs where possible, especially in training and establishing clear procedures for collective mechanisms and referrals, technical knowledge on data management, data protection and related laws, and data reporting. In some cases, support with Internet data will be necessary.

4.1.3 Enhance local communities' ability to participate in programme cycles

The ability of local communities to participate in programme cycles will have to be enhanced through community-level awareness creation and sensitisation of accountability and key SEA and GBV aspects that require community action. The awareness creation and sensitisation will use diverse means, including pictorials, community radios, and other means relevant to the communities. Procedures for accountability to affected populations will be explained mainly through awareness-raising programmes and community barazas.

This will also require good partnerships with DLGs, specifically with the offices of the DCDOs or CDOs, to find ways to work with their monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning systems. Policy and support for implementation in these areas should come from DLGs. The UN partners will have to establish a strong relationship with the monitoring and evaluation units of the DLGs to support these initiatives during the lifetime of the programme and beyond. Basic training or procedure improvement may be necessary, depending on DLG interest and responsiveness.

4.1.4 Improve the harmony of the state and non-state systems

Some form of tension among the Local Councils, district local governments and NGOs was identified as an area requiring redress. Effective delivery of services cannot be achieved if government and NGO systems compete. Therefore, there is a need

to harmonise the mechanisms and systems of complaints and feedback in service delivery by the State and NGOs and ensure that affected communities know how to use the systems. It will also be necessary to harmonise the different reporting systems, for example, the Health Information System, the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Information Management System, and the GBV databases, to ease data collection, analysis and reporting at various levels within the government and NGO systems. The different systems used by other government departments and NGOs will also have to be harmonized to avoid double reporting.

It was also noted that LCs cannot handle all the cases that arise in their respective areas of jurisdiction, and they need to institute a specific accountability-to-affected-populations role without interfering in NGO service-delivery processes. For example, this would include verifying that PDM grants are distributed fairly, supporting the implementation of decisions at district or sub-county council levels, and establishing working arrangements to improve service delivery, which involves negotiating with government officials and NGO partners.

It will also be necessary to conduct awareness raising or training for NGOs undertaking work in the region and all other actors involved in community mobilisation in some way on AAP and how the DLG and NGO systems best interact. Moreover, all the actors and the general population need to know and understand the principles and practices of AAP. More than on-off training is required for duty-bearers, the training needs to involve more than imparting facts: it should be more targeted, based on identified lacunae in AAP practices, and ensure pro-active protection.

Every organisational entity is independent and unsupervised regarding AAP at the community level. There are no mechanisms for ensuring consistency from district to district, for example, considering the views of all project participants in project design and implementation. A way of ensuring consistency and continuous improvement in AAP is needed, though it is unclear how the UN and its partners intend to fund and sustain this initiative. The UN will have to work with all the relevant DLGs, NGOs, and donors to bring

attention to the problems and assist in generating potential solutions. Solutions are also needed to the problems of GBV and forced child marriage, and the roles of the police and politicians in those matters will have to be clarified. Procedures or regulations for handling GBV need to be clarified and made affordable, partly because the role the police play in GBV and related cases is inconsistent. Consensus needs to be achieved with the police at the district level, and all police agents on the ground need to be adequately trained.

The UN and its partners will have to decide how to approach the almost uniform refusal by the police to act on sensitive cases without being 'facilitated'. Again, the UN and its partners will work with the full range of actors to analyse these problems and find the most workable solutions. The partners will ensure that the opinions of those most concerned – the affected populations– are at the centre of any deliberations.

Some work has already been done to raise awareness on AAP and related issues. The training will continue in a highly targeted way, focusing on specific issues, laws, and procedures which have been identified as causing problems. More attention will be given to using the police to help people with procedures. Elders and cultural leaders will also need to be sensitized on the importance of AAP and why the rights of community members, including girls and women, matter. The perception that NGOs are spoiling girls and women will need to be dissipated.

It will also be necessary to harness the linkages between formal and informal community-based structures and local governments' political and services departments for longer-term impact by supporting existing community centres/offices or creating new ones as central points for easy access to paralegals/community volunteers and any other agents.

Finally, it will be useful to develop a supervision system and a mechanism for ensuring consistency and achieving progressive improvement in the quality of the work of community-based structures. For example, periodic forums could be organised to

create mass awareness (using especially radio stations, megaphones, community radios, community dialogues or any other appropriate medium). These forums could be on the availability of different channels, such as toll-free lines, what issues to discuss there, their modus operandi, the extent to which they are free, and the freedom of people to speak about pertinent issues without any negative consequences to them.

4.2 Improve Access to Safe and Responsive Mechanisms to Handle Complaints and Feedback

In addition to the traditional channels of communication, advances in technology have created new opportunities, leveraging the use of telephones, emails and social media to enhance community participation and receive feedback more effectively. Improving two-way communication channels and procedures for relaying information to key stakeholders is necessary so that complaints and feedback are handled effectively.

4.2.1 Improve two-way channels of communication

We will leverage the traditional, technology-based, and preferred communication channels to improve procedures so that they build on the strengths and insights of the affected population to meet their needs and account for their diversity. We will achieve this through approaches relevant to each of the channels.

General strategies to improve two-way channels of communication

- Prepare staff and community-based structures to deliver well-packaged messages under a conducive environment using participatory methodologies.
- Use clear and simple language and integrate many communication channels (including pictorials).
- Provide some explanations on the use of pictorials to strengthen messages and ensure that the pictures are available to those who do not travel to public places where, in most cases, pictures are displayed.

