



KARAMOJA TUMAINI NETWORK · KTN

Strategic Plan

2026 – 2030

Toward Pastoralist Child Protection Leadership

The SHIELD Framework Safeguard · Heal · Integrate · Empower · Lead · Data

Adopted by the Board of Directors March 2026

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OUR VISION

A Karamoja where every child is safe, educated, and thriving within their community.

OUR MISSION

To prevent, respond to, and resolve the migration of Karamojong children to urban streets through a culturally grounded, evidence-led, corridor-wide model that integrates prevention in Karamoja, response in urban areas, sustained reintegration, education, advocacy, and shared sector data.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Nine in ten of our staff and leaders are Karamojong. We speak Nga’Karamojong. We work both ends of the road — the villages children leave and the city streets they reach — and we follow each child for up to two years after they go home, long after others have closed the file.

HOPE · HEAL · EMPOWER

Behind every number is a child with a name.

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Foreword

This Strategic Plan is the Karamoja Tumaini Network's answer to a question that has not had a serious organisational answer for over thirty years: who will stay with these children?

Uganda's response to Karamojong children on the streets has cycled through the same pattern since the 1980s. The government rounds them up. They go to a holding facility. They are transported back to Karamoja. They return to the streets within months. The 2017/18 enumeration by Retrak, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics counted more than 15,000 of them across just four towns. A government audit reported by the Office of the Auditor General found that of 1,000 children processed through one programme, only 292 could be located afterwards. The rest had disappeared back into a system designed to lose them.

We started KTN because the question of follow-through was not being asked seriously by anyone with the cultural reach to answer it. There are several organisations working on street children in Uganda. Few speak Nga'Karamojong. Fewer have presence in both Napak and Kisenyi. None has built a longitudinal child-tracking system that follows individual children for the two-year period after reintegration, which is precisely when most of them return to the streets.

The SHIELD framework is more than an acronym. Each of its six pillars corresponds to a specific failure point in the existing response system.

Prevention in Karamoja is structurally underfunded. Urban outreach is dominated by forced removal rather than trust. Reintegration ends at the point of family handover. Education access is patchy and gender-blind. Advocacy is fragmented across many organisations with no coordinating voice. And data systems are siloed or absent.

KTN does not propose to do everything. We propose to do the things that no one else is positioned to do well, and to coordinate honestly with the organisations that are doing the rest. The implementation roadmap in Chapter 12 reflects that discipline: we begin small, in Napak and Kisenyi, with one cohort of children we can track in detail, before scaling.

The five years covered by this Plan will be difficult. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Karamoja's monetary poverty rate has risen to 74.2 percent, the highest level on record, and the 2024 census places its multidimensional poverty at 0.57, the deepest of any sub-region in the country. Drought cycles are tightening. The trafficking networks have proven adaptive to every law enforcement response thrown at them. We are not promising to solve this crisis by 2030. We are promising to build an organisation that the children of Karamoja can rely on for the long journey from street to school to self-sufficiency, and to share what we learn with the sector.

On behalf of the Board, I commend this Plan to our staff, partners, donors, and, most importantly, the communities of Napak, Moroto, Kotido, Kaabong, Amudat, Abim, Nakapiripirit, Nabilatuk, and Karenga whose children are at the centre of this work.

Chairperson, Board of Directors

Karamoja Tumaini Network

March 2026

List of Acronyms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this Strategic Plan.

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
AVSI	Association of Volunteers in International Service	MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
CFPU	Child and Family Protection Unit (Uganda Police)	MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
COPTIP	Counter Trafficking in Persons Office	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CPC	Child Protection Committee	OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
CRANE	Children at Risk Action Network	PREC	Protection and Restoration of Exploited Children
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
EU	European Union	SAGE	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	SALVE	Support and Love via Education
HRW	Human Rights Watch	SHIELD	Safeguard, Heal, Integrate, Empower, Lead, Data
IOM	International Organization for Migration	TIP	Trafficking in Persons
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification	UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority	UCRNN	Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
KIDP	Karamoja Integrated Development Programme	UGX	Uganda Shillings
KTN	Karamoja Tumaini Network	UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association	WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

The Karamoja Tumaini Network (KTN) is a Ugandan non-governmental organisation working to break the cycle that pushes children from Karamoja onto the streets of Kampala and other urban centres, and to ensure that those who do reach the streets find a credible, culturally grounded route back to school, family, and stable life. This Strategic Plan sets out how we intend to do that work over the period 2026 to 2030.

The crisis in summary

An estimated 70 to 90 percent of street children in Kampala are ethnically Karamojong, according to KCCA officials and sector organisations. The most rigorous national enumeration, conducted in 2017/18 by Retrak in partnership with the MGLSD and UBOS, identified more than 15,000 children aged 7 to 17 living or working on streets across four urban centres. During the January 2024 Non-Aligned Movement summit clean-up, around 900 of the approximately 1,000 children removed from Kampala's streets were reported to come from Napak.

74.2%

monetary poverty in Karamoja – over four times the national average of 16.1%

UBOS, 2023/24

600,000

people in acute food insecurity by the 2024 lean season, all nine districts in Crisis

IPC, 2024

US\$5

the price at which girls are sold at open-air markets in the eastern region

US State Dept TIP

The drivers are structural and worsening. By the 2024 lean season the IPC placed all nine Karamoja districts in Crisis, with 112,270 children requiring malnutrition treatment, a 25.7 percent increase on the previous year. Five consecutive rainy seasons failed between 2020 and 2022, and the drought cycle that once recurred every five years now hits roughly every three. Against that backdrop, parents send children to the streets as a survival strategy, and trafficking networks have organised around the resulting flow.

Why existing responses fail

Government and NGO responses have for three decades cycled through the same intervention: forced roundup in Kampala, transport to a holding facility, repatriation to Karamoja. Each iteration produces temporary decreases followed by return to baseline or growth.

The Auditor General found that of 1,000 children processed through one government programme, only 292 could be subsequently traced. Over 700 disappeared.

What works, where rigorously implemented, is also known. UNICEF reports that its Napak reintegration pilot has placed 637 children in schools with psychosocial support. Dwelling Places Uganda reports reintegrating 1,954 children into families since 2002. The Country Director of Dwelling Places has stated publicly that enrolling a child in school reduces the chance of return to the streets by around 95 percent. The evidence is clear. The gap is operational, not conceptual.

