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Social relationships and child labour migration from Kamoja, Uganda

An exploratory study

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► Research to Action (RTA) Report

June 2022

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Key points

- Significant drivers of child labour migration from Karamoja include hunger, death or absence of a parent, conflict-related insecurity, forced marriage, illness, debt, and abuse.
- Youth share information about migration with each other, including dangers, but young people remain willing to take the calculated risk of migration because their alternatives are so dire.
- Karamojong youth learn from their peers where and how to migrate. They also sometimes provide more tangible support, such as bus fare or guiding peers to their destination.
- Youth help newly arrived migrants access accommodations, find income generating activities, and navigate their new environment. Youth rely on each other's advice, and some youth benefit from emotional support from peers.

Introduction

Child labour migration is an issue of critical global importance. Child labour migrants experience exceptional rates of labour exploitation along with violence, hunger, and homelessness. Based on limited existing research, there is an important relationship between child labour migration and social relationships. This study advances inquiry into this area by exploring the link between social relationships and child labour migration among the Karamojong in Uganda, a group particularly affected by child labour migration. The study also explores drivers of child labour migration from Karamoja.

For at least the past 15 years there have been efforts by government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations to prevent child migration, resettle child migrants, and improve the conditions of

child migrants from Karamoja. Despite these efforts, significant migration of Karamojong children continues unabated. A recent study in Napak District, Karamoja illuminates the region's continued focus on migration. The study finds that 21 percent of children ages 12 to 17 in Napak believe that migrating is the only way to make enough money to survive, and 17 percent plan to migrate in the next year (25 percent when including only 15- to 17-year-olds) (ICF, 2021).

Studying the vast number of children involved in child labour migration is of vital importance because many of them are experiencing labour exploitation in addition to other challenges. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013), "Amongst child labourers it is migrant children who receive less pay, work longer hours, less often attend school, and face higher death rates at work in comparison to local children." An International

Organization for Migration (IOM) report states, “Migrant child labourers are among the least visible and least politically enfranchised human groups” and calls for additional studies on this “underreported issue” (2015a, p. 29).

Background

Research context: Karamoja, Uganda

Karamoja is located in the north-eastern corner of Uganda along the border with Kenya. It has an approximate population of 1.2 million people with an average age of 15 years. Karamoja is the least economically developed region in Uganda and one of “the world’s poorest areas” (UNFPA, 2018, p. 2).

► Map of Uganda highlighting Karamoja region



Labour migration among Karamojong children

Historically the Karamojong are a largely agro-pastoral population, and there has long been substantial internal migration within Karamoja (IOM, 2015b). While internal migration continues, decades of unrest and recurrent natural shocks have led to significant migration of the Karamojong, many of them children, to other areas of Uganda and neighbouring countries (IOM, 2015b).

In 2014, IOM conducted an extensive study of child migration from Karamoja. IOM concluded, “Children who migrate from Karamoja in search of income opportunities are vulnerable to labour exploitation, and many become victims of trafficking in persons. Understanding the “why” and the “how” of this phenomenon is critical because it will lead to better programmatic interventions by the Government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and international organizations like IOM,” (2014, p. 42).

Understanding the “why” and the “how” remains highly relevant as Karamojong children continue to experience child migration, child trafficking, and labour exploitation in large numbers. NGOs and media report that child trafficking from Karamoja is a common occurrence (Agiresaasi, 2020; CHTEA, 2020; Favour, 2020; Ojore, 2021; Plan International, 2019; The Independent, 2020). Child-initiated labour migration within and from Karamoja is also very common. Children travel within Karamoja to find better grazing land for cattle, and migrate within and beyond the region in search of income generating opportunities (IOM, 2014). Significant populations of Karamojong child migrants have been identified in all of Uganda’s major cities and in neighbouring countries (IOM, 2014; Retrak - Hope for Justice, 2018; Stites & Akabwai, 2012).

Migrant children often experience labour exploitation and are subjected to violence, hunger, and homelessness (IOM, 2014; Retrak - Hope for Justice, 2018; Walakira et al., 2014). Children working for employers are often verbally and physically abused, forced to work long hours, and fail to receive promised payment (IOM, 2014). Self-employed street children face hazards including arduous physical work and vehicular and personal assault (Walakira et al., 2014). Child labour migrants are commonly engaged in begging, street vending, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation (USDOL, 2020).

