

THE BURIAL OF THE HATCHET AT NADAPAL 1 to 4 October 2002

Introduction

The Community Based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit of the African Union/Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) has been working on conflict management and peacebuilding issues in the Karamojong Cluster for nearly four years. CAPE's work began as an animal health project, but it was discovered that in order to provide effective animal health services, livestock-related conflict should be dealt with simultaneously. Additionally, CAPE's work with these communities in the animal health sector built trust in the CAPE staff to deal with the sensitive issues surrounding inter-communal conflict.

One of the main areas where CAPE has been carrying out conflict management and peacebuilding activities is along the Turkana-Toposa border between Kenya and Sudan (see map, p. 2). The Turkana in the area are a sub-group known as the Kwatela. Three *epidings*¹ lie along this border and it is in these particular areas that CAPE has focused most of its efforts. Over the time that these activities have been carried out, fifteen meetings have taken place between the elders of these communities, as well as one women's peace crusade which involved women, elders, and youth travelling along the length of the border to discuss peace. Through the course of these meetings, two of the *epidings*, Zolia-Songot and Mogila-Naliel, decided to make a formal peace and bury the hatchet, a traditional symbol for putting down weapons and agreeing to live peacefully.

The decision to bury the hatchet was made during the Nanam Focal Meeting in September of 2002 (see report *The Turkana-Toposa Focal Meeting at Nanam*), also facilitated by CAPE. In addition to deciding to bury the hatchet, formalizing their peace, the following resolutions were made:

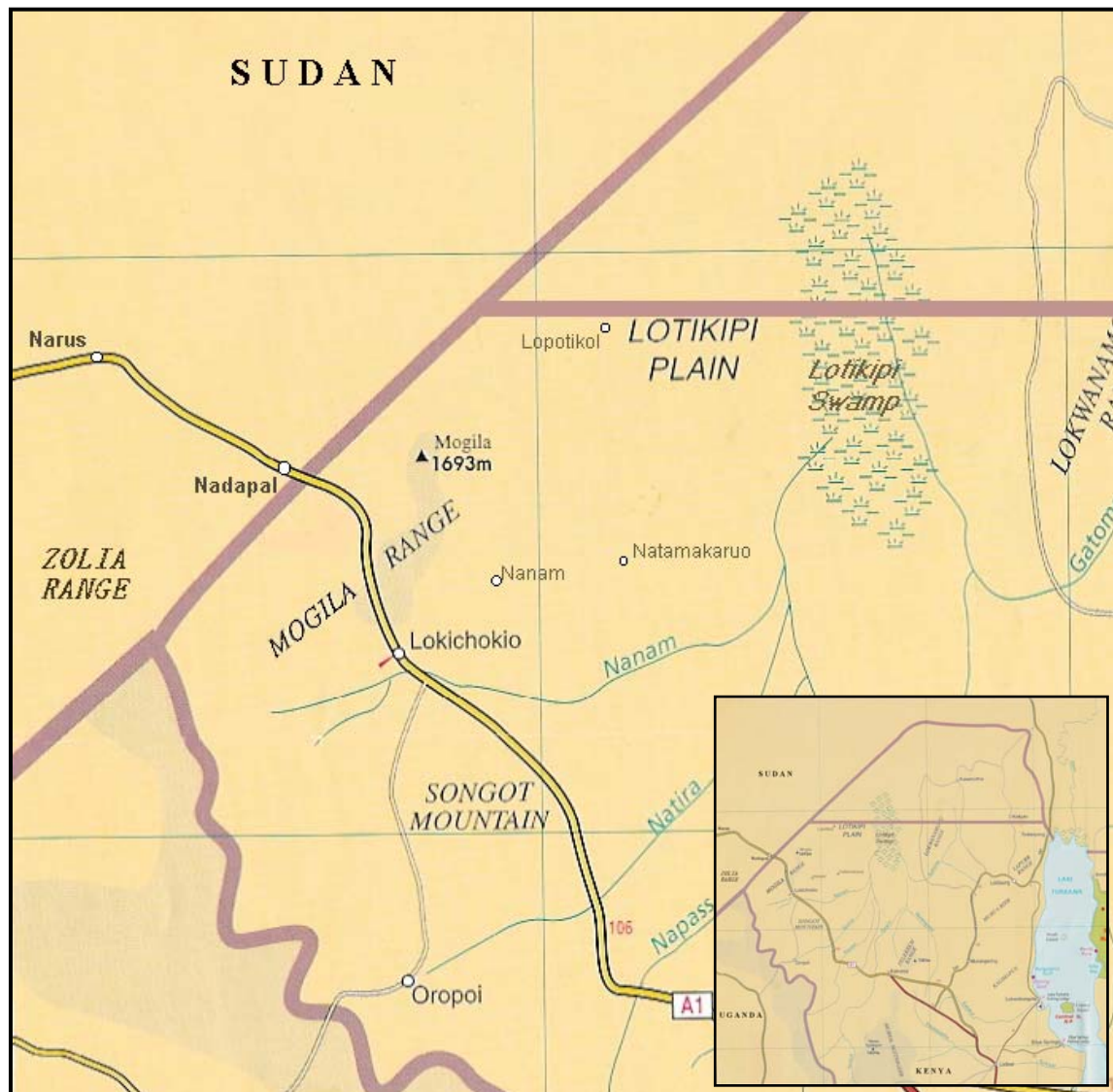
1. A grazing agreement was established with each community allocated their own grazing areas. In the event of inadequate rain on one side, the grazing areas may be shared if prior permission is sought.
2. Possible dam sites that would benefit both sides were selected and agreed upon.
3. Chiefs were requested to take the lead in ensuring that the message of peace is spread throughout each community.
4. Chiefs will work to establish *Kraal*-level village peace committees, which, along with the Chiefs, will be responsible for enforcing these resolutions
5. A policy for stolen cattle was created based on traditional punishments for these acts. The Toposa will charge a fine of three cows or bulls for each cow or bull stolen, in addition to the return of the stolen animals, while the Turkana will charge a fine of only one cow or bull.
6. Non-violent theft of animals, such as stealing cattle when returning from grazing at the end of the dry season, will be dealt with as severely as violent raiding.