What KTN brings

KTN's positioning rests on three assets that no other organisation in this space combines. The first is cultural and linguistic legitimacy: Nga'Karamojong fluency at every operational level, which most existing actors lack. The second is corridor-wide presence, operational footing in both Karamoja source communities and Kampala destination areas. The third is MEAL and data expertise, including practical fluency with KoboToolbox and Power BI, which positions us to build the longitudinal child-tracking infrastructure that the sector is missing.

HOW THIS ALIGNS WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

This three-part positioning maps closely onto what leading child protection actors treat as best practice: locally led delivery (a stated priority of UNICEF, the EU, and Irish Aid), continuity of case management over time (central to the reintegration standards of Hope for Justice and Family for Every Child), and outcome-level evidence (the direction of travel across Save the Children, World Vision, and BRAC). KTN's distinctiveness is the combination of all three in a single Karamojong-led organisation positioned along the whole corridor.

The SHIELD Framework

Our strategic model is organised around six interconnected pillars, summarised by the acronym SHIELD. Each letter corresponds to a specific failure point in the current sector response.



Pillar	Focus	What it means
S	Safeguard	Prevention in Karamoja's source communities: child protection committees, early warning tied to food security data, family economic strengthening through VSLAs and climate-smart agriculture, and disruption of trafficking recruitment.
H	Heal	Urban response in Kampala and other cities: Nga'Karamojong-speaking outreach, harm reduction rather than forced removal, voluntary drop-in centres, substance abuse support, and health bridging for undocumented children.

Pillar	Focus	What it means
I	Integrate	Reintegration that does not end at family handover: two-directional tracing, household safety assessment, mediation, and 12 to 24 months of post-resettlement monitoring – the single largest gap in the current response.
E	Empower	Education and livelihoods that make return sustainable: school enrolment and retention, accelerated learning for over-age returnees, gender-responsive programming, and market-linked vocational training.
L	Lead	Sector advocacy and policy leadership: prevention funding in Karamoja, closing the 13-to-16 legal age gap, legal aid for abused children, and convening the many organisations in the sector around shared standards.
D	Data	The longitudinal evidence infrastructure the sector needs: outcome-level MEAL, a KoboToolbox child-tracking database, real-time dashboards, applied research, and academic partnerships.

Implementation approach

The Plan unfolds in four phases. Phase 1 (months 1 to 6) is foundational: constituting the Board, adopting safeguarding policies, signing MOUs with KCCA and Napak District, finalising the MEAL framework, and deploying our first outreach team to Kisenyi. Phase 2 (months 7 to 18) is a tightly bounded pilot of 100-plus children in active case management. Phase 3 (months 19 to 36) scales to 500-plus children across the corridor with published outcome data. Phase 4 (year 4 to 5 and beyond) consolidates KTN's position as the reference organisation on pastoralist child protection in East Africa.

Resource requirements and 2030 outcomes

The five-year resource envelope is indicatively USD 7.5 to 9.5 million, weighted toward the Safeguard pillar in Karamoja (the most cost-effective intervention point) and the Integrate pillar (the sector's largest operational gap). By 2030 KTN expects to have placed at least 2,500 children in case management, achieved school retention above 80 percent for reintegrated children, supported at least 1,200 families with livelihood interventions, contributed to closing the 13-to-16 legal age gap, and established the country's first sector-wide longitudinal database on Karamojong child migration outcomes.

REGIONAL AND FORWARD CONTEXT

Demand for this work is unlikely to recede within the Plan period. Pastoralist child migration and cross-border trafficking are a growing concern across the Horn of Africa, and donor interest in locally led pastoralist child protection is rising. The 2025 closure of USAID and the end of large resilience programmes such as the Apolou Activity have widened the financing gap in Karamoja, making durable, diversified funding more important than ever.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Who we are, the purpose of this Plan, the five-year question that shaped it, and how it was developed.

Introduction

1.1 Who We Are

The Karamoja Tumaini Network (KTN) is a Ugandan non-governmental organisation registered to work on the protection, education, and reintegration of children from the Karamoja sub-region who are at risk of, or already experiencing, street migration and exploitation. The name combines the regional anchor, Karamoja, with the Swahili word tumaini, meaning hope. Karamoja is the geographic and cultural ground of our work. Tumaini reflects what we owe the children we work with: not pity, not rescue narratives, but a credible operational stake in a different future.

KTN was founded by a coalition of Karamojong professionals, child protection practitioners, MEAL specialists, and educators who concluded, over years of working separately in this sector, that what was missing was not more programmes but an organisation with the cultural fluency, geographic reach, and data discipline to make the existing programmes work better and to fill the operational gaps that everyone could see but no one had filled. That gap analysis became the SHIELD framework.

1.2 Purpose of This Plan

This document is the operational compass for the KTN Board, Secretariat, and field teams over the five years from 2026 through 2030. It commits us to specific goals, with quantified targets, against which we expect to be held accountable. It also signals our intent to partners, donors, government agencies, peer organisations, and the communities of Karamoja, so that they can decide whether to walk alongside us.

The Plan does four things

- **States what we will do** – the six SHIELD pillars.
- **States what we will not do** – we are not building parallel infrastructure where competent partners already operate.
- **Commits us to measurable outcomes** – the Results Framework in Annex A.
- **Acknowledges what we do not yet know** – with explicit assumptions and a risk register.

1.3 The Five-Year Question

The strategic question that has shaped every section of this document is simple: what kind of organisation does Karamoja need that does not currently exist? The honest answer is that Karamoja needs an organisation that combines four characteristics rarely found together: cultural and linguistic legitimacy, corridor-wide presence, follow-through over years rather than months, and serious investment in evidence. KTN is built to be that organisation, and this Plan is built to make us that organisation by 2030.

1.4 How This Plan Was Developed

Plan development drew on three streams of input. The first was a foundational research synthesis covering ten dimensions of the Karamoja street children crisis, drawing on UBOS data, UNICEF reporting, U.S. State Department TIP reports, Human Rights Watch documentation, the Auditor General’s reviews, and the operational publications of Hope for Justice, Dwelling Places, IOM, S.A.L.V.E. International, AVSI, and other sector actors. The second was a strategic planning workshop convened by the founding Board, where the SHIELD framework was developed and tested against the research base. The third was bilateral consultation with prospective community and institutional partners.