Social relationships and child labour migration

A comprehensive analysis of this relationship is lacking both in the broader literature and in the context of Karamoja. Reed and colleagues (2019) explore the role of relationships in pathways into commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and trafficking in persons in Nevada. The authors find that friendships influenced involvement through two distinct mechanisms: peer pressure and copying behaviour. A number of studies have explored social relationships among street children

and the role such relationships can play in policy. For example, Ayuku and colleagues (2003) conducted social network analyses of street children in Kenya with the aim of improving health and social interventions for this population. Similarly, Reza (2017) conducted an in-depth analysis of social ties among street children in Bangladesh. He offers policy recommendations for improving the lives of these children that incorporate “the centrality of relationships on the street life,” (p. 499).

The role of social relationships in child labour migration is similarly understudied in the Ugandan context. Several studies of Karamojong migration emphasize the importance of social networks in gaining employment but not in relation to child migrants (Iyer & Mosebo, 2017; Stites & Akabwai, 2012). IOM’s (2014) study of child migration discusses peer pressure in its analysis of the history of the phenomenon and notes the importance of social networks in surviving the destination environment. However, the study does not examine these issues in depth. A mixed-methods study of street children in Uganda, many of whom were from Karamoja, also mentions the role of friends in influencing children to work on the streets (Retrak - Hope for Justice, 2018). None of these studies offers the in-depth analysis of social relationships that this topic merits.

The paper will help to fill the knowledge gap related to social relationships and child labour migrations. It will also allow a deeper exploration of the drivers of child labor migration from Karamoja.

Methodology

Research questions

The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the social risk factors driving child labour migration from Karamoja?
2. How do Karamojong children gain information about migration?
3. How do social networks facilitate migration among Karamojong youth?
4. How can an understanding of social relationships of Karamojong youth migrants help to prevent child labour migration, mitigate the most dangerous forms of child labour for migrants, and withdraw migrant children from labour?

Data sources

This paper draws on secondary survey data and primary interview data. Each data source is described in detail below.

Survey data

The secondary data for this paper will be drawn from the CSEC Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) and Prevalence Study in Karamoja, Kampala. The study was funded by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) and implemented by ICF International and Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration. Data collection for this study took place in 2021. The purpose of the original study was to establish the baseline knowledge, attitudes, and practices around CSEC including the prevalence of CSEC in Napak District, Karamoja. GFEMS has funded interventions designed to reduce child trafficking and CSEC in Napak District. The data collected for this study helped the implementers tailor their programs to the needs of the community. Additionally, the study will be repeated in 2022 to determine whether the project has resulted in any change in KAP or the prevalence of CSEC.

The sample size for the baseline study was 986 households and 830 children. This study used a probability sampling design, selecting villages with probabilities proportional to size. Within villages, researchers entered the total number of households into the computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) program, and the program selected households using a systematic sampling interval. Within each household, the CAPI program randomly selected up to two children ages 12 to 17 for the child interview. The response rate at the household level was 99 percent. The acceptance rate among children available during the fielding period was over 95 percent. However, 28 percent of children ages 12 to 17 listed as members of selected households were absent from the village during the 1 to 2 days the interviewers were working in their village. While the post-stratification weights attempt to account for these absences, the weights do not adjust for nonresponse bias specifically, and thus the exclusion of these absent children is a limitation of the data.

Researchers interviewed any available adult in a selected household, with a preference for a parent of a 12- to 17-year-old if possible. Each interview was expected to last around 30 minutes. The questionnaires contained

questions about social networks and KAP related to child trafficking, migration, and CSEC. Some qualitative data were collected through open ended questionnaire items.

Interview data

The primary data for this paper comes from qualitative interviews conducted with key informants and young Karamojong labour migrants in 2022. The participants were chosen purposively based on their availability and the expectation that they could provide useful information for the study. While the study did not employ strict quotas, researchers aimed to include about half male and female participants to allow the exploration of gender implications related to the research topic. Similarly, they sought variety in ages and in types of employment among working migrants. These efforts allowed for the exploration of a greater range of perspectives on the topics of study despite the small sample size. Participants were recruited to the study through introductions by community leaders and NGOs as well as direct approaches to Karamojong children working on the street by research assistants (RAs).

Interviews were semi-structured and followed a detailed interview guide. Interview topics included a detailed labour migration history, information sources about migration, expectations and realities upon arrival, experience finding accommodations and work upon arrival, qualities and conversations with friends, and expectations for future. To avoid selective observations in data collection interviewers asked open questions and were careful not lead participants in their responses.