- d. Use different languages to reflect the diversity of the Karimojong. In particular, interpretations should focus on the real messages to be delivered to the audience.
- e. Create or identify existing proactive WhatsApp groups and target specific groups of people or group leaders to provide general updates on key issues for participants to pass on to their respective groups. In this regard, it would be useful to filter social media, select what is good for a given group, and ignore what is less useful.
- f. Create spaces/community centres/help desks at the sub-county or village levels for community members and intervening agencies to interact and provide direct feedback on specific issues of interest to community members or about different programmes.
- g. Improve radio waves for wider coverage, ensure programmes are broadcasted in appropriate languages, and focus on issues relevant to communities and of interest to NGOs and government so that NGOs and government can actively participate, respond to community concerns, and take feedback.
- h. Identify and use viable radio stations to raise awareness about their existence and reach, and broadcast targeted programmes in Ngakarimojong or other relevant languages to deliver key messages about accountability to affected populations.
- i. Develop a list of toll-free lines managed by different agencies, popularise the toll-free numbers, and implement guidelines for effectively managing calls.

Strategies to improve targeted channels of communication

◆ Direct visits or face-to-face interactions

This channel is commonly utilised when individuals visit NGO or government offices. It is also used when field activities (including visits, community meetings/barazas, and service distribution occasions) occur. This channel can be enhanced through the following:

- a. Ensuring that field staff who receive complaints or feedback from community members directly record the information into an electronic tablet or paper-based system;

- b. Ensuring that staff classify the complaints or feedback immediately into the tablet or notebook;
- c. Taking appropriate action in relation to the case category. The staff in question should provide immediate feedback to minor case categories based on their understanding of the project and the intervening areas. Should it not be possible to respond immediately, the person receiving the complaint should record (with consent) the telephone number of the complainant for follow-up. Critical case categories should be referred immediately to the next level of the chain for onward submission to the compliance and investigations team;
- d. The person who receives the complaints and feedback should respond or provide feedback to the relevant parties within 14 days if the issues belong to minor case categories in accordance with the agreed grading system; and
- e. Finally, the person who receives the complaints and feedback should record the action in the beneficiary feedback and complaint database once the feedback loop has been closed and make sure that documentation of the relevant issues and processes is shared with the CFM focal point by the end of each week, and that the CFM online tracker is updated. The data is analysed for trends and reported to inform programming

◆ Hotlines/toll-free lines/telephone calls

The affected population use telephone calls through toll-free or staff telephone lines. Community members prefer to use toll-free lines or staff telephone lines to keep the source of information anonymous. To promote the use of toll-free and staff telephone lines as a channel of communication that the affected population can rely on for real-time feedback on a range of issues, it is necessary to:

- a. Ensure that every intervening agency provides a dedicated toll-free line or staff telephone contacts with specified time(s) of the day when to receive complaints and feedback from the project participants, and what actions are required of them and what to expect;

- b. Specify the time of the day when participants can call to complain or provide feedback and the languages to be used on the toll-free platform;
- c. Specify the action and times for the focal points to categorise the complaints and feedback, process the issues, and share the results with relevant project leads, sectors or organisations;
- d. Ensure that relevant staff are available and well-equipped to provide feedback or investigate issues promptly and effectively; and
- e. Follow up to ensure that relevant staff have shared the vision and actions that would have enabled us to verify data ultimately and to provide support to a fully functional system.

◆ Emails

It will be necessary to streamline email communication and provide capacity support to enable the effective use of emails in a two-way information sharing process to:

- a. Ensure that different intervening agencies provide dedicated e-mail addresses to receive complaints and feedback from people with Internet access. In addition, it will be necessary to provide optional email addresses for a centralised system to enable different categories of people to raise their concerns regarding different interventions and their perspectives on the AAP practices;
- b. Ensure that the dedicated e-mails are checked daily by the email holders who should classify the complaints and feedback and forward the e-mail to the hotline staff to record the classification on the CFM online tracker;
- c. Use the same medium or a hotline to close complaints and feedback through emails if a participant provides his/her telephone number or any other channel within two weeks of submitting a complaint or feedback and if the complaint or feedback falls under the “minor case” categories. Complaints in the “major case” categories should immediately be handed over to the focal point of compliance and investigations. If, for any reason, the intervening agencies cannot respond by the

stipulated timeline, the hotline team needs to contact the complainant to inform them about the delay and set a new deadline.

◆ Suggestion boxes

Develop and disseminate a standardised guideline that outlines steps for handling complaints and feedback through suggestion boxes, which should include the following steps:

- a. Ensuring that fixed suggestion boxes are situated in secure, safe, and accessible locations for the affected population to use them;
- b. Sensitising community members on the use of the suggestion boxes and providing specific training on the use of pictorials to enable illiterate persons to communicate their ideas;
- c. Sharing information about where the boxes are located, how often the respective organisations open the boxes, and who keeps the keys to the boxes, and reassuring community members that the complaints they raise remain confidential;
- d. Ensuring that, where an organisation uses a standard registration form for recording complaints or feedback, the programme staff explain how the forms are used and submitted to the suggestion boxes;
- e. Noting that using a standardised form for recording complaints and feedback may limit and hinder people from sharing their complaints and feedback. Therefore, staff conducting the sensitization should explain the minimum required information for registering the complaints and feedback and allow for the flexibility to enable participants to provide information using other pieces of paper/materials, as long as they give the minimum required information;
- f. Ensuring that the staff manning CFM open the fixed suggestion boxes at least once every week to register the complaints and feedback into an online database within two days after opening the boxes;
- g. Ensuring that there is an option for mobile suggestion boxes, especially during the implementation of some activities, such as seed or food distribution and beneficiary selection/

registration. For the mobile suggestion boxes, ensure that the boxes are opened at the end of the activity and that all complaints are addressed and responded to before the team leaves the activity venue;

- h. Ensuring that appointed staff (normally the Monitoring & Evaluation team, together with the CFM focal persons) categorise the complaints and feedback and that the complaints and feedback are sorted and shared with the relevant core staff for action;
- i. Providing leadership to ensure that the feedback loop is closed and that a response is provided to the complainants through the central telephone hotline or the CFM focal person where a complainant has shared their number. This should be done within two weeks of registering a complaint if the cases fall under “minor case” categories; and
- j. Ensuring that major case-category complaints are handed over to the compliance and investigations focal point immediately without any further delay.