AN HONEST LIMITATION

We have not pretended that this Plan emerged from a broad participatory process with the children themselves. That work has not yet been done at the scale it deserves, and Chapter 10 commits us to building it into our first operational year. The current Plan reflects what an evidence-led founding team thinks is the right starting position. It will be revised against what children, families, and source communities tell us once we are operational.

1.5 Document Structure

Chapter 2 sets out the crisis we are responding to. Chapter 3 analyses our operating context. Chapters 4 and 5 cover stakeholder and SWOT analyses. Chapters 6 through 8 articulate our vision, mission, values, theory of change, and strategic goals. Chapter 9 is the heart of the document: the SHIELD framework, with one section per pillar. Chapter 10 sets out cross-cutting commitments. Chapter 11 covers institutional strengthening. Chapter 12 lays out the four-phase roadmap. Chapters 13 through 16 cover partnerships, resource mobilisation, risk, and MEAL. Chapter 17 concludes. The annexes contain the results framework, an indicative budget, key references, and a glossary.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CRISIS WE ARE RESPONDING TO

The evidence base: the scale of the problem, what drives migration, the corridor, trafficking, conditions on the streets, the gender dimension, and why past approaches have failed.

The Crisis We Are Responding To

This chapter summarises the evidence base on the Karamoja street children crisis. The figures are drawn primarily from the 2017/18 Retrak-MGLSD-UBOS enumeration, the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Reports for 2019 through 2025, UNICEF and IOM operational reporting, UBOS poverty and census data, the IPC, and academic studies including the Feinstein International Center at Tufts and the AfriChild Centre. Where figures conflict, we have used the most recent or methodologically robust value and noted the variance.

2.1 The Scale of the Problem

The only methodologically rigorous count of street children in Uganda remains the 2017/18 Retrak-MGLSD-UBOS Enumeration Study. It identified 15,476 children aged 7 to 17 living or working on the streets across four urban centres: Kampala, Jinja, Iganga, and Mbale. In Kampala specifically, the study counted 2,600 children sleeping on the streets and a further 1,410 working on the streets but sleeping elsewhere.

15,476

children aged 7–17 on the streets across four urban centres

Retrak-MGLSD-UBOS, 2017/18

70%+

of children found on Kampala’s streets are from Karamoja

KCCA officials

93%

of children rounded up in Kampala originate from Napak District alone

Napak District Chairperson

The true national figure is almost certainly higher. The enumeration covered four urban centres, but Karamojong street children have been documented in at least nine Ugandan towns and cities, plus across the Kenyan border in Nairobi’s Kamukunji and Eastleigh neighbourhoods. The phenomenon began in the 1970s, escalated in the late 1980s during civil strife, and spiralled from 2007/08 with a mass influx of Karamojong families into Kampala. Each major government intervention has produced temporary decreases followed by return to baseline or growth.

Most children on streets tell us that they have parents, and it is them that send them to the streets to beg money.

Martin Kizza, MGLSD Commissioner

2.2 What Is Driving Migration

The root causes of child migration from Karamoja are structural, multi-layered, and worsening. Karamoja is Uganda’s poorest region by every measure. UBOS data for 2023/24 places the regional monetary poverty rate at 74.2 percent, more than four times the national average of 16.1 percent, and rising; the 2024 census records its multidimensional poverty at 0.57, the deepest of any sub-region. An estimated 84 percent of Karamoja’s young people experience multidimensional poverty, and youth unemployment is estimated to exceed 40 percent.

Climate change has compounded the structural poverty. Drought cycles that once recurred every five years now hit approximately every three. Between 2020 and 2022, five consecutive rainy seasons failed. By the 2024 lean season the IPC again placed all nine districts in Crisis, with 600,000 people acutely food insecure, 84,000 at emergency level, and 112,270 children requiring malnutrition treatment, a 25.7 percent increase on the 89,000 recorded in 2023. Hundreds of children have died from starvation in recent years.

The aftermath of the government’s disarmament campaigns between 2001 and 2013 compounded the crisis. While the campaigns brought relative peace, they destroyed the pastoral economy’s primary defence mechanism without adequate replacement. The Feinstein International Center found that disarmament actually increased poverty because people could no longer protect their livestock. In the decade leading up to 2010, Karamoja lost an estimated 80 percent of its cattle to insecurity.

EDUCATION INDICATORS: THE WORST IN UGANDA

The 2024 census records that 74.2 percent of primary-aged children in Karamoja are out of school – a figure that coincides almost exactly with the monetary poverty rate. The regional literacy rate stands at around 30 percent against a national rate of 85.3 percent. Net secondary enrolment, at 8 percent, is the lowest of any sub-region; net primary enrolment, at 44 percent, is also the lowest in the country. Nearly 80 percent of women in the region have either no schooling or incomplete primary education.

Against that backdrop, parents send children to the streets as a deliberate survival strategy. Children generate more sympathy as beggars than adults do. Established Karamojong communities in Kampala’s Kisenyi neighbourhood provide shelter and social networks. The prospect of any income, however meagre, outweighs the near-certainty of hunger in Karamoja.

2.3 The Migration Corridor

Children travel from Karamoja to Kampala along a well-documented corridor following the Kampala-Moroto highway through Jinja, Mbale, Soroti, and Iriiri. The journey by overnight bus takes 12 to 13 hours, with fares ranging from UGX 30,000 to 50,000 (roughly USD 8 to 14). Migration is not spontaneous: it follows organised patterns involving adult facilitators, intermediate staging points, and in many cases trafficking networks. Napak District is the primary point of origin, followed by Moroto.

Children rarely travel alone. Most are accompanied by adult “aunties”, women who may or may not be actual relatives, who facilitate the journey and then manage begging operations in Kampala. Migration is near-permanent rather than seasonal: children typically stay away more than 11 months per year, returning to Karamoja only during the Christmas period, and migration intensifies during drought and the lean season from March through July.

My aunty told me: there is no money so you must go to Kampala to look for money on the street.

