



# PLAYING FOR PEACE

## NEWSLETTER PLAYING FOR PEACE

July 2007

This newsletter is part of the Peace & Sports programme for “young warriors” in the Karamojan region in north-eastern Uganda, in northern Kenya and in southern Sudan.

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### **An uncertain future for Ngiturkana**

By Meindert Korevaar and Sara Ketelaar

After 5 months since we facilitated the training in Kakuma on Conflict management, Peace building and Sports as a tool for relationship building, we are back in Turkana land, Kenya's biggest province. Thanks to rain the area has undergone a real metamorphosis: from grey and dusty, to green and fresh. The green vegetation with the colourful people of this area, the Ngiturkana, together with their livestock, form a beautiful picture. We are visiting some of the area's where the Peace and Sports Programme is being implemented by LOKADO: Lokichoggio Oropoi Kakuma Development Organization. During four weeks we visit kraals, talk with warriors, diviners and other kraal leaders, we meet with the women of different peace choirs, witness cow vaccination, attend football trainings combined with peace talks and we see many, many camels, donkey's, goats and of course: cows and guns. Again we are impressed by the richness of these people: their possessions (cows!), their colourful culture and their wisdom.

You would assume since there is plenty of water, the pastoralists don't face many problems now. There must be enough grazing land for their cows, so no need to cross borders in search for that. Unfortunately there is, as always, a negative side.

After some heavy rains roads and bridges have been flushed away, causing serious transport problems. That on its turn has consequences for the delivery of almost everything, because remember: there's not much more in Turkana land except lots of camels, goats and cows. Fuel prices are high, there is a shortage of fruits and vegetables, and the prices of basic goods are often more expensive than anywhere in Kenya. Flooded rivers have cut the precious connections to remote areas, were wells have been ruined by the washing water, or only produce muddy water.

In the merged kraals of chief Akadai Lodea and diviner Apamulele Erot Muria we hear the great news that they just agreed peace with the neighbouring Dodoth kraals. This agreement has already been signed in 2005 (Oropoi 2005 protocol), but violated

several times since then. Chief Akadai is a wise and respected man; he does not want to risk any losses of lives and livestock anymore. He wants peace, and the sooner the better. He advises the youth warriors not to go for raiding. Diviner Apamulele, also called general, says he is also a supporter of peace. Apamulele and Akadai are in a good position: their kraal is very big, they have loads of cattle, and we notice that every man is carrying a gun. This community has to be taken seriously.

The chief is acting as a connector; he agreed peace with neighbouring Dodoth kraals, has a good relationship with the Jie from Uganda and wants to have cross border peace meetings combined with sports to build relations among the youth warriors. Unfortunately there are many spoilers on the lure, who are really threatening peace. There are rumours that the diviner Apamulele also challenges the peace, by allowing fellow Ngiturkana from other manyattas to lead the stolen cattle from Dodoth through his manyatta.

During the introductory meeting with the kraal elders, women and youth warriors, we witness a public accusation of a young warrior. Augustin Kai Lopic, co-ordinator of LOKADO, and his colleagues identify him as one of the warriors who went for a raid on Dodoth just a few weeks ago. One of the raiders died, another one was severely



injured. The boy is a member of a kraal in Letea, 100 kilometres from Oropoi and the current location of the kraal of Egadai and Apamulele. He has been stimulated to go for the raid by a mighty diviner of Loreng, called Ekoritorob. He and this diviner are blamed by the elders, and are accused of spoiling the recent peace with Dodoth. The peace is fragile, and may not be threatened by dividers like such.

