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# RESEARCH TO ACTION CONFERENCE

Social Relationships and Child Labor  
Migration from Karamoja, Uganda: An  
Exploratory Study

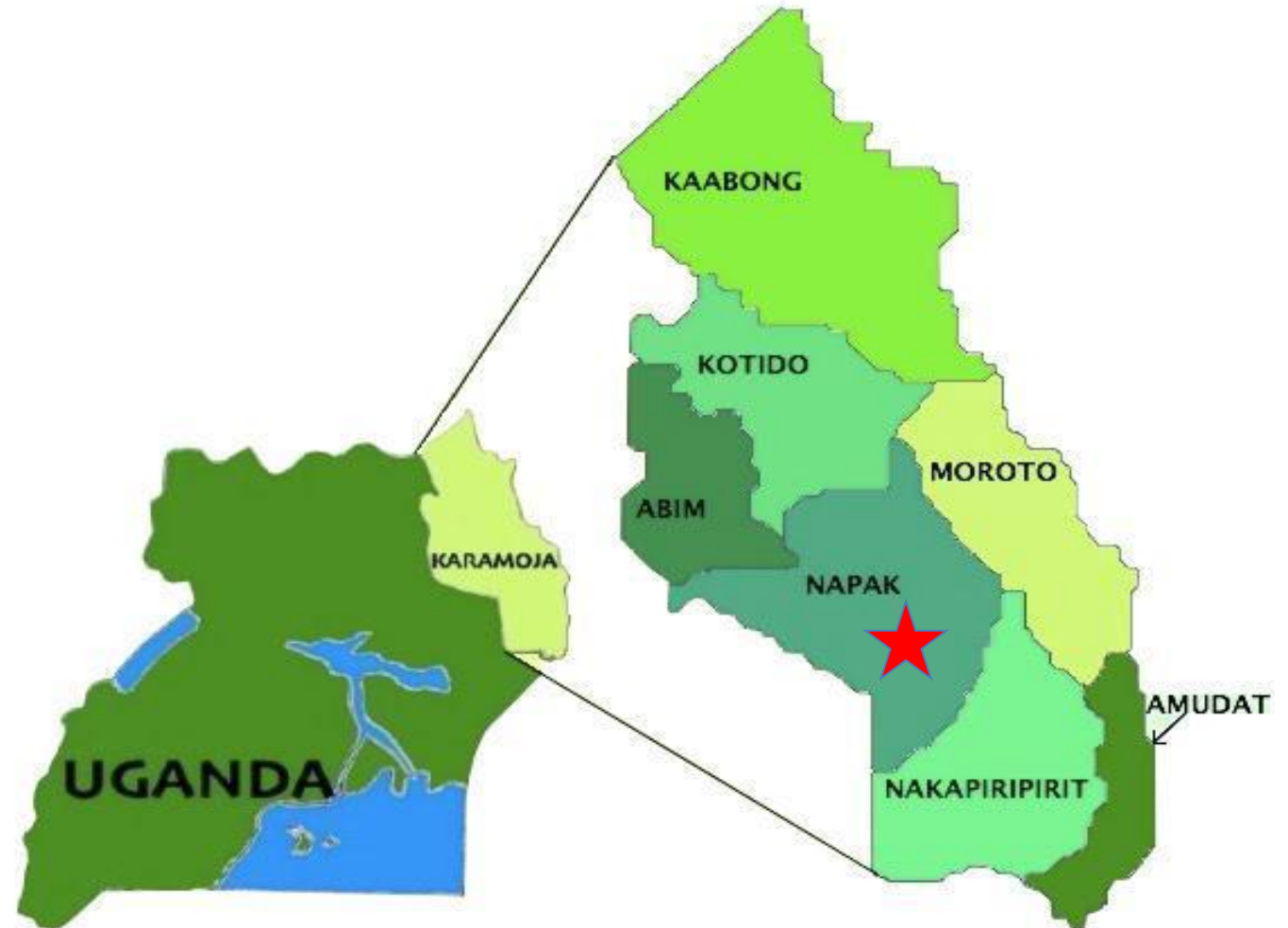
Holly Koogler

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## OBJECTIVES

- Investigate the social risk factors related to child labor migration from Karamoja
- Explore the peer relationships of child labor migrants from Karamoja
- Propose policies and potential interventions that reflect the true structure and dynamics of social networks for preventing child labor migration, mitigating the most dangerous forms, and withdrawing migrant children from labor