A nine-year-old child, to IOM

2.4 Trafficking and Exploitation

The street children crisis cannot be separated from organised child trafficking. According to U.S. State Department TIP reports, NGOs estimate that the majority of child sex trafficking victims in Uganda are ethnically Karamojong, and one international organisation has estimated that between 7,000 and 12,000 children are exploited in sex trafficking nationally. The Government of Uganda’s 2023 report recorded 1,006 trafficking cases, 510 of them involving children; the 2025 TIP Report records 1,055 trafficking incidents investigated in 2024.

Forced begging is the most visible form of exploitation. Trafficking networks operate with military-like organisation: women hire out children to Kampala-bound colleagues; supervisors monitor collections; daily earnings are confiscated; and children who fail to meet targets are physically punished. Girls face particular exploitation through sale at open-air markets. Conservative civil society estimates indicate that since 2019 over 9,000 girls have been bought at markets such as Arapai, Chapi, and Sire.

9,000+

girls bought at open-air markets since 2019

Civil society estimates

3,000+

Karamojong girls working as domestic servants in Nairobi’s Eastleigh

E. Africa Child Rights Network

130

trafficker convictions in 2023, up from 73 in 2022

US State Dept TIP

Trafficking networks span village to city and across international borders, with routes running from Karamoja through Busia to Nairobi. After government crackdowns, traffickers adapt, using social media and radio to advertise fraudulent job opportunities. Official complicity compounds the problem: the U.S. Department of Labor has noted that immigration officials have been acknowledged as complicit. Sentences often fail to deter.

2.5 Conditions on the Streets

Karamojong street children in Kampala concentrate in Kisenyi (locally called Kikaramoja), Katwe, the Old Taxi Park, Owino Market, Wandegaya, Old Kampala, and Kisugu-Go Down. Many sleep on the ground outdoors, exposed to cold, rain, and mosquitoes. Income activities vary by gender and age: boys primarily collect and sell scrap, carry loads, and beg at junctions, while girls overwhelmingly engage in begging, often carrying infants to generate sympathy, and in domestic work. Both boys and girls are pushed into commercial sexual exploitation.

Substance abuse is pervasive and serves as a coping mechanism. A study of street and slum youth in Kampala and Gulu found that 70.1 percent had used alcohol or other substances, with alcohol, khat, aviation fuel and petrol, and marijuana the most common. Children report sniffing fuel and

glue to suppress hunger, stay warm, and cope with trauma, and forced drug use is a documented form of initiation and control.

Violence is constant and comes from every direction. Human Rights Watch documentation in 2014 and 2019 recorded systematic police brutality, including beatings, extortion, arbitrary detention with adults, and forced labour. The AfriChild Centre found that police and KCCA officials sexually harassed street girls. Among children themselves, older youth dominate newcomers through violent initiation. Ethnic discrimination compounds every hardship: Karamojong face extreme prejudice in Kampala, and the slang term *bayaaye* is used interchangeably with Karamojong identity.

2.6 The Gender Dimension

While boys traditionally dominate global street child populations, the Karamojong street population shows a notably high proportion of girls, driven by the begging economy and trafficking dynamics. In one 2019 roundup, girls constituted 65 percent of the children rescued (184 of 283). This pattern is unusual internationally and is central to understanding the Karamoja crisis.

Girls face disproportionate sexual violence and exploitation. Many are channelled into commercial sex work, some as young as 12. The cultural valuation of girls through the bride price system creates economic incentives for families to sell or traffic their daughters. According to U.S. State Department reporting, 50 percent of girls in Karamoja are married before age 18, compared with 34 percent nationally. Boys face their own specific dangers: more frequent physical violence, forced drug use as gang initiation, and in Karamoja itself, exploitation as armed cattle raiders. Services reach girls and boys unequally; programmes for street girls are estimated to reach only around 30 percent of the affected population.

2.7 Why Past Approaches Have Failed

The dominant government approach — forced roundups in Kampala, transport to Kampiringisa or Kobulin holding facilities, repatriation to Karamoja, no follow-up — has failed by the government’s own admission. Of approximately 1,000 children processed through one programme, the Auditor General found that only 292 could be located afterwards; over 700 were untraceable.

We analysed the past performance. We said, no, we can’t keep like this.

MGLSD, 2024

Children return to the streets for predictable reasons: lack of economic opportunities in Karamoja, insufficient resettlement support, aviation-fuel addiction that most rehabilitation centres cannot treat, more reliable food and income on streets than in home villages, active re-recruitment by trafficking networks, unaddressed trauma, and in some cases outright family rejection. The fundamental dynamic is that interventions focus on the symptom — children on Kampala’s streets — rather than the cause: structural deprivation in Karamoja. Prevention spending in Karamoja remains a fraction of response spending in Kampala. KTN’s strategic intent is to invert that balance.

TREND AND COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

Read over time, the indicators move in one direction: poverty up from 65 to 74.2 percent, the trafficking caseload up from 1,006 to 1,055 recorded incidents year on year, the drought cycle tightening, and the funding base narrowing after the 2025 closure of USAID. The pattern of repeated removal without follow-up is not unique to Uganda; comparative experience documented by Retrak, Hope for Justice, and Family for Every Child across East Africa shows the same return-to-street dynamic wherever case management ends at family handover. Sustained, tracked follow-up is the variable that distinguishes durable reintegration from recirculation.

3

CHAPTER THREE

OPERATING CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The environment KTN will work in: the source region, the destination cities, the migration corridor, the legal framework, and a dense, fragmented sector.

Operating Context Analysis

Chapter 2 established the crisis. This chapter analyses the operating environment in which KTN will work. Understanding this context matters because it shapes where KTN can add value, where it should not duplicate, and where the binding operational constraints are.

3.1 Karamoja: The Source Region

Karamoja is a sub-region of north-eastern Uganda comprising nine districts: Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, Moroto, Nabilatuk, Nakapiripirit, and Napak. The total population is approximately 1.3 million. The region borders South Sudan and Kenya, with porous frontiers that have historically allowed cross-border raiding, weapons trafficking, and now child trafficking. The dominant economic system is pastoralism, with a degraded agropastoral sub-system around the few permanently watered areas.

Three points about Karamoja matter for this Plan

- The region is not poor by accident; it has been systematically under-served by the Ugandan state since independence, and three iterations of the Karamoja Integrated Development Programme have failed to close the poverty gap.
- The disarmament campaigns of 2001 to 2013 brought relative peace but destroyed the livelihood resilience of pastoral households, a finding the Feinstein International Center has documented.
- Climate change is not a future risk in Karamoja; it is a present reality, with the drought cycle tightening from once-in-five-years to once-in-three-years.