Also the Ugandan army, UPDF, is threatening the peace of the pastoralists. During our stay in the kraal near Oropoi, the Ugandan army attacks a Dodoth community with heavy machinegun fire from their gun ships. Fortunately nobody gets injured, but the army takes all the cows. They give the owners an impossible choice: a cow for a gun. The Dodoth kraal can get back their cows, if they hand over their guns. In a insecure environment, where the most valuable possessions of a herdsman are his cows and his gun (one gun equals the value of two bulls, which is Ksh 25000,- or approx. € 300,-), forcing people to change their lifestyle is likely to fail. Taking all the cattle will force the warriors to go and raid, instead of handing over guns to a government who chases them out of Uganda by bombing and shooting their kraals. The disarmament strategy of Uganda seems therefore not very effective.

On the Kenyan side, the government is not doing much. Although Turkana land is the biggest district (77.000 km<sup>2</sup>, with only 700.000 people living there), there is for the government not much to get. People take care of their own security, which the state is

failing to provide. Of course there are some people who abuse the power of the gun. This results in shooting incidents, robbery, ambushes, and so on. Basic needs like health, education, food and shelter are in some cases provided by international NGO's and the church. Again the state is failing.

But still in the most remote areas there is hardly any healthcare, which means that people sometimes have to walk for days to get to the hospital. In Oropoi division there is some education through the ABET programme (Alternative Basic Education for Turkana) that provides mobile education. At least it is something. Mobile basic services adjusted to the nomads who are constantly migrating is a challenge to NGOs and more important to the Kenyan government.

LOKADO, as a Community Based Organisation (CBO), is meaning a lot to the communities around Lokichoggio, Oropoi and Kakuma. They are reconstructing, for example, the old colonial road from Oropoi to Uganda, linking transport of people and goods from Kenya to Uganda and vice versa. Thanks to these roads LOKADO's counterparts from Uganda like KOPEIN<sup>1</sup> and DADO<sup>2</sup> do not need to travel all the way to Mbale, Kitale, Lodwar and Kakuma, but can just cross the border from Kaabong to Kalapata in Uganda, to Oropoi in Kenya. For these organisations quick transport and adequate communication is very important in their daily work as it often can save lives. When incidents happen, LOKADO and their friends, rush to the bush to see how they can help the local communities. Meanwhile LOKADO communicates with the authorities and tries to involve the police from Kakuma and Oropoi to support law and order, one of the tasks a government should provide. LOKADO is well-known in all corners of the three divisions. When children see the red LOKADO car approaching they spontaneously start singing their songs: *Iyong LOKADO ekisil!* (*You LOKADO we want us to stay in peace!*)



Where LOKADO offers assistance to several kraals in organising peace meetings and bridging the gap to the authorities, there are also international NGO's and churches who try to bring development to the Ngiturkana. Some initiatives are really good, like the boreholes in remote areas provided by Lutheran World Federation (LWF), or the

many mission hospitals of the Catholic Church. Unfortunately there are also projects who do more harm than good. In the cadre of the Turkana Rehabilitation Project (funded by the Kenyan government and the European Community), a Norwegian

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<sup>1</sup> KOPEIN = Kotido Peace Initiative (partner of the Peace and Sports programme, see also Newsletters April and May)

<sup>2</sup> DADO = Dodoth Agro pastoral Development Organisation (co-operating partner of both KOPEIN and LOKADO)

Church organisation introduced a tree, which would really do well in the arid area of Turkana. This tree, *Prosopis Chilense* (or *Etirae* in Turkana, which literally means “pricking badly”), was planted in 1986. Nowadays the whole area around Kakuma and Letea has hardly any other trees than this nasty thorn tree, which is causing a lot of damage to indigenous plants, to animals and even to people. It’s roots go very deep, claiming all the water, destroying the local vegetation and making the soil even more dry. It’s poisonous thorns makes goats sick, losing their teeth, paralysed or even die at last. For human beings the tree has only use for fencing and burning charcoal. Several organisations tried to wipe out this shrubs, by cutting it, burning it, even by poisoning it. A waste of efforts, if you know that the seeds will last for 10 years or more. Supported by the Kenya government and the EU, this tree is also one of the spoilers in Turkana land that make daily live for Ngiturkana really harsh.