The burial of the hatchet was the ceremony to mark the beginning of these resolutions taking effect. The ceremony involved key stakeholders in the communities, including elders, women, youth, administrators, and NGOs working in the area. In addition to burying the hatchet, white bulls were contributed by each

¹ A pass along the border between two communities of different ethnic groups. The three *epidings* in this case are Mogila-Naliel, Zolia-Songot, and Lopotikol.

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community to be slaughtered and eaten, an important traditional symbol of peace, and women sang songs and danced together. The following report describes the events that took place during the ceremony on the 1st to 4th October 2002 at Nadapal.



Map of the Turkana-Toposa Border Area

Objectives

1. To facilitate the Toposa and Kwatela in formalizing their commitment to peace
2. To ensure that the instruments of war that were buried will not be tampered with by sealing them into concrete
3. To use this agreement as an example of a lasting peace to show to other conflicting communities
4. To involve the two governments as to ensure that they will both be held accountable by the two communities and help to enforce the resolutions

The Hatchet Burying Ceremony

Opening of the Ceremony

The ceremony was officially opened by the PCA of Kebekenyan. After welcoming all of the visitors to Sudan, he made a special point of welcoming the two commissioners present at the ceremony. The PCA saw the ceremony as a sign of great progress between the two communities, and as a grain of hope that true peace will finally happen.

Traditional Prayers

Elders from each community led the participants in traditional Toposa and Turkana prayers. These prayers asked for help in supporting their decisions to bury the hatchets of war, and for friendship to multiply between the two communities. They prayed for strong rains in order to help their cattle multiply so they would be less tempted to raid. Further, they wished for their efforts towards peace to spread to their neighbors so that they could end the conflict from all sides.

Speeches by Key Elders

As the elders were responsible for creating the peace agreement and making the decision to live in peace, they had the most important role in the ceremony. Each of the key elders from the communities involved was requested to address those community members present. While some of their speeches contained accusations against other elders, most were hopeful about the peace that would be established, making suggestions for how the government could help to enforce the agreements and how they could show that they were serious about peace.

Longu'rameri Ekipor, a Kwatela elder from Natamakaru, in Kenya, placed the responsibility for implementing the peace and resolutions determined at Nanam on the government. He recalled the time after the Nanam Focal Meeting when he shared bulls and goats with key elders following their decision to make peace, saying that he had already begun to live in peace since that day. Ekipor accused Lokopelimoe, a Toposa elder, of not doing the same.

Lokopelimoe responded to these accusations by saying that this is the time when the peace agreement begins for him, and following the meeting, he will invite the other elders to slaughter animals at his home as Ekipor did previously. Further, Lokopelimoe suggested that in addition to slaughtering animals, they should show that they are at peace by grazing their animals together.