Within Karamoja, Napak District is the documented epicentre of child migration. The Napak District Chairperson has stated that 93 percent of street children rounded up in Kampala originate from his district. KTN's first phase of operations will therefore be anchored in Napak, with planned expansion into Moroto, Kotido, and Kaabong in subsequent phases.

3.2 Kampala: The Destination

Kampala is the largest single receiving city for Karamojong children, with over 4,000 documented street children. The destination neighbourhoods are concentrated and well known: Kisenyi, Katwe, Old Taxi Park, Owino Market, Wandegaya, Old Kampala, and Kisugu-Go Down. These areas are administered by the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), which holds the statutory mandate for child protection within the city.

KCCA passed a Child Protection Ordinance in 2022 prohibiting the sending of children to beg, the giving of money to street children, and the employment of children in hazardous activities, with penalties of up to six months' imprisonment. KCCA also conducts the rescue operations that have rounded up several thousand children since 2022. KTN will seek to formalise its own operational MOU with KCCA in Phase 1, and commits to corridor-wide presence by Phase 3, including Moroto town and Jinja, where S.A.L.V.E. International's substance abuse capacity can be partnered with rather than duplicated.

3.3 The Migration Corridor

The migration corridor from Karamoja to Kampala is approximately 500 kilometres long and follows the Kampala-Moroto highway through Jinja, Mbale, Soroti, and Iriiri. Bus fares of UGX 30,000 to 50,000 are typically paid by adult facilitators rather than children, locking children into an upfront debt that begging earnings then repay. Moroto town serves as a staging point for children from Kaabong and Kotido. Cross-border migration into Kenya is a documented extension of the corridor. KTN's operational presence will be concentrated at the two ends of the corridor in Phases 1 and 2, with corridor-monitoring extended in Phase 3 and a cross-border component developed in Phase 4.

3.4 Legal and Policy Environment

Uganda's legal framework for child protection is comprehensive on paper. The Children Act (Cap. 59), as amended in 2016, defines a child as a person under 18, sets the minimum age for work at 16, and prohibits child trafficking. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009) prescribes up to 15 years' imprisonment for trafficking adults and life imprisonment for trafficking children. In March 2024, Uganda acceded to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking.

THE GAP BETWEEN LAW AND IMPLEMENTATION

The U.S. Department of Labor's 2024 assessment concluded that Uganda made only minimal advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labour, noting zero funding for labour inspections and a loophole permitting children as young as 12 to engage in hazardous work through apprenticeships. Compulsory education covers only seven years (to about age 13), creating a dangerous gap where 13-to-16-year-olds are neither required to attend school nor legally permitted to work. Of the Shs 3.4 billion budgeted for the 2019 street children intervention plan, only Shs 1 billion was released. KTN's Lead pillar commits us to advocating for the closure of this age gap.

3.5 Sector Landscape

The organisational landscape in the Karamojong child protection space is unusually dense. The Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) coordinates a broad membership of child-rights organisations, and the faith-based CRANE network reports a large membership with over 3,000 staff. International organisations operating in the space include UNICEF (with a reintegration pilot in Napak), IOM, the World Food Programme, the Embassy of Ireland (with a USD 12 million education commitment for 2026), and the EU (funding the PREC project through Hope for Justice).

The funding landscape has shifted significantly since 2025. The closure of USAID, which had financed major resilience programming through the five-year Apolou Activity covering 310,000 people across five eastern districts, has left a substantial financing gap that other donors have only partly filled. Despite the sector's density, coordination is weak: there is no single sector-wide coordination mechanism and no shared beneficiary database.

The opportunity is not to add another forced-removal programme or another residential shelter. It is to fill the unfilled gap: cultural and linguistic legitimacy, corridor-wide presence, longitudinal follow-up, and shared data infrastructure.

4

CHAPTER FOUR

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The actors whose interests, capacities, and posture toward KTN's work will shape implementation — grouped by whether they enable, constrain, or partner on the work.

Stakeholder Analysis

The analysis below identifies actors whose interests, capacities, and posture toward KTN’s work will shape implementation. We have grouped stakeholders by their primary relationship to the issue, because in practice the meaningful distinction is whether an actor enables, constrains, or partners on the work.

Stakeholder	Interest / role	KTN’s engagement
Karamojong children and families	Primary rights-holders and ultimate measure of success; not currently organised into a recognisable constituency.	Community engagement, child-voice mechanisms, family case management, regular feedback loops.
Source communities (Napak, Moroto, Kotido)	Origin of child migration; hold the cultural keys to prevention.	Village Child Protection Committees, clan engagement, livelihood programming, dialogue in Nga’Karamojong.
MGLSD	National lead on child protection and trafficking; sets policy.	Policy engagement, technical inputs, joint sector reporting, MOU for data sharing.
KCCA	Statutory authority for Kampala street operations; runs roundups and referral pathway.	Operational MOU; replace some roundup capacity with voluntary outreach; joint reporting.
Napak District Local Government	Primary destination for repatriated children; under-resourced for follow-up.	Direct MOU, technical and operational support, joint case management.
Uganda Police CFPU	First line of formal child protection encounter; mixed track record.	Joint training, paralegal accompaniment, conduct monitoring, legal aid coordination.
COPTIP	Anti-trafficking enforcement lead under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.	Intelligence sharing on trafficking routes, joint operations support, victim referral.
UNICEF	Major institutional funder and technical partner; runs the Napak reintegration pilot.	Programme alignment, co-funded scale-up, joint MEAL framework.
IOM	Operates the Coordinated Response to Human Trafficking; long Karamoja history.	Referral pathway, joint cross-border programming, family tracing collaboration.
Irish Aid / Embassy of Ireland	Long-term Karamoja donor; USD 12m education commitment for 2026.	Strategic funding partnership aligned with their Karamoja education focus.