A true connector is Father Bernhard Ruhnau from the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, who is based in the permanent settlement of Oropoi. He is visiting the kraals in those remote areas where nobody reaches or dares to go, offering help and assistance and spreading the word of God. After 25 years in the bush, people know him as *Apaamerireng* (the name of a Red and White spotted bull, which is a honourable name for Ngiturkana). He is one of them. Spending all his energy, his resources to the local communities. He wants his people on both sides of the border to live peacefully together. There has been many bloodsheds in the area around Oropoi, between Ngidoso, Ngiturkana, Ngijie and Ngitoposa. Though the father does not fear any threat or ambush. Recently he went to a very remote place close to the Ugandan border, where he met with some 120 heavily armed Dodoth warriors. Even his co-driver did not dare to get out of the car. Father Bernhard got out and talked with them. He listened to their problems (they’ve just been chased out of Uganda by the UPDF) and advised how they could meet with the neighbouring Ngiturkana to talk about peace. He has prevented other clashes between pastoralists warriors, too many to mention.

Father’s main concern is modernity. The road reconstructed by LOKADO could not be used recently because of insecurity caused by some spoilers with bad intentions. Although father sees the importance of the road, to connect the remote areas and have education and healthcare, he realises that this same road could be the beginning of the end of a rich culture. The introduction of a cash economy faces challenges to men in particular. One of the diviners from Oropoi and some of the warriors who have some small money to spend, leave their manyatta temporarily to go to Oropoi centre or the “big city” of Kakuma where they are often found drunk. Because of gun possession this can result in life threatening situations. Not only alcohol abuse, crime and modern illnesses will reach the area, but also new initiatives from NGO’s and government. Of course if these initiatives are in close consult with the local people, and really add something to their lives, it is welcome. But Fr. Bernhard does not want another “ugly thorn tree” there. He discourages his people to do any farming, because in time that will also effect the vegetation and again the way of living of his people.

The pastoralists in Turkana land face an uncertain future. Luckily there are some very committed connectors like Fr. Bernhard and the people from LOKADO. They keep on supporting their people, in search for long lasting peace. With or without support from outside. However we are one and we should be together.

*Na kirai ngoni ngipei ka itemokino kirauni ngipei!*

**Peace song of the women of Letea, northern Turkana district:**

**Yautu Ekisil**

*Iyo LOKADO, Iyo KOPEIN, Iyo DADO  
Yautu Ekisil!*

*Yautu Ekisil atobila akwara,  
Atopetasi ejomu,  
Ekisil ka ngimoe kangulu aremore*

*Ekoe Ngidoso, Ngiturkana,  
Ngimurle, Ngjie, Ngitoposa,  
Yautu ekisil!*

*Ani Kanyangangiro, Kosikiria,  
Kaileny, Loitan  
Taarae ngitunga tobwangas ngaatuk*

*Ekisil ka ngimoe ngulu  
Kanyangangiro, Kosikiria, Kaileny  
Yautu ekisil*

**Peace with our ancient enemies**

You LOKADO, You KOPEIN, You DADO,  
Let us go for peace!

Our Peace will break spears,  
sit together in one skin,  
such peace with our ancient enemies will be long  
lasting

Please people from Dodoth, Turkana,  
Murle, Jie and Toposa,  
Let us go for peace!

During the raids of Kanyangangiro, Kosikiria,  
Kaileny and Loitan(\*),  
many people were killed, cows run away and  
disappeared up to now

The peace between our attackers from  
Kanyangangiro, Kosikiria and Kaileny is needed  
Let us go for peace

\* In 2004 and 2006 the Ugandan army (UPDF) bombed and attacked the places of Kanyangangiro, Kaileny (both in Uganda) and Loitan in Kenya. A huge raid between Dodoth and Turkana took place in Kosikiria (Kenya) in 2003