4.2.2 Complaint and feedback mechanisms

It is necessary to intensify current efforts to engage communities to participate more effectively in the complaints and feedback mechanisms. This will improve the engagement process by explaining the purpose of the CFM and generating ideas from the community on how their participation can be enhanced. CFM is a community engagement component, not a stand-alone activity, so the programme teams should have the skills for effective community participation. The monitoring and evaluation teams at the respective organisations should engage communities in focus-group discussions in the project sites once a quarter to discuss and gain an in-depth understanding of the workings of CFM and contribute to trend analysis.

It is also necessary to agree on collectively written guidelines on the redesign and ongoing implementation of CFM to make it adaptable to context/district-specific realities. In doing so, we will focus on established procedures for recording complaints, investigating, taking action and providing feedback to the complainant in a safe, dignified and timely manner.

This will be achieved through a number of actions:

- a. Developing a harmonized CFRM Standard Operating Procedure for all programmatic activities across the intervening agencies;
- b. Developing standard databases for CFRM documentation and management and establishing a common approach for the grading of feedback and reporting at the partner level;
- c. Developing a comprehensive case-management framework that standardizes the recording, grading, and follow-up processes for CFRM cases across intervening agencies, ensuring a cohesive approach to accountability: systematic analysis of feedback and data collected; standardized reporting templates and procedures; and recommendations for future enhancements;
- d. Implementing joint protocols that prioritise participant protection while paying attention to potential stigma and shame, which could further victimize the survivors and any potential repercussions associated with reporting the incident;
- e. Conducting training and consultation activities to ensure that the CFRM system is adopted and contextualized and that it reflects the best practices of each partner;
- f. Every organization should appoint a focal person responsible for receiving complaints from community members, recording them in dedicated kobo links (where practicable), and coordinating responses and feedback. The CFM focal person will work collaboratively with the monitoring and evaluation teams to receive complaints and feedback registered in suggestion boxes, sensitize the communities about CFM, and disseminate the brochures and other visibility materials;
 - Mapping and strengthening referral pathways, ensuring the provision of immediate referrals for support where necessary, and, in all cases, communicating the results or resolutions of the complaint to the complainant while respecting all confidentiality concerns; and
 - Teams regularly report to the community regarding the type of complaints received and individual and organizational resolution processes, ensuring no protected or confidential information is revealed.

4.3 Strengthen Systems and Procedures for Mainstreaming Perspectives in Project Cycle Management

To achieve full participation of the affected populations in project cycle management, we will draw on our field experiences, the efforts of various organizations, and best practices and general principles to foster the participation of communities in project cycle management.

The following set of actions will be required:

- a. Developing a flow chart for the complaints and feedback mechanism should be disseminated widely to all key stakeholders, including partners and third parties (contractors). This could be developed in the form of pamphlets, brochures, or cards, with clear descriptions of the CFM process and containing hotline numbers and e-mail contacts;
- b. Implementing capacity-building initiatives to strengthen staff skills to address and respond to complaints and feedback and drawing upon the lessons learned to adapt the tools to context-specific needs and challenges. This includes strengthening analysis of gender and power dynamics and ensuring the project teams actively engage with community members on the progress of the efforts to address such challenges;
- c. Developing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and Key Messages based on information requests and complaint scenarios, standard messages about programmes, beneficiary selection, and other relevant issues to guide field teams in providing consistent and quick feedback to communities. This should be a living document that is updated regularly, at least quarterly and as and when necessary;
- d. Ensuring that team members and beneficiaries monitor project implantation and evaluate the usefulness of the CARMs, mainly by seeking regular feedback from community members; and
- e. Integrating as many communication channels as possible, using clear and simple language and media of communication (including pictorials), and ensuring many languages are used to reflect the diversity of the Karimojong.

4.4 Reinforce Organisational Efforts to Strengthen Community Engagement and Programmatic Impact

To address the variance in accountability and adherence to the minimum standards and build on the ongoing efforts and past experiences, we wish to strengthen engagement with the communities we serve and hold our team members accountable as the agencies' representatives. This commitment is at the core of the work of the UN, its partners, and NGOs. Being more accountable helps us to tap into the experiences, strengths and insights of affected communities and to empower them to effectively participate in decisions and programmes that affect them. This will involve support to institutional and programmatic capabilities to implement the AAP strategy in line with minimum humanitarian standards. This support will entail the following actions and initiatives:

- a. Developing a partnership plan to engage with diverse local and international organisations, including UN agencies, international NGOs, community-based organisations, the private sector and other relevant organisations, to promote complementarity and coordination in the implementation of the AAP strategy;
- b. Implementing plans to promote mechanisms for information exchange, peer support and mentoring;
- c. Establishing harmonized, minimum, safeguarding procedures within the CFRM framework, ensuring secure feedback channels that protect participants' identities, and maintaining confidentiality for all partners;
- d. Ensuring that all participating organisations embed a culture of accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at all levels of the humanitarian system and that the standards are followed across all programmes;
- e. Developing and implementing a plan to share lessons learned and work towards stronger accountability and measurement mechanisms, drawing from the strengths of each organization and learning to strengthen compliance to the minimum standards across organisations and locations;
- f. Mainstreaming accountability to affected

populations as part of the management practices by integrating AAP in all the stages of programme cycle management, including needs assessment, strategic response planning, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation;