Stakeholder	Interest / role	KTN's engagement
EU and EU-funded actors	Fund PREC and broader child protection work.	Programme alignment, possible direct funding through future calls, sector advocacy.
Hope for Justice	Operates Lighthouse shelters, conducted the enumeration, runs PREC.	Operational collaboration, data partnership, joint child tracking.
Dwelling Places Uganda	Four-phase reintegration model; 1,954 children reintegrated since 2002.	Reintegration partnership, learning exchange, Karamoja hub coordination.
S.A.L.V.E. International (Jinja)	Uganda's only dedicated drug rehabilitation for street children.	Referral partnership for substance-affected children; Jinja coordination.
AVSI Foundation	Education and vocational training including VESP.	Vocational training partnership for 15-to-24-year-olds reintegrated through KTN.
CRANE Network and UCRNN	Sector coordination platforms covering hundreds of organisations.	Active membership; leadership on data-sharing standards.
Makerere and Gulu Universities	Academic research capacity in child protection and pastoralist studies.	Research partnerships, joint publication, student placements.
Trafficking networks	Adversarial; profit from continuation of the crisis.	Mapped through research; disrupted through awareness and law enforcement support.
Faith and clan leaders in Karamoja	Cultural authority influencing early marriage and child-sending decisions.	Community engagement, dialogue, integration into CPC structures.
Media and journalists	Shape public narrative; can amplify advocacy or reinforce stigma.	Media engagement strategy, story sourcing, position as a credible expert voice.

5

CHAPTER FIVE

SWOT ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

An honest assessment by the founding Board: strengths, weaknesses we have not dressed as opportunities, the external openings, the threats, and the assumptions the whole strategy rests on.

SWOT Analysis and Strategic Assumptions

The SWOT analysis below reflects an honest assessment by the founding Board and Secretariat, refined against the research base and sector consultations. KTN is a young organisation; the weaknesses section is therefore substantive, and we have resisted the temptation to dress those weaknesses as opportunities. The point of the exercise is operational honesty.

Strengths

- Nga’Karamojong fluency at every level of staffing, addressing the sector’s most consistently cited service gap
- Founding team with combined experience across child protection, MEAL, education, and pastoralist development
- Corridor-wide vision from inception, rather than source-only or destination-only programming
- Technical fluency in modern data tools (KoboToolbox, Power BI) that most sector actors lack
- Strategic clarity on what we will not do: no parallel infrastructure where competent partners exist
- Founding Board balancing Karamojong legitimacy and external technical capacity

Weaknesses

- New organisation with no operational track record; donors and government partners will need convincing
- Limited secured funding at the start of Phase 1: initial cash flow is the binding constraint
- Small founding team relative to the geographic and thematic ambition of SHIELD
- Field infrastructure does not yet exist in either Napak or Kisenyi; it must be built
- Brand recognition is currently zero outside the founding team’s professional networks
- Clinical capacity for substance abuse and trauma will be partnered out (S.A.L.V.E.) rather than built in-house initially

Opportunities

- Acknowledged sector failure of the roundup-repatriate-return model creates space for a credibly different approach
- MGLSD’s stated shift to a three-pronged prevention-withdrawal-rehabilitation approach aligns with SHIELD
- Irish Aid’s USD 12m education commitment for Karamoja in 2026 is a substantive new funding stream
- EU PREC and other Hope for Justice-led initiatives create scope for partnership rather than competition
- Sector data vacuum is a clear positioning opportunity for an organisation with MEAL credibility
- Rising donor interest in pastoralist child protection across the Horn of Africa; Uganda’s 2024 Palermo accession opens advocacy space

Threats

- Climate trajectory worsening, not improving; drought cycles tightening from 5-year to 3-year intervals
- Trafficking networks are organised, adaptive, and protected in places by official complicity
- Political environment around the 2026 general elections may compress space for civil society advocacy
- Donor fatigue on Karamoja after three KIDP iterations with poor outcomes
- the many organisations in the sector create real risk of duplication and coordination fatigue among partners
- Macro-economic pressure on the shilling and global aid budgets, sharpened by the 2025 USAID closure

5.1 Strategic Assumptions

Every strategy rests on assumptions that, if invalidated, would require strategic revision. We have surfaced ours below rather than burying them. Chapter 15 contains the full risk register and mitigation plan.

Assumption	If it does not hold
Cultural fluency is genuinely valued by donors and partners	KTN's Nga'Karamojong-first model is the central differentiator. If funding continues to reward visible outputs over slower trust-building, the model will be harder to sustain financially.
Government remains willing to share operational space	KCCA and Napak District have signalled interest in MOUs. If political shifts close that space, the corridor-wide model becomes harder to implement at scale.
Karamoja's structural drivers will continue to push children outward through 2030	Demand for KTN's services will not shrink during the Plan period. A major external intervention that shifted the underlying drivers would move KTN's emphasis toward consolidation.
Sector actors will partner rather than compete	Our model assumes good-faith collaboration with Hope for Justice, Dwelling Places, S.A.L.V.E., AVSI, UNICEF, and IOM. If competitive funding turns collaboration into rivalry, the partnership architecture will need revision.
Long-term funding for follow-up is securable	The 12-to-24-month post-resettlement monitoring that defines our Integrate pillar requires donors who fund duration rather than events.
MEAL infrastructure can be built without disproportionate cost	We assume KoboToolbox, Power BI, and modest cloud hosting will deliver the longitudinal database within budget. If data-protection requirements raise that cost significantly, the Data pillar's roll-out will slow.

6

CHAPTER SIX

VISION, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

What anchors the work: a vision set within community rather than away from it, a mission that compresses SHIELD into a sentence, and values that are operational commitments rather than aspirations.

Vision, Mission, and Core Values

6.1 Vision

A Karamoja where every child is safe, educated, and thriving within their community.

The vision is anchored within community rather than away from it. Decades of intervention have framed the goal as removing children from danger and returning them to a state-managed pathway. That framing has not worked. KTN’s vision deliberately reverses the directionality: the destination is the community, made safer and more capable, not the institution.

6.2 Mission

To prevent, respond to, and resolve the migration of Karamojong children to urban streets through a culturally grounded, evidence-led, corridor-wide model that integrates prevention in Karamoja, response in urban areas, sustained reintegration, education, advocacy, and shared sector data.

The mission statement compresses the SHIELD framework into a single sentence. Each clause maps directly to one or more pillars: “culturally grounded” anchors Safeguard and Heal; “corridor-wide” defines the geographic scope; “sustained reintegration” is Integrate; “education” is Empower; “advocacy” is Lead; “shared sector data” is Data.