Two Karamojong RAs carried out the interviews in Karamojong language. Most interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews took place in a location chosen by the respondent, most frequently outdoors either in a public space or in front of the respondent accommodations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and translated to English as verbatim as possible. The RAs also wrote fieldnotes for each interview. Fieldnotes included an interview summary, a description of the respondent's appearance and mannerisms, a description of the setting, and details of any information provided outside of the recording.

In total, 3 key informant interviews were conducted with civil society organization and government representatives, and 24 interviews were conducted with former or current labour migrants ages 13 to 21. Interviews with returned migrants took place in towns and villages in Karamoja,

including at the site of programs intended to rehabilitate former youth migrants. Interviews with current migrants took place in various destinations including Busia, Mbale, and Kampala.

Participants engaged in various income generating activities, including trash picking, carrying water, house cleaning, nannyng, hawking goods, and theft. Some participants engaged in multiple activities over time or at the same time. Most participants had migrated for work multiple times interspersed with returns to their origin villages or towns in Karamoja. Some undertook farming while back in Karamoja.

Data processing and analysis

Survey data

Previous analysis of this data (ICF, 2021) focused on child trafficking and CSEC and was limited to key variables in the dataset. This paper explores the additional data related to migration and social networks using Stata. This analysis required reshaping the data file to allow analysis of all children in the household, not just child respondents. All estimates presented in the report use the survey weights to improve the representative of the estimates. The data are intended to allow the production of estimates representative of adults and children ages 12 to 17 in Napak District.

Interview data

As noted above, the RAs translated and transcribed all interviews into English. The transcripts and fieldnotes were coded using the qualitative software MAXQDA. The open-ended responses from the survey were also incorporated. Before beginning to code, the transcripts were reviewed in detail to develop an initial list of themes. During the coding process, new codes were added as new patterns emerged. Regular analytic memos were written throughout the coding and analysis process to develop the findings, and the emerging findings were discussed the RAs and with colleagues at Makerere University.

Ethical considerations

The study was reviewed by both the Makerere University School of Social Sciences Research and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Ethics Committees in a rigorous, two-month long process to ensure the appropriate protection measures were in

place. As part of this process, researchers were required to meet with local government officials and civil society representatives working with the target population to discuss the objectives and methods of the study and gather letters of support. In addition, in preparation for the study, the research team developed a child protection protocol. The protocol described best practices in interviewing children, how to recognize and respond to distress, protocols for confidentiality, and steps for reporting child abuse.

The RAs read aloud the informed consent statement before beginning an interview, and they only proceeded after all questions were answered and the respondent agreed to be interviewed. Whenever possible, RAs also sought consent from a parent or guardian of minor participants. However, those living independently provided their own consent. Participants were given 18,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately \$5) cash as a thank you for their time and to reimburse any phone or transportation costs as required by the National Ethics Committee.

Findings

This section presents findings related to the drivers of migration and peer relationships of youth labor migrants.

Drivers of migration

In the qualitative data, poverty, and the associated hunger, almost universally emerged as a key driver of migration. An adult survey respondent was asked who should make the decision about whether a child migrates for work, and she replied, “No one *decides*; it’s the hunger that chases children away.” When a different adult survey respondent was asked what they would do if they had concerns about a child being trafficked, they replied, “Hunger is the reason children leave the village,” implying that children being driven out by hunger is the more pervasive problem compared to trafficking. The survey data support the conclusion that hunger is widespread. Two-thirds of children (69 percent) went to bed hungry at least 1 night in the week preceding the survey, and one-quarter (27 percent) went to bed hungry three or more nights. Most qualitative participants described some additional drivers of migration, and most of those either contributed to or resulted from poverty.

The loss or absence of a parent was commonly cited as a reason for migration. When child survey respondents were asked how many people they could rely on in a time

of need, 45 percent of respondents reported having two or fewer people they could rely on. With so many children having such a small safety net, it is unsurprising that the loss or absence of a parent may lead to labour migration. These events are very common in the lives of children in Napak, as shown by Table 1 below.

► **Table 1: Absence and death of parents**

	Absent from child's household	Has died
Mother	19%	5%
Father	29%	13%
Both parents	15%	2%

A large minority of children live in households without one or both of their parents. Five percent of children are maternal orphans, 13 percent are paternal orphans, and 2 percent are double orphans. Children described having to support themselves after the death of their parents. A now 17-year-old female recalled having to support herself at age 8, explaining, “I found out that my father had died so then from there I began looking for work from within like mudding people's houses, laying bricks and so on.” Some youth also take on responsibility for siblings after the loss of their parents. A 14-year-old female explained, “The kind of life I live now is not good. It’s a child headed family; we have no parents, and these days I fetch water for people just to survive and take care of young brother.”