# SENDING AREA: NAPAK DISTRICT, KARAMOJA, UGANDA



# CONTEXT

*“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” (IOM, 2014, p. 42).*

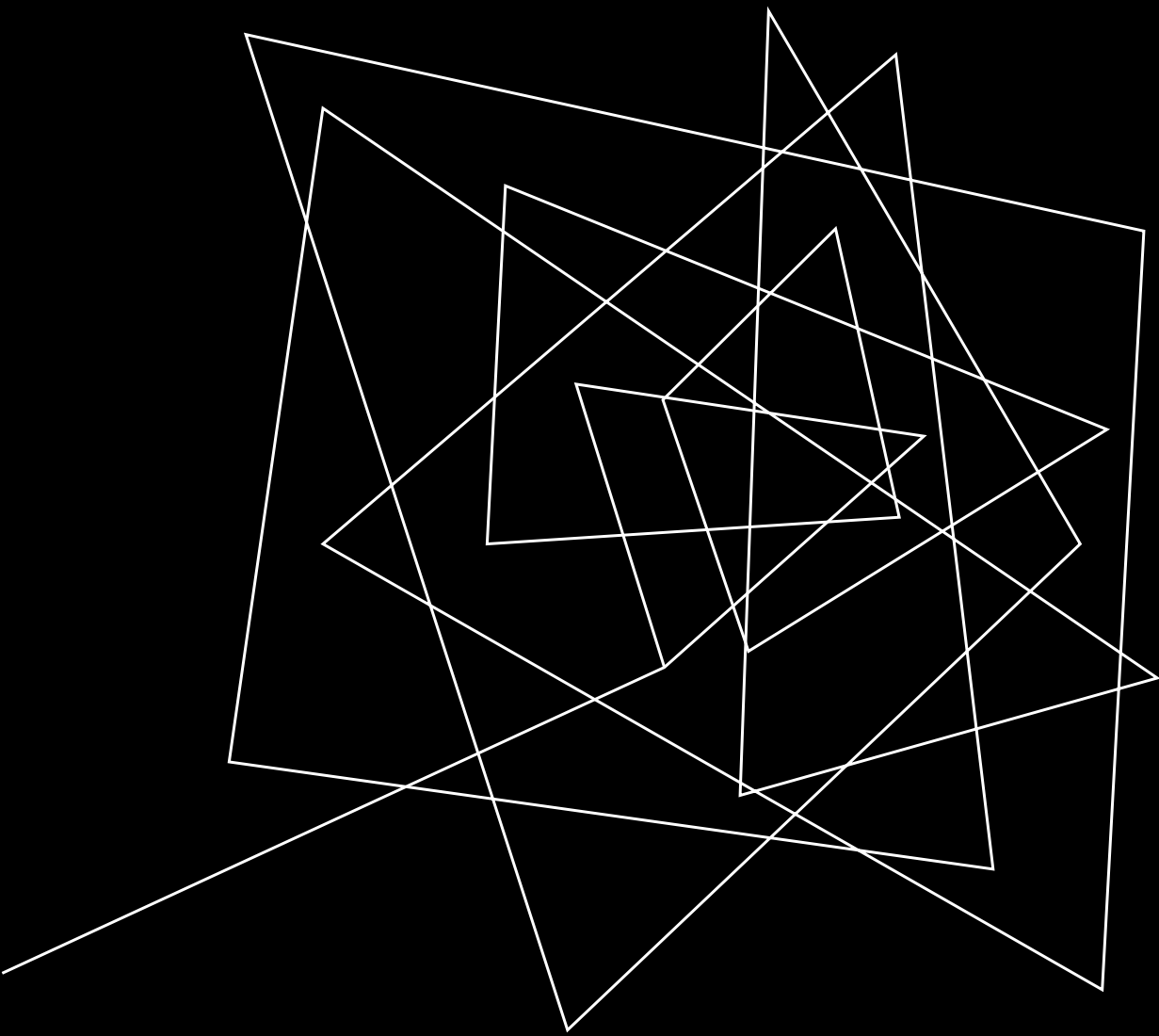
- Least economically developed region of Uganda
- Historically agro-pastoral with substantial internal migration
- Unrest and natural shocks decimated cattle livelihoods
- Tradition of children engaging in *elejilej* (income generating activities)
- Significant migration of children within and from Karamoja
- Karamojong children visible in all major towns & cities in Uganda



Karamoja, Uganda (Kato Francis)

# METHODS

- Quantitative data:
  - Secondary survey data from study focused on child trafficking, funded by Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS), conducted in 2021 by Makerere University
  - Sample size: 986 adults and 830 children ages 12-17 in Napak District
- Qualitative data
  - Open-end question responses from survey respondents
  - 24 in-depth interviews with youth ages 13-21
    - Interview topics included labor migration history, information sources about migration, expectations and realities upon arrival, friendship characteristics, expectations for future
  - 3 key informant interviews with government and NGO officials
- Analysis
  - Coded qualitative data using MAXQDA
  - Analyzed quantitative data using Stata
    - Data are weighted and estimates are representative of adults and youth ages 12-17 in Napak District



# SOCIAL RISK FACTORS

# DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: POVERTY

*No one decides; it's the hunger that chases children away.* – Adult respondent when asked who should make the decision about whether a child migrates for work.