6.3 Core Values

The values below are not aspirational. They are operational commitments that, when in tension with other organisational pressures, should be the values we revert to. Each is accompanied by what it means in practice.

Value	What it means in practice
Cultural Centring	Karamojong identity, language, and community structures are the operational ground of our work, not a context to be navigated. Nga’Karamojong is spoken at every level. Programme design is tested against community input before external best practice; where the two diverge, we document the choice.
Child-Centredness	Children are not passive beneficiaries of programmes designed by adults. They participate in the design of services that affect them, their feedback shapes operational decisions, and their voices are documented in our public reporting.

Value	What it means in practice
Evidence-Led Practice	We commit to outcome measurement, not activity counting. The sector has measured activity for decades and the children are still on the streets. We will publish our findings whether or not they are flattering.
Long-Form Commitment	We stay with children for at least 12 to 24 months after reintegration, the period in which most current programmes lose them. The discipline of duration is a value, not just a programme design choice.
Partnership Without Duplication	Where competent partners exist, we partner. Where they do not, we build. The test of success is sectoral, not organisational.
Safeguarding First	Children’s safety in our care is non-negotiable. Our PSEA and safeguarding policies are mandatory, our background checks rigorous, and any incident is escalated to the Board and to independent review.
Transparency and Accountability	Our budget, results, and setbacks are publicly documented. Beneficiary accountability mechanisms are integrated rather than appended.
Gender Justice	The street child population is disproportionately girls, and the trafficking economy specifically targets girls. Our programming is gender-responsive by design.

7

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEORY OF CHANGE

The explicit causal chain connecting our inputs to outcomes — the if-then propositions that would all have to be true for the strategy to succeed, and the points at which it could fail.

Theory of Change

The KTN theory of change is the explicit causal chain connecting our strategic inputs to the outcomes we seek. Surfacing the if-then propositions this way exposes the points at which our model could fail, which is the prerequisite for designing measurement and risk management around the right things.

7.1 The Core Proposition

The cycle that brings Karamojong children to urban streets has six failure points: weak prevention in source communities, hostile urban response that drives children underground, family handover without follow-up, education and livelihood gaps that make returns unsustainable, fragmented advocacy that cannot move policy, and absence of shared data that prevents the sector from learning. The SHIELD framework targets all six in a coordinated way.

The proposition is that addressing all six failure points simultaneously, with cultural and linguistic legitimacy, will break the cycle in measurable ways within five years — and shift sector practice beyond our direct caseload.

The six pathways below set out, for each pillar, the if-then logic and the indicators against which the logic will be tested.

Pathway	If → then logic	Indicators
7.2 Pathway 1 — Prevention	If we support source communities with village-level child protection committees, livelihood interventions through VSLAs and climate-smart agriculture, anti-trafficking awareness in Nga’Karamojong, and early warning tied to food security data, then the structural drivers weaken at the household level, fewer children are recruited, and the cohort entering the corridor each year declines.	Households reached; functional CPCs; recruitment incidents flagged and disrupted; out-migration at sub-county level.
7.3 Pathway 2 — Response	If we deploy Nga’Karamojong-speaking outreach workers, run voluntary drop-in centres rather than forced removal, provide harm reduction, and bridge children to health services, then trust is built with children whom existing services do not reach, urban exploitation is reduced, and we gain the footing required for voluntary return.	Children engaged; drop-in attendance; harm reduction delivered; proportion entering voluntary case management.

Pathway	If → then logic	Indicators
7.4 Pathway 3 – Reintegration	If we conduct two-directional tracing, household safety assessments, mediation, and 12-to-24-month monitoring, then the sector’s single largest gap closes for our caseload, return-to-street rates fall, and reintegration becomes a measurable rather than presumed outcome.	Children in post-reintegration case management; school retention at 12 and 24 months; return-to-street rate; family livelihood status.
7.5 Pathway 4 – Education and Livelihoods	If reintegrated children are enrolled and supported to stay in school with accelerated learning and gender-responsive programming, and if 15-to-24-year-olds receive market-linked vocational training, then the reduction in street-return that Dwelling Places associates with school enrolment is reproduced and extended.	Enrolment and retention rates; vocational completion and placement; earnings outcomes for graduates.
7.6 Pathway 5 – Advocacy	If we organise sector advocacy around closing the 13-to-16 legal age gap, securing disbursement of budgeted funds, shifting investment toward Karamoja prevention, and protecting children from abuse, then the legal and policy environment becomes more enabling and the operating ground improves.	Legislative and policy outputs influenced; public budget shifts year-on-year; documented changes in police and KCCA conduct.
7.7 Pathway 6 – Data and Learning	If we build a longitudinal child-tracking database, contribute to shared sector data standards, produce dashboards and applied research, and partner with universities, then the sector moves from activity-counting toward outcome measurement and KTN becomes the reference point for evidence-based pastoralist child protection.	Children in the longitudinal database; partners using KTN data systems; research publications; adoption of shared standards.

7.8 Theory of Change Assumptions

Each pathway rests on assumptions identified in Chapter 5 and monitored through the MEAL framework in Chapter 16. Two deserve specific attention: that children themselves will choose voluntary engagement when offered a credible alternative to forced removal (the central premise of our Heal pillar), and that source-community livelihoods can be strengthened sufficiently to outweigh the pull of urban begging income (the central premise of our Safeguard pillar). Both will be tested early. If either fails, the theory of change requires revision rather than scaled implementation.

8

CHAPTER EIGHT

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching 2030 goal, six strategic objectives with quantified targets — one per SHIELD pillar — and three cross-cutting quality conditions on all of them.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

8.1 Overarching Goal

By 2030, the cycle that pushes Karamojong children onto urban streets has been measurably weakened for the children KTN engages directly, and sector practice has shifted toward prevention, cultural fluency, and longitudinal accountability in ways that benefit children beyond KTN’s direct caseload.

8.2 Strategic Objectives

The overarching goal disaggregates into six strategic objectives, one per SHIELD pillar. Each is paired with quantified five-year targets. Full indicators, baselines, and means of verification are in the Results Framework (Annex A).