Lotoom agreed with Lokopelimoe's idea, seeing animals grazing together as the most genuine sign of peace. He also suggested that in addition to burying the weapons of war to symbolize the end of conflict, they should bury any other tools related to raiding. One of those mentioned was the razor blade that is used to shave the heads of mourners who have lost their sons, husbands, and friends. Lotoom saw that there would be no further need to use this razor, as there would not be any further loss of life from raiding.

Loyarabok recalled a previous meeting in Lodwar, during which the rain fell on them as they deliberated how to reach peace. This rain was seen as a sign of peace that would come to the Toposa and Kwatela. This rain later helped them decide to make peace. Because their peace has been blessed by the rain, Loyarabok cautioned the community members present that they ought not to do anything that might spoil the

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peace. Loyabarok spoke of his frustration over peace that had been spoiled in the past, and requested that both the Kwatela and Toposa could recall the peace that their great grandfathers made and maintained.

Lokinei-Long'echelmoe, a Kwatela elder, requested the government to help maintain this peace. He acknowledged that the SPLM may have more difficulty enforcing the agreements made as they are involved in a war, but said that the Kenyan government should be capable of it. As proof of their involvement and intent, he called for the government to coordinate the return of all animals that were previously stolen between the Kwatela and Toposa. He was so hopeful for the peace that would come from this hatchet burial that he asked the participants to begin thinking of ways to come to peace with the Jie and other neighboring communities which with the Turkana and Toposa have conflict.

Agreeing with Lokinei that all previously stolen animals need to be returned, Long'urabok sad that any incident of theft would only divide them again. They would have to ensure that these previous incidents were resolved so that they might start with a clean slate.



White bulls contributed by the Turkana and Toposa for slaughtering

Closing of the Ceremony

The D.C. of Turkana and the Commissioner of Kapoeta both gave speeches to close the ceremony, assuring the communities that both governments would be involved in supporting this peace.

The D.C. Turkana emphasized that this ceremony was for the elders, as they had made the critical decision to live in peace, and they would be the main enforcers of the agreement. He did, however, guarantee that the Kenyan government was committed, and would not tire of moving from border to border searching for peace. He promised to deal harshly with any thieves. Additionally, he mentioned the increase in marketing at Lokichoggio, and how this would be used as a means of identifying stolen livestock. The D.C. made it clear that this could not be the end of inter-communal dialogue on the border. There should be vigorous follow-up to ensure that this lasts and is enforced.

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Louis Lobong, the Commissioner of Kapoeta County, welcomed everyone to his county in the name of the Toposa. He linked the need to end cattle raiding with the SPLM's struggle for liberation, saying that his army has been distracted by looking for raiders, rather than focusing on fighting the Government of Sudan. Commissioner Lobong acknowledged that in the past, the government had been "toothless," failing to strictly enforce the law and punish raiders. He promised that in the future, this would change, and that anybody who tries to steal during peace will face government action. The Commissioner concluded the ceremony by assuring that because of the effort made by the elders and other community members to live in peace, they would have the full support of both governments.



Turkana and Toposa women dance together to celebrate the hatchet burial

Conclusion

The burying of hatchet is a rare event. The last time it occurred was in 1973, between the Matheniko of Uganda and Kametak of Kenya. It has not been broken to date. This gives hope that the Kwatela and Toposa ceremony will lead to lasting peace. It should be noted, however, that even during this important ceremony, many of the elders who spoke accused other elders of theft of cattle and inciting raids. This shows that there is still further work to ensure that the necessary trust for this peace agreement to be enforced is in place. Some of these same elders suggested ways of creating that trust, both through relying on their traditional mechanisms for ensuring peace, as their grandfathers did, and grazing their cattle together.

In addition to establishing trust, there needs to be strong enforcement of the agreement. This enforcement should come from both the communities themselves as well as the authorities. While it may be difficult to ensure that all thievery stops, by refusing to support raids and punishing those young men that do steal, the elders in particular will limit theft. The authorities were also called on for strong enforcement. The involvement of government leaders in the ceremony shows that they will take the issue of cattle theft seriously and punish offenders harshly. Further, CAPE will have a role in the enforcement of the agreement and the resolutions by encouraging the development of village peace committees and holding numerous follow-up meetings to monitor the progress of the peace and resolutions taking effect.

This important event has the potential to positively impact other communities, particularly those along the Toposa-Kwatela border. Lopotikol, a neighboring *epiding*,

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is directly linked to the communities involved in this ceremony, and will hopefully take this example and decide to join this peace agreement. Additionally, the Turkana and Toposa are nearly surrounded by groups with which they are in conflict. By these two communities coming to peace, there is the potential for them to make a significant impact across the Karamojong Cluster.