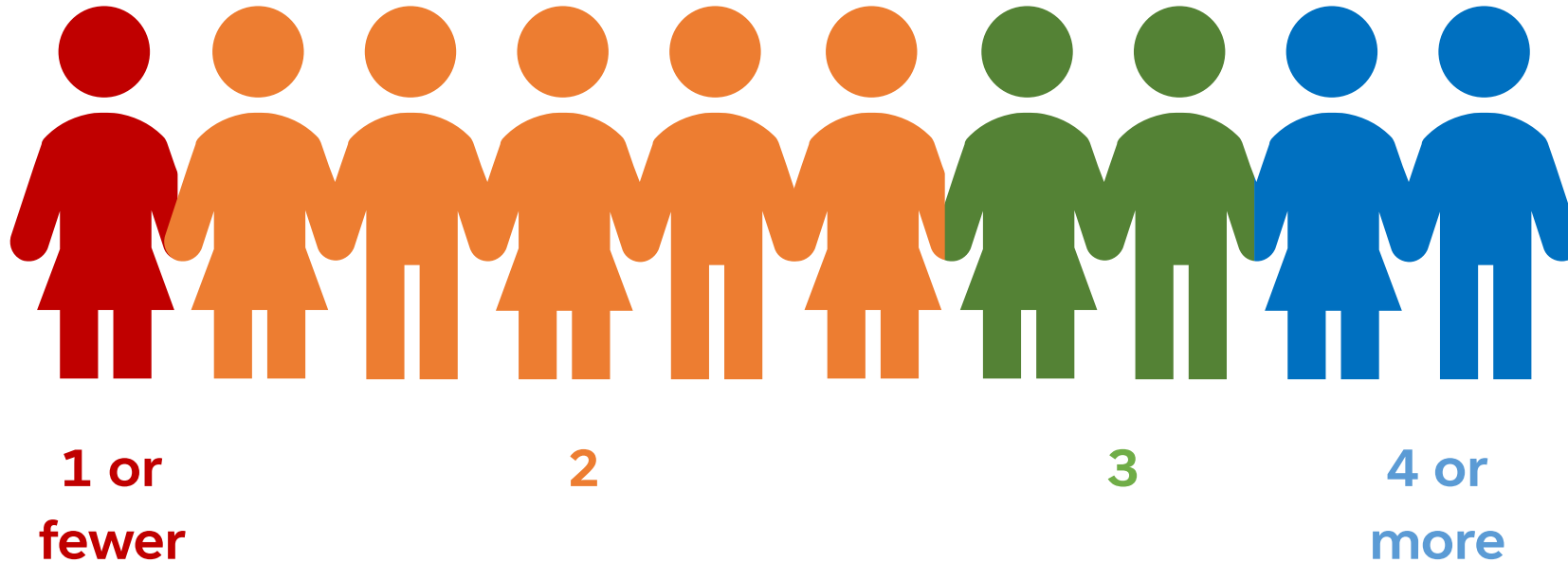
*I cannot go home. I'm used to eating three meals a day. I can't stand village life where you eat one meal a day.* –Female Age ~21



- 69% of children went to bed hungry at least 1 night the previous week
- 27% of children went to bed hungry 3 or more nights
- 20% of children believe that migrating is the only way to make enough money to survive

Adult interview in Karamoja, Uganda (Kato Francis)

# HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN YOU RELY ON IN A TIME OF NEED?





# DRIVERS OF MIGRATION: ABSENCE OF PARENT

*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.* –Female Age 17 describing her life around age 8 after both her parents died

*The kind of life I live now is not a 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.* –Female Age 14

- 5% maternal orphans
- 13% paternal orphans
- 2% double orphans

*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."* –Male Age 17

- 19% live in a household without their mother
- 29% live in a household without their father
- 15% live in a household with neither their mother nor father