- g. Facilitating the work of community-based structures and other actors by strengthening capacity and leadership (through training in specific skill sets, including an understanding of AAP principles and practical examples of how aid can be delivered accountably) and ensuring that efforts to improve communication, community engagement, and follow-up on anticipated corrective measures are informed by communication, participation and feedback;
- h. Developing plans to improve community engagement and communication with the affected population based on trust and acceptance and a propensity to improve stakeholders' perceptions of community-based structures and accountability in general;

- i. Investing in a technological system to support innovative communication and monitoring techniques, providing materials (such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and Internet data) to support technology-based systems for two-way communication, and providing training on their use;
- j. Providing technical support and assistance to partners in setting up and/or enhancing systems that increase the participation of women, men and children in improving the timely sharing of information regarding the response, listening and responding to feedback from the affected population, ensuring a two-way communications channel that takes into account preferred languages, formats, and categories of the affected population; and
- k. Proactively mitigating the risks and challenges of implementing the AAP strategy by enhancing the capacity to continuously analyse and implement a mitigation plan across different organisations and implementing partners.

5.0 PARTICIPATORY PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES FOR AAP

5.1 Participatory Planning and Monitoring

The strategy seeks to use community-based structures to empower the affected population to participate in and/or lead the information gathering and analysis process to improve programme design, delivery and impact. Some participants who participated in project cycle management also felt empowered to contribute to project ideas and provide feedback. On their part, the intervening organisations need to encourage continued monitoring and analysis of the CARMs, especially regarding the accessibility of the CARMs, types and trends of complaints, and lessons learned.

Additionally, intervening organisations need to engage more stakeholders in discussions and regular visits to the project sites to document findings in accordance with agreed indicators. Finally, it is also necessary for the AAP working group, government officials, and country teams to seek comprehensive feedback and complaints from affected populations to build trust within the community and respond to their unique needs. Increasing the participation of local stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation will further empower the affected communities to improve the programme's impact. It will enable the AAP team to diversify its data sources, enrich its findings, and improve practice.

5.2 Database, Reporting and Learning

It will be judicious to commit to a centralised system to capture data on various cases, feedback, and complaints. A centralised system allows for systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting to area and country management and informs decision-making and learning over time. Building on such a system and the progress made so far, it is necessary to consider a central database for logging issues, analysing and reporting.

The proposed CFM database should mirror the data-collection tools used to capture beneficiaries' feedback and complaints. Intervening agencies shall ensure the safe storage of personal data by keeping data safe from unauthorized access, loss, and unintended disclosure, changes, or deletion. When processing personal data, organisations will need to demonstrate awareness of the data protection policy and ensure a satisfactory level of information security about confidentiality, integrity, and availability. A focal person for information management will manage the online database and dashboard and ensure the database is maintained, updated and monitored.

Quarterly reports and the Power BI dashboard will capture key findings from each category of feedback and complaints. To strengthen reporting, FGDs should be conducted quarterly to explore in-depth community perspectives on the operations of the accountability mechanism, support trend analysis, and improve the quality and design of programmes.

5.3 Further Actions

In the next five years, we propose the following set of actions to improve AAP practices, programme delivery and impact:

- a. Developing baseline targets based on which progress will be measured;
- b. Harmonising standardized M&E tools which disaggregate participant data and information by sex and age to enable the programme team to understand better and address gaps in gender integration;
- c. Incorporating gender-specific indicators into the logical frameworks to better document and track the progress made by each partner organisation and programme in gender integration and devise means of adjusting interventions based on the challenges and other factors of different groups;
- d. As a minimum standard, ensuring every intervening entity has monitoring and evaluation staff

or specific AAP focal points to deliver on AAP commitments and standards;

- e. Conducting regular, participatory sessions with staff and partners to analyze monitoring and evaluation data, assess progress as related to targets, and make any necessary adjustments to implementation strategies as part of an effective monitoring system;
- f. Using monitoring visits to engage project participants or local stakeholders in ongoing monitoring to give feedback on specific activities, in line with the participation principles of AAP;
- g. Encouraging the use of peer monitoring, which could include donors and local government staff in activities at the district and country levels, and once data has been analyzed, encouraging the project teams to report back to stakeholders, including affected populations, community representatives and government officials;
- h. Developing indicator-based terms of reference and user-friendly and context-specific tools to ensure objective monitoring and assessment and to enable local stakeholders and any other monitoring teams to observe and collect data on specific AAP practices; and
- i. Engaging in discussions with stakeholders through monthly, quarterly and annual reviews of the appropriateness of the data collected and identifying areas for improvement so that programmes meet the needs of affected populations.

5.4 Measurement of Progress

Deriving from their role mandate, the monitoring and evaluation and/or the AAP focal points shall play an active role in monitoring to assess progress, identify options for response, and provide clear recommendations for an appropriate response. Each agency shall be expected to monitor its context through an established CFM system or regular follow-ups of the AAP strategy plans.

Progress will be monitored through monthly dashboards, periodic meetings, and annual reviews of action plans, which should inform AAP choices and advocacy efforts at various levels.

Progress on impact will be assessed based on the four strategic objectives and four outcomes:

- a. Improved capacities of community-based structures and the affected populations for a collective and sustainable programme impact as a result of humanitarian action (CHS 3).
- b. A fully functional complaint-and-feedback mechanism, which receives and responds to complaints in an appropriate and timely manner (CHS 5).
- c. Systems and procedures for mainstreaming community perspectives in project cycle management strengthened, and communities and the affected population received assistance appropriate to their needs (CHS 1); and
- d. A reinforced organisational capacity to deliver coordinated and complementary assistance through a collective mechanism, informed by joint planning and integrated activities, and capable of managing risks and improving response outcomes (CHS 6).