In addition to the death of a parent, other factors include the parent’s own labour migration, or abandonment. Several interview participants cited polygamy as the reason for their abandonment, as their father moved on to new wives and left behind previous families. A 17-year-old male recounted,

Even our father left us and got another wife, no giving any help as a father. If you ask father, “Give me something,” because he has cows, he will say, “You go and ask your mother, go to the grave and ask your mother.”

A 19-year-old female who also experienced abandonment stated,

I come from a very poor and polygamous family, and my mother happens to be the first wife... and two others follow. When my father married his third wife, he completely abandoned our family, and he is unbothered about us.

Participants described other drivers of migration, including conflict-related insecurity, forced marriage,

illness, debt, and abuse. The ongoing conflict in Karamoja was of particular concern to males, who are much more frequently targeted than girls. A 17-year-old male explained,

The main reason I left home was insecurity and hunger. There was no way out because if you would even think of sleeping in the house, the raiders pull you out and kill. Even when you think of sleeping in the bush– same story. So, I decided to migrate from home. In other words, I ran away from fear of the cattle rustlers.

Forced marriage was of more concern to girls, who are sometimes forced into marriage so that their families will receive a bride price (for example cows or cash) from a man in exchange for the girl's marriage. A 14-year-old listed all her reasons for migrating, including an impending forced marriage:

Now when I'm here, I'm here because of poverty. No one bothered to take me to school, and some time back my uncle wanted to force [me] to marry. It's the reason I came here, and I don't even want to ever go back home again.

► **Achia**¹ / age 14 / female

Several participants attributed their migration to the illness or injury of themselves or a family member. One respondent told the interviewer that she had cerebral malaria and had to move both for treatment and because of hunger. Others migrated because of the loss of household income resulting from a member's illness or accident. One respondent's father lost his limbs in an accident and could no longer support her, and all their family's assets were sold off to pay her father's hospital bill. The cost of treatment and of traveling for treatment

was a reason for migration for several other participants. One 16-year-old female who had previously attempted suicide due to the hopelessness of her situation stated,

But on Friday I told my mother I am going to Kampala. Then she replied me, "Now that you are going who is going to cultivate the garden?" Then I told her, "What about that woman who is coming here daily to demand for the money that I used to take you to the Hospital?" There is nothing to give her, not even a cow we have to pay her debt.

► **Nadim** / age 16 / female

The respondent later told the interviewer she also brought along her younger sibling when she migrated, explaining, "I cannot manage to get that money alone, I need help of the child."

Key informant participants mentioned abuse as a driver of child migration, and this was the reason cited by a 19-year-old female who recalled her first migration at age 16, stating, "My parents mistreating me that is why I thought of it." She later commented that her mother was an alcoholic and that their belongings and even their home were taken to pay her mother's debts.

Child labour migration and peers

The analysis of the interview data showed that peers support each other at all stages of migration in many different ways. Migration is a common topic of conversation among young people in Napak. Almost half

¹ All participant names in this paper are pseudonyms. Names within quoted selections of interview transcripts have been removed or changed.

(49 percent) report discussing migration with their friends. Some of these conversations take the form of experienced child migrants sharing information with those who have never migrated. Topics include how to travel, where to go, and how to get the money to travel. A 17-year-old male named Lowot recalled the help a friend provided before he first migrated. Lowot stated,

[My friend] told me to get around 30,000 UGX to board the bus, and I told him I don't have that money. He told me I will buy for you a jerrican and everyone who needs water to be taking for them and per each jerrican was 200 UGX, within two or three weeks you can get 35,000 UGX for your transport. Even me I did as he had said.

Like that respondent's friend, some experienced migrants go beyond providing information. Some lend their peers money for bus fare, and others act as guides from the village to the city. A 17-year-old described how disorienting it was to arrive in Kampala coming from rural Karamoja and how critical the physical guidance of his friend was. He said,

Because I saw the cars, those high buildings, people are many; I just remained stranded like that. I said there is no where I can go. [...] I used to see people touching the heads of the cars to cross but I said if I try, they will knock me, and I die. I remember my first time. I stayed at the bus park, no moving, until my friend [...] came and picked me.