## DRIVERS OF MIGRATION:

### INSECURITY

*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. – Male Age 17*

### FORCED MARRIAGE

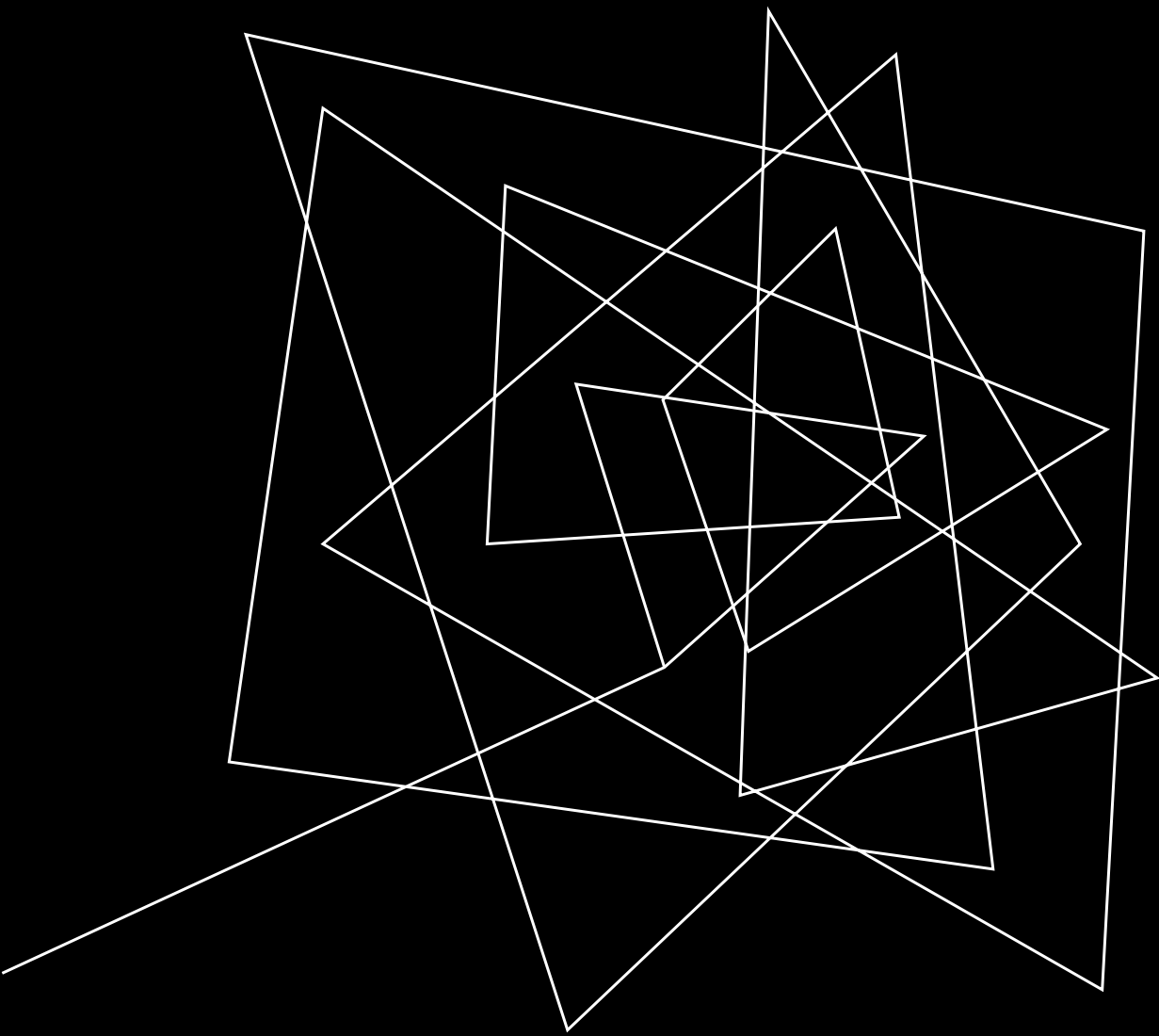
*Now when I'm here, I'm here because of poverty. No one bothered to take me to school, and some time back my uncle wanted to force [me] to marry. It's the reason I came here, and I don't even want to ever go back home again.  
. – Female Age 14*

### ILLNESS, DEBT

*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.*

*I even brought my sibling who is very young. [...] I cannot manage to get that money alone, I need help of the child.*

*. – Female Age 16*



CHILD LABOR  
MIGRATION &  
PEERS

## PEER SUPPORT TO TRAVEL

*[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. – Male Age 17*

*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. – Male Age 17*



Kisenyi bus terminal (SoftPower News)

# PEER SUPPORT ON ARRIVAL

## Accommodation

- *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. – Female Age 14*
- *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. – Male Age 17*

## Income generation

- *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. –Female Age ~21*
- *[He 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. – Male Age 17*
- *Some girl then came around in the evening with the news that some woman was busy looking for someone to work in her house. Ehhh, even this woman was too tough, but the rest would tell me to just endure. – Female Age 17*

# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

*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.* –Female Age 19

- Peers share information about migration and trafficking: how to, where to go, scare stories
- Raising awareness of risks in the absence of improvements in drivers of migration is unlikely to be effective

*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.* – Male Age 17

- Peers exchange advice and learn from each other
- Balanced discussions with returned migrant youth
- Formalizing peer support networks could help reduce vulnerability and prevent labor exploitation



# THANK YOU

Holly Koogler  
hollyhk@jhu.edu