Further, specific indicators have been developed for each outcome area based on the four outcome indicators, which will be reviewed annually. The review will build on the progress, barriers and opportunities, lessons learnt and best practices, and potential expansion and new locations.

5.5 Indicators

5.5.1 Communities and the affected populations are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action (CHS 3)

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

This indicator will be measured by the capacity of community-based structures and the strategies of the affected populations to become resilient and sustain the programme impact.

Performance indicators

- a. Percentage of the target communities and the affected populations who report that they can better withstand future shocks and stresses due to humanitarian action.
- b. Number of local authorities, leaders and organisations responsible for responding to crises

report that their capacities have increased.

- c. Number of members of the target communities and the affected population who report having not identified any negative effects resulting from humanitarian action.

5.5.2 Communities and affected populations have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints (CHS 5)

This indicator will be measured through the capacity of the existing complaint and feedback mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints in an appropriate and timely manner.

Quality criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

Performance indicators

- a. Percentage of the affected populations in the target locations who demonstrate awareness of the complaint mechanisms established for their use.
- b. Percentage of target community members and affected populations who report that the complaints mechanisms are accessible, effective, confidential, and safe.
- c. Number of complaints investigated and resolved, and whose results have been fed back to the complainant within the stated timeframe.

5.5.3 Communities and the affected population receive assistance appropriate to their needs (CHS 1)

Quality criterion: The humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

Performance indicators

- a. Number of women, men, girls and boys consider that the response takes account of their specific needs and culture.
- b. Number of women, men, girls and boys report that the assistance and protection provided correspond with their assessed risks, vulnerabilities and needs.
- c. Percentage of beneficiaries requiring assistance and/or protection reports that the response takes account of their capacities (e.g., skills and knowledge).

5.5.4 Communities and the affected populations receive coordinated, complementary assistance (CHS 6)

Quality criterion: The humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary. This indicator will be measured by a collective mechanism, informed by joint planning and integrated activities, which ably manage risks and improve response outcomes.

Performance indicators

- a. Reduction in reported cases relating to gaps and overlaps in the response identified by the affected populations.
- b. Number of intervening agencies that share relevant information through the AAP working group, community-based structures, and other coordination forums.
- c. Number of organisations that coordinate needs assessments, delivery of aid, and monitoring of aid delivery.

6.0 RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Working on AAP in a complex situation can be difficult, posing several operational risks and challenges. Moreover, the Karamoja context is still fluid, and certain event changes could challenge efforts to implement high-quality AAP practices. The following potential risks specific to AAP have been identified:

- a. Risks associated with the safety of individuals who report cases of GBV or child abuse involving powerful or wealthy perpetrators could undermine commitments and standards.
- b. Risks of political interference by powerful individuals who use their resources and authority to manipulate accountability processes could undermine the decisions of community-based structures and threaten the safety of members of the affected population who communicate information to or exchange information with intervening agencies associated with involving affected populations due to fears of retaliation, compromised confidentiality, and the erosion of trust in both local mechanisms and humanitarian actors.
- c. Genuine partnership may be impossible if district local governments and NGO partners are not genuinely committed to at least some of the AAP agenda and principles.
- d. For various reasons, donors may not maintain interest in Karamoja and AAP.

Management strategies for each risk have been identified and built into the strategy to reduce the negative impact if a risk arises.

- a. This is a challenge rather than a threat, and it will partly depend on how successfully the UN and its partners can present the UN and its work on challenging accountability issues to change the status quo for the better. Communities will be engaged in intensive education about the real issues and challenges of the affected communities. The causes of indignation by some powerful individuals against individuals who report cases of forced child marriage and defilement by traditional leaders or the 'powerful' in the village who stir up resentment. The risk will be minimised if more resources are invested in sensitization, mobilization, and working through existing community-based structures.
- b. In pursuit of the AAP agenda, strong cooperative relations need to be built with DLGs and other partners from the beginning. Where possible, the priorities of different actors should be taken on board and supported, provided they are consistent with the objectives and overall strategy of AAP. A continuous dialogue is necessary to ensure that differences of opinion, if any, are understood and appreciated even where agreement is not reached. The UN should also invest much more in building advocacy coalitions within Karamoja to address some of the accountability-related structural problems and promote positive change.
- c. The UN and its partners should accept that the motivation and performance of DLGs and other actors vary from case to case. Clear agreements about performance and outcomes and the roles and responsibilities of each party will have to be forged. The UN will identify those who show the most interest and commitment and concentrate work there and will 'map' the district structures that most genuinely want to work with AAP and have interests that the partnership can meet.
- d. If donors reduce or stop funding to Karamoja, specifically AAP work, some parts of the work will inevitably become unsustainable. There will be a greater focus on institutions which can be self-financing. Phase out will have to consider that future work in the sector may be on a smaller scale, so the scale of the work may have to be reduced during the programme and continuously assessed for sustainability. The UN and its partners can work with DLGs to lobby the central government and donors for funds and to help them develop strategies for making AAP work as self-financing as possible.

7.0 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR AAP IN KARAMOJA

Two management structures have been proposed to implement the AAP strategy. The first structure is a possible collective accountability system for Karamoja, and the other one is of actions and decision-making processes at various levels in collaboration with a number of organisations and the Government of Uganda.

7.1 Operational System(s) for Complaints and Feedback Mechanism

Decisions about the future structure of AAP will have to be made and analysed at a later stage. There are two options: a single structure handling a collective AAP or separate structures for the UN and its partners.

The first structure would be a centralized system supported by the UN for its partners, other NGOs, and government, and it would build on existing accountability structures to accommodate different systems. Some considerations for a centralized system would be finding an existing or independent host within the NGO or government. Such a system would require investment to ensure adequate capacity, funding and buy-in.