Peers provide critical support to new arrivals. One-fifth of survey respondents (21 percent) reported knowing someone who could help them find a place to stay or find income generating opportunities in a new place if they wanted to migrate. Many interview participants describe meeting up with friends or relatives upon arrival for orientation and support. For example, a 17-year-old male recalled, "It is one of my cousin brothers who migrated here last year who helped us with accommodation and that is where we are currently sleeping." In other cases, would-be-migrants depart without knowing anyone at the destination. They describe seeking out other Karamojongs on arrival. A 14-year-old female recounted,

We got some girls and asked them kindly tell us where we can get the rest of the Karamojongs. They told us to first sit under the veranda, and then in the evening we go; maybe you may identify any of your relatives in the evening. We went and slept with them. In the morning, we came and went to look for our accommodation.

Some participants described a tense initial period once they met with other Karamojongs but were eventually

helped. Two different 17-year-old girls described their arrivals:

They were like now telling the girl who brought me here, "You very well know that we contribute everything here, where is she going to sleep?" This girl refused, and [the first girl] said, "Maybe let her sleep inside as I sleep outside." They refused. So again, some other girl called Nawot came, and this girl requested Nawot for me to sleep in their house. Nawot then said, "It's ok we have space in our house."

We went and sat down some tall building, we started crying because we told ourselves that we had gotten lost. Then there were some girls who passed by, Karamojongs also, but wrong ones who had turned to be grabbers. They approached us and asked us, "Hello girls where are you from? Karamoja?" We said yes. They wanted to grab the phone from us, and we pleaded. They took us to where the rest were, and where they stayed.

In the second anecdote, their peers initially planned to rob them but instead helped them find somewhere to sleep and even tried to help connect them with work.

Like those participants, many young people described being helped by peers in their search for income generating opportunities. For some this help took the form of information about market rates to help with targeting and negotiating jobs. A 21-year-old female explained, "Those that have migrated, and they tell when you go out to look for work, you should know house work with good money, like 700,000." Others learned specific skills from peers which enabled them to engage in income generating activities. Lowot, the young man who earned his bus fare by carrying water in a jerrican, described a lesson on theft:

[My friend said,] "When you see bosses, they have money, don't fear them, don't think when someone is very big they will beat you. For us we are now used be being beaten in the street." Even me one day I tried. I got a big man with a stomach, I teased him, and the man pulled 150,000 UGX, when that money that time was too much. Then I gave some money to my friend to say thank you for also teaching me.

In other cases, more established migrants used their personal networks to help new migrants find open positions. Muya, now 17, had a particularly hard time finding work when she first arrived in Busia because she lacked skills other migrants had. She said, "I tried cleaning and sorting; tried winnowing; groundnuts just came from

the air and all poured on my face. This woman just told me to go away because I was not able to.” Eventually Muya was connected to a position by a peer: “Some girl then came around in the evening with the news that some woman was busy looking for someone to work in her house.”

In addition to providing support with accommodations and with finding work, migrants provide each other with advice on how to survive in the new setting. When Muya complained that her employer was “too tough,” her peers told her to “just endure.” Muya was not alone in being encouraged to endure hardship. Upon arrival, Lowot, the young man who would eventually learn theft, asked a friend where he could sleep. His friend responded,

Sleeping!? Are you seeing those boxes? Are you seeing those sacks? If you want to sleep at night you enter in that sack, you sleep. Here there is no your mother's home or house of your mother; you will have to sleep on the veranda of these houses in town.

Participants also described receiving advice about safety and about the mindset needed to survive in such a difficult setting. A 17-year-old male recalled advice from a friend, who told him, “Here, life is very hard; you should be very careful. To survive from here it is what?—It is your energy. Not like they will just feed you. You need to use your common sense.” A 14-year-old girl described how she and her friends would advise each other to stick to their values. She said,

► We used to tell ourselves: When you are here, it's to look for survival, not prostitution. Like when you thought of coming here, it was [due to] poverty of your family.

► Sagal / age 14 / female

Perhaps due to the precarity of their lives, exchanging of advice is the dominant topic of conversation among peers who are migrants. When asked what they talk about with friends, a 21-year-old female responded, “It's just advice, nothing else.” Similarly, a 14-year-old female replied,

“Nothing, only advising ourselves on what to do in life like. A 17-year-old male responded, “What you talk about is life, sharing stories, advices.”