The second option would be exclusively for the UN and its implementing partners. This would entail developing a standard operating procedure to guide AAP operations at the district level.

7.2 Decision-making Structure

The management structure for decision-making is divided into three levels: the steering group, the AAP working group, and a community of practice (COP). The structure is outlined below, with a brief explanation of the functions of each level.

7.2.1 AAP steering group

The steering group is the highest decision-making structure of the AAP. It shall consist of senior officials with the authority to direct actions, initiate organizational change and approve resources to effectively

implement the AAP agenda/initiatives. The group shall consist of heads of agencies (UN, INGOs, local NGOs, etc.), representatives of relevant committees, such as SGBV PSEA, and members of the HCT.

The group will be chaired by a dedicated Coordinator hosted by UN Women, with technical support from active NGOs, UN agencies, and relevant government partners to ensure an inclusive and holistic approach to AAP. A government representative will co-chair the steering group and act as a stakeholder adviser.

The group will meet quarterly and ad hoc, as and when necessary, to review and advise on progress and address urgent matters.

7.2.2 The AAP working group

The working group will provide direction for the operation of AAP by addressing gaps in capacity, communication and information to meet the needs of the affected population, listening to and hearing their voice, and enhancing their agency. The group will provide updates on various humanitarian coordination activities, including the inter-sectorial working groups and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

The working group aims to ensure that the group's meetings are strategic and focused on clear objectives and the determination to guide action-oriented decisions required to advance the AAP agenda. The working group will endeavour to make all decisions by consensus. In instances where there is no consensus, the Chair, in consultation with the Co-chair, will decide, considering the majority's position. All decisions will be made with full respect to the mandates of individual participants and invitees.

The Working Group is an inclusive cross-sector coordination and technical support

The mechanism brings together agencies, including the UN, Government partners, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international and local NGOs, civic society groups, private-sector actors, and other appropriate actors. Participation in the working

group is open to operationally relevant actors to ensure optimum engagement with the affected population. The group will be chaired by a UN partner and co-chaired by a government functionary member of the AAP working group, and the group shall be accountable to the steering group.

The working group will:

- a. Organise lessons-learned and information-sharing events to foster collaboration and learning and to enhance AAP implementation and effectiveness across the region;
- b. Monitor the progress of the AAP Roadmap and align strategies across intervening agencies;
- c. Provide technical advice to and support partners to incorporate emerging and established context-specific and good practices and standards on aspects of AAP programming;
- d. Coordinate and share information on developments and initiatives relevant to AAP with all relevant sectors operating in Karamoja, the sectoral working groups, the PSEA Network, and the Gender Task Team to enhance complementarity and avoid overlap and parallel structures;
- e. Identify fundraising opportunities for supporting the Roadmap's activities;
- f. Facilitate the development of key advocacy messages;
- g. Hold individual agencies to account for objectives, action points, and activities agreed upon in meetings; and
- h. Conduct an annual performance-monitoring exercise among working group participants as an internal accountability mechanism.

The Working Group will meet once a month or more frequently, as determined by the members.

The group shall propose and agree on the venue of its meetings, and any partner shall be at liberty to offer to host a meeting.

7.2.3 AAP community of practice

The Community of Practice (COP) shall consist of technical teams and be open to programme managers, monitoring teams, and AAP focal points at the organizational and district levels. The leadership of the COP will be rotational and elected from participating organisations. The COP shall work to improve the implementation of the strategy by generating solutions to challenges and drawing on lessons learned to enhance the participation of the affected populations in programme delivery.

The COP will:

- a. Promote the sharing and exchange of knowledge and learning with field staff to foster deeper technical connections and information and experience sharing on AAP;
- b. Guide the field teams on how to incorporate insights and feedback from key stakeholders into the AAP strategy;
- c. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of AAP practices and streamline AAP practices;
- d. Implement joint protocols that prioritize participant protection and share updates on feedback mechanisms and protection strategies; and
- e. Undertake needs analysis to identify potential areas of improvement and ensure effective communication regarding AAP standards and practices.

The COP will meet once a month or more frequently, as determined by participants. The group shall propose and agree on the venue of its meetings, and any partner shall be at liberty to offer to host a meeting.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

This strategy document covers the next five years of involvement in Karamoja by the UN and its partners. The AAP activities can be justified on condition that:

- a. They meet needs which are so pressing and important that the impact achieved during the five years alone justifies them. For example, they make people appreciate and work towards a safe environment and amplify community voices for accountability;
- b. There is a reasonable chance that the State, local governments, national NGOs, and international NGOs, or a combination of two or more of these, will sustain AAP activities beyond the involvement of the UN; and
- c. There will be a long-term impact through an improvement in the performance of community-based structures or individuals, with no further external intervention – e.g., the population knows and has access to procedures for communicating complaints and feedback and participating in programmes; and local governments supervise CARM mechanisms to ensure compliance with AAP commitments and standards.

Satisfying the third condition will require continuous work as most one-off work has limited impact. Situations normally return to where they were unless the basic reasons for their initial emergence are fundamentally changed. Despite this general limitation, some specific changes should be possible. For example, an increase in funding so local governments can continue with the work, improved knowledge, and a CARM fully embraced by most NGOs and local governments could occur. With intensive work on AAP over the next five years, there is a chance for the impact to be sustained beyond the five years.

It is recognised that the demand for voice and accountability can never be fully satisfied, the need

will never decline, and funding from the State will never be sufficient. The demand for voice and accountability has other difficulties:

- a. It is very expensive due to the number of people served and the operating context;
- b. It is hard to supervise the quality of service given, a problem that is usually simply ignored; and
- c. CARM works in situations with a two-way communication system and on systems that can deliver. In practice, complaints and feedback are filed, but the issues are not addressed promptly. Communicating effectively amidst sometimes overwhelming challenges is very important, and it relies on skills beyond merely having such systems in place.

Therefore, there is a need for a strategy for providing feedback on an adequate and prompt scale because many people have similar problems, and it is necessary to ensure that the system serves people and is able to protect the rights of the affected populations.

Broadly, the sustainability of the impact of AAP can be classified into four (4) dimensions:

Sustainability of AAP impact:

- a. **Institution building:** Local governments, district committees, NGOs, and NGO Forums should be strengthened through training, self-financing arrangements, structure and procedure setting, etc. Filling or strengthening the role of M&E at the district level could also promote the sustainability of AAP and its impact.
- b. **Changing attitudes** to the real challenges of accountability and realizing that it is possible to create a protective environment for all categories of people. This will require the collective efforts of more actors, including DLGs, district committees, UN, INGOs, national NGOs, etc.



Public awareness of rights and responsibilities:

awareness creation, improving service delivery, voice and accountability will promote AAP sustainability.



Harmonising the local government and NGO accountability systems to improve service delivery and ultimately promote AAP sustainability.

Some of the factors which will guide the quest for the sustainability of AAP activities are:

- a. Capacity building of partners to enable them to sustain their participation;
- b. Lobbying for long-term funding for AAP partners;
- c. Training of allies, mainly NGOs and district committees on AAP for their sustained involvement;
- d. Establishing a permanent home for the AAP. This may be through DLGs or opening an AAP desk

- e. at another organization, such as an NGO Forum;
- e. Strengthening District NGO Forums or district committees as the fulcrum of an alliance for AAP;
- f. Ensuring that at hand-over, the scale of operations will be such that another partner can sustain them, and the appropriate scale at hand-over should be determined at an early stage, depending, for example, on how many agencies will take over the work, their capacity, etc.; and
- g. A strategy to make the existing community-based structures sustainable. This could involve opening them up immediately to other NGO activities, releasing ownership, and encouraging DLGs and NGOs to work through them. A hand-over for their continued management and financing will need to be formulated as part of the AAP strategy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Community-based structures exist in all the districts of Karamoja, and they are used to generate, collect, and share information. The efforts of the UN, its partners, other organisations and the Government of Uganda to use community-based structures to engage the affected communities in humanitarian and development programmes in Karamoja is laudable. Even the DLGs rely on the same structures to programme for communities, and the Parish Development Model (PDM) is an example of this.

The structures, which include community volunteers, VSLAs, the LCs, religious institutions, and community services departments of the DLG, play significant roles in informing and sensitising communities on different programmes meant for them. However, although most community-based structures are operational, the mapping exercise and analysis of the capacity and community perceptions of, and response to, the structures' work reveals that none of the structures is delivering in line with AAP commitments to the scale necessary. Therefore, capacity gaps and structural problems will need to be addressed.

Similarly, despite traditional and technology-based communication channels, most community-based structures do not have an effective programme for two-way communication, especially involving diverse groups of people. Moreover, there is no mechanism or system for collective feedback and oversight. An analysis of the frequency of feedback from different

groups and individuals shows that most complaints did not elicit appropriate feedback and that there were no attempts to hold field staff accountable for their activities.

Even the measures instituted by UN agencies and INGOs to enhance AAP practices through information provision and collection and participation of affected populations at all the stages of project management cycles have challenges. For example, they are not being implemented to the necessary scale, and the partners will need to strengthen their respective organization-specific systems of handling community accountability and referral issues. In addition, they will need to adopt a collective system that works in harmony with the government and NGOs and fosters the commitment of all key stakeholders to strengthen community engagement and programmatic impact.

Finally, although the districts of Karamoja have a lot of similarities, care should be taken to adapt the strategy to the conditions prevailing in each district and even the location within a district. These conditions are not homogeneous and require contextualizing approaches to suit diverse groups of people in different geographical settings within the project locations. The strategy should be implemented on the premise that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. On that premise, and to implement the strategy to benefit the affected population, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

i)	During the selection process for engagement in different districts of Karamoja, the ability of selected community-based structures and partners to deliver on AAP capacity indicators should be assessed;
ii)	Specific budgets should be allocated for improving the quality and accountability activities of community-based structures through training, joint exercises, and monitoring delivery as an ongoing exercise;
iii)	The capacity of field staff and partners to monitor the performance of AAP organizational frameworks and systems against AAP strategic objectives should be improved;
iv)	A plan should be developed to ensure all intervening/participating organizations define and implement internal procedures for acknowledging, evaluating, responding to, and, where necessary, investigating complaints in conjunction with their top leadership staff or country offices when it involves serious staff misconduct;
v)	Good practices should be shared, and community-based structures should be monitored collaboratively for compliance with the agency's commitment to AAP and technical standards;
vi)	Undertake advocacy to enhance visibility with donors and relevant actors and to interest them in investing in AAP in Karamoja;
vii)	Investments should be made in the AAP management structure and sustainability plan for Karamoja;
viii)	Strengthen coordination of the AAP management/working structures to foster collaboration and enhance CFRM implementation and effectiveness across intervening agencies; and
ix)	Analyse systematically the context and evolving spaces and structures for engagement with the population, develop and adopt a gender- and culturally-sensitive approach to the affected population, and use multiple sources of information for a more comprehensive understanding of what is happening on the ground and to devise measures to mitigate risks for the organizations, staff, partners, and the population

ANNEX

Annex 1: Methods and Participants for AAP Strategy Development

The strategy was developed based on evidence from qualitative and quantitative secondary and primary data on gender-specific experiences and perceptions. A desk review of project documents, the AAP mapping report, and other literature relevant to Karamoja and the strategy helped to establish the extent and relevance of existing data to AAP project areas. In particular, the desk review identified areas where more information was required, especially the approaches of community-based structures to AAP, gaps and opportunities in those structures, the manifestations of power relations between the structures and end users, and community perceptions of the strengths and constraints of community-based structures and practices. In addition, a literature review revealed why people chose to resort to some structures instead of others for reporting sensitive matters, the relationships between community-based structures and government functionaries, and their implications for reporting.