A few participants mentioned the importance of emotional support from their friends. The young woman who suffered cerebral malaria also has a mental illness. When asked if her best friend is aware of her mental illness, she replied, “Yes, she's aware of my problem. Even when I go mad, my madness wants being next to her.”

The support migrant youth received from peers stands in stark contrast to more formal institutions. Those who brought up NGO programs had universally negative reports. Several expressed frustration that programs only targeted out-of-school youth and noted that they did not qualify for these programs because they had never attended school. A 17-year-old male attended a six-month training program but was unable to find work afterwards. He lamented, “After six months, there is not any support they gave me. I was thinking they will give me some support.” Instead he only received tools, which were sold by a housemate to cover the trainee's share of the rent.

Lowot, the young man who learned theft from a peer, developed a drug addiction. He describes going to an NGO for street children for meals, stating, “We have some teaching, like, ‘You stop this and that,’ [but] because of life in the street you are after eating only and don't listen to what they are teaching.” However, at the time of the interview, Lowot was no longer involved in theft or drugs. He described how peers gave him advice on how to stop these activities and alternative ways to generate income. They also offered him material support such as a place to stay while he figured things out. They provided emotional support as well: “[My friend] used to advise and say, ‘Let's go and play football. If you remain alone you will think bad things.’ We talk every evening and every day.” It was through the support of peers, not through institutional support, that he was able to make these meaningful changes in his life.

Conclusion and recommendations

This section presents conclusions related to the drivers of migration and to peer relationships among migrant youth followed by policy recommendations.

The drivers of youth labour migration from Karamoja are numerous and interrelated. While most interview participants said that poverty or hunger were the reason for their migration, these were generally cited in

combination with additional drivers. Most commonly these included death or absence of a parent, conflict-related insecurity, forced marriage, illness, debt, and abuse. Youth in this region face numerous significant challenges. As summarized by 17-year-old Muya,

Here in Karamoja, when the year ends, you thank God. You don't focus on what is ahead of you. We have hunger, diseases, raids. All is struggling.

► Muya / age 17 / female

In the context of such struggles, it is rational that migration would be a central topic of conversation among peers in Karamoja. These discussions cover details on where and how to travel, but young people also frequently share stories of tragedy related to migration. They talk about youth who have had organs removed or been beheaded or other gruesome occurrences. Through these discussions, youth are aware of the horrific potential outcomes of migration. When asked in the survey about risks when children migrate, most children agreed that there's a large risk of not making any money, not having enough to eat, contracting a disease, being beaten, and being trafficked for sex (ICF, 2021). However, young people continue to migrate in large numbers despite widespread knowledge of the risks.

A quote from a 19-year-old female provides a succinct explanation for this choice:

My child is here crying of hunger; [I have] nothing to give. So just look at all that—what would you do if it was you? I decided to come.

► Nalem / age 19 / female

Young people are willing to take the calculated risk of migration, not due to lack of awareness of the risks involved, but because their alternatives to migration are so dire.

Once young people have migrated, their survival and success in their destination is improved by their access to support from other Karamojong youth. Youth help newcomers to access accommodations, find income generating activities, and navigate their new environment. Youth rely on each other's advice, and some youth benefit from emotional support from peers. Youth narratives suggest that peer support plays a much more significant role in migrants' achieving their goals and influencing their decisions than does institutional outreach and engagement.

The findings of this study have policy implications leading to several recommendations:

- In the absence of improvements in the drivers of migration, programming focused on raising the awareness of the dangers of migration is unlikely to be effective in substantially reducing child labour migration. Programming that addresses the drivers of migration is much more likely to achieve a reduction in child labour migration. Such programming would be even more effective if youth peer networks were harnessed to share information about the programming and to recruit participation.
- While awareness-raising campaigns designed and implemented by adults are unlikely to be effective in stemming the flow of migration, a potential alternative could be the facilitation of youth-led, *balanced* discussions of the risks *and benefits* of migration. Youth are already assembling this information individually in a piecemeal fashion, and some have access to more information than others. Facilitated discussions could help align expectations with reality, share advice on avoiding victimization, and help young people self-advocate for better conditions.
- Formalizing peer support networks at major destinations could help reduce vulnerability and labour exploitation. As described in the findings, peers already help one another informally, but this support could potentially be more systematic and effective with more organization and outside aid. Child migration is so pervasive in Karamoja, the formalization of information sharing and peer networks is unlikely to exacerbate the problem. Rather it has the strong potential to reduce the vulnerability and instability of this existing

population, creating safer conditions for those already enmeshed in these struggles.

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