The study explored community perceptions of and experiences with community-based structures in relation to their perceived strengths and areas needing improvement, community needs, preferred communication strategies, and mechanisms for reporting sensitive matters.

In addition, FGDs, interviews, and KIIs were conducted with members of community-based structures, members of the affected community, and NGO and government staff in Abim, Amudat, Kotido, and Moroto districts. The strategy development process assessed the structures, practices, limitations, and opportunities of community-based structures related to community participation in humanitarian and development programmes implemented by the UN and its partners, International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and district local governments.

Survey data from the AAP mapping exercise captured the different community-based structures

operating in Karamoja. Field data collection focused on understanding the perceptions and experiences of community members, with the community-based structures mapped. Similarly, FGDs and interviews helped to assess the practices, limitations, and opportunities of community-based structures in delivering AAP commitments.

A total of 24 FGDs involving 288 people, 20 interviews, and 17 KIIs were conducted. While the FGDs were conducted with members of community-based structures and other community members, 20 interviews were conducted with group leaders of various community-based structures, local leaders and ordinary members of the community, and KIIs were conducted with staff of UN partners, Abim NGO Forum, and district local governments. Finally, through the Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops and consultations with leaders of various community-based structures, participants helped to clarify and validate the findings. Their perspectives helped to identify common elements that helped generalise the strategy for all the districts of Karamoja. The table under the limitations section summarises the data-collection methods, participant categories, and number of participants per category and district.

Four out of the nine districts of Karamoja were sampled, and data was collected in Abim, Kotido, Amudat and Moroto districts, focusing on planned AAP locations. Abim and Kotido in North Karamoja were chosen on account of their ability to provide insights into the effect of the conflicts between the two neighbours on their relations and humanitarian situations. Meanwhile, Moroto and Amudat in the south were selected for their unique attributes: hard-to-reach and centrality to humanitarian interventions. Amudat is not only a hard-to-reach location; its border with Kenya adds an extra dimension to the conflict and peacebuilding dynamics. In addition, Moroto District is the main base for humanitarian actors. It has enabled the research team to access many agencies and document their contribution to affected communities. The sampling was appropriate because it represents the dynamics at play in Karamoja.

Data was collected and analysed, and the information emerging from different sources was compared in a triangulation framework while applying gender-sensitive analytical frameworks. This was done to assess the gendered dimensions of conflict and peace-building, including age, disability, and inclusion analysis, to ensure that no harm was done and that questions that risked re-traumatising respondents who had experienced conflict or violence were avoided. Generally, the researchers adhered to human rights standards, and the ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

3.2 Limitations

There were primarily two limitations related to the assignment, and measures were implemented to ensure they did not significantly impact the quality of the strategy.

First, the assessment was limited in spatial scope, focusing on only four out of the nine districts of Karamoja, thus potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings based on the strategy's

development. However, the wide-ranging consultations conducted with diverse stakeholders conversant with AAP in Karamoja and a validation workshop with representatives of AAP structures improved the chances of generalizing the strategy to all the districts of Karamoja.

Second, the entire stakeholder consultation, which was planned to be conducted within three days, was practically not feasible, given the magnitude of the assignment. Moreover, securing an appointment with everyone who should have been consulted was impossible. Therefore, more time than anticipated was spent in the selected districts of Karamoja and in consultations with different stakeholders to ensure that the data collected was deep and broad. Although not everyone targeted was consulted, the data collected suggests a saturation point for most relevant issues.

The table shows the breakdown of data collection methods and the participant categories reached per district.

S/N	Data collection method and major participant category	Participant category	Number per district
1	Focus Group Discussions with groups and community members	<p>Abim (4 in Awach: 2 female, 1 male, 1 mixed; and 2 mixed in Atunga)</p> <p>Amudat (3 mixed in Karati: and 3 in Amudat Town Council: 2 mixed and 1 female)</p> <p>Kotido (4 in Nakapelimoru: 1 male, 1 female, 1 PWD, and 1 mixed); and 3 in Rengen: 1 female, 1 male, and 1 mixed)</p> <p>Moroto (3 in Tapac: 1 male (male youth), 1 male others, and 1 female; 2 in Nadunget: 1 youth, and 1 mixed)</p>	<p>Abim (6)</p> <p>Amudat (6)</p> <p>Kotido (7)</p> <p>Moroto (5)</p> <p>(Total: 22)</p>

2	20 interviews	Abim (a cultural leader, LC 2 Chairperson, a retired civil servant, a volunteer with World Vision International, and a volunteer with CDFU)	Abim (5)
		Amudat (Parish Chief, PDM Team Leader, VSLA group leader, LC 1 Chairperson, a female beneficiary of PDM)	Amudat (5)
		Kotido (LC 2 Chairperson, ordinary youth, community volunteer)	Kotido (3)
		Moroto (LC1 Chairperson, Youth leader, SAACO group leader, VHT, a health worker, 2 religious leaders)	Moroto (7)
			(Total: 20)
3	17 KIIs with staff of the UN and its partners, other relevant NGO programme staff, and district local government staff	Abim (Abim NGO Link Forum, DCDO, CDO, District Probation and Child Welfare, Karibu Radio Station)	Abim (5)
		Amudat (ZOA, Caritas, Town Clerk)	Amudat (3)
		Kotido (Mercy Corps, Nakere, Gard, KOPEIN)	Kotido (4)
		Moroto (FIDA, Save the Children, and Uganda Red Cross)	Moroto (3)
			(Total: 17)



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