Obj.	Pillar	Target by 2030
1	Safeguard	30 functional village-level Child Protection Committees across Napak, Moroto, and Kotido; 1,200 households with livelihood support; trafficking recruitment incidents at monitored markets down at least 40 percent against baseline.
2	Heal	Outreach engaging 4,000 children across Kampala, Jinja, and Moroto town; three drop-in centres with cumulative attendance over 12,000 child-visits; voluntary case-management entry at 35 percent or higher.
3	Integrate	2,500 children entering the full reintegration pathway; sustained school retention at 12 months of 80 percent or higher; return-to-street rate within 24 months below 15 percent.
4	Empower	2,200 children enrolled in formal schooling or accelerated learning; 600 young people aged 15–24 completing vocational training with documented outcomes; young-mother support reaching 400 girls and young women.
5	Lead	Substantive contribution to at least three policy reforms (priority: the 13-to-16 age gap); legal aid or paralegal accompaniment in 500 cases; 10 sector coordination forums producing measurable shifts.
6	Data	Longitudinal database covering 2,500 children with outcome data at 6, 12, and 24 months; five-plus research outputs; data standards adopted by 10 partner organisations; an annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection report from 2028.

RESULTS-FRAMEWORK INTEGRITY AND EVALUATION READINESS

Each objective is expressed as a specific, measurable, time-bound target against a defined population and baseline year – the form institutional evaluators (UNICEF, the EU, Irish Aid, FCDO, GIZ, SIDA, and Global Affairs Canada) expect. The targets are deliberately outcome-weighted (sustained school retention and return-to-street rate rather than activity counts), and every indicator in Annex A is disaggregated by sex and, where relevant, by age band, district, and disability status. Baselines that do not yet exist are marked for establishment in the Phase 1 baseline study.

8.3 Cross-Cutting Commitments

Three commitments cut across every objective and are detailed in Chapter 10. They are not separate goals but quality conditions on all six objectives.

- **Gender-responsive programming.** At least 55 percent of children in case management will be girls, reflecting the population’s gender skew. Young-mother support, anti-early-marriage programming, and trafficking-survivor services are integrated rather than appended.
- **Karamojong centring.** Nga’Karamojong fluency at every operational level, community participation in design, and Karamojong representation on the Board are constitutive rather than instrumental.
- **Safeguarding.** Zero-tolerance PSEA and child safeguarding policies, independent annual audits, and Nga’Karamojong-language reporting channels are operational from day one.

9

CHAPTER NINE

THE SHIELD FRAMEWORK

The heart of the Plan. Six interconnected pillars covering the full continuum from prevention in Karamoja to advocacy at national level — each one a direct answer to a specific gap in the current response.

The SHIELD Framework: Our Strategic Model

The SHIELD framework organises KTN’s work into six interconnected pillars covering the full continuum from prevention in Karamoja to advocacy at national level. Each letter corresponds to a specific gap in the current sector response, identified through the foundational research in Chapter 2 and the operating context analysis in Chapter 3.



Figure 1. The SHIELD continuum. Safeguard, Heal, and Integrate follow the child along the migration corridor; Empower sustains recovery over the long term; Lead and Data strengthen the system around the child.

9.1 Why SHIELD

We considered three other organising frameworks during plan development. A simple three-phase model (prevention, response, reintegration) is conceptually clean but ignores sector-level work on advocacy, coordination, and evidence. A child-stages model (arrival, stabilisation, return, follow-up) is operationally useful but obscures the source-community work that should precede street arrival. A thematic model (education, health, livelihoods, protection) is funder-legible but loses the geographic and temporal logic that distinguishes our approach.

SHIELD does three things the alternatives do not

- It explicitly spans the migration corridor, with Safeguard in Karamoja and Heal in urban areas.
- It separates Integrate from Empower so the duration commitment to reintegration is not hidden inside the longer-term education and livelihoods work.
- It elevates Lead and Data to pillar status rather than treating them as back-office, which is how the sector has historically treated advocacy and evidence — and why both are weak.

HOW THIS COMPARES WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

The continuum-of-care logic SHIELD embodies is the same logic that underpins UNICEF’s child protection systems approach, Family for Every Child’s family-strengthening models, and the Retrak reintegration framework now carried forward by Hope for Justice. KTN’s distinctive move is to anchor that continuum in a single migration corridor and a single language community, rather than treating prevention, response, and reintegration as separate programmes run by separate actors.

9.2 The Six Pillars at a Glance

	Pillar	Focus
S	Safeguard	Prevention in Karamoja: early warning, anti-trafficking awareness, child protection committees, family economic strengthening.
H	Heal	Response in urban areas: Nga’Karamojong outreach, harm reduction, basic necessities, health bridging, substance abuse support, voluntary drop-in centres.
I	Integrate	Reintegration pathways: two-directional tracing, household safety assessment, voluntary reunification, 12 to 24 month post-resettlement monitoring.
E	Empower	Education and livelihoods: school enrolment and retention, accelerated learning, school feeding, vocational training, young-mother support.
L	Lead	Advocacy and sector leadership: policy reform, legal aid, conduct monitoring, sector convening on shared standards.
D	Data	Evidence and accountability: longitudinal child-tracking database, dashboards, applied research, academic partnerships, shared data infrastructure.

Each pillar is detailed below. The structure is the same throughout: the problem the pillar responds to, the specific actions we will take, geographic scope and phasing, key partnerships, and expected outcomes.

S

PILLAR · 9.3

Safeguard: Prevention in Karamoja

Prevention in Karamoja is the single most cost-effective intervention point in this crisis, and it is the most under-funded. Sector spending on Kampala response runs at multiples of the spending on Karamoja prevention. KTN's first pillar is built to invert that ratio for our own work and to advocate for the same inversion at sector level.

The problem this pillar addresses

Children leave Karamoja because the structural drivers in source communities push them out: a 74.2 percent poverty rate and 75 percent food poverty, tightening drought cycles, 74.2 percent of primary-aged children out of school, and an active trafficking economy. The drivers cannot be addressed by urban-end interventions alone. Until households can feed their children, until child protection committees disrupt recruitment, and until livelihoods provide credible income, the corridor will continue to fill from the source end.

Children return to streets because families cannot feed them. Economic strengthening is the foundation that makes every other pillar sustainable.

Key actions

- **Village-level Child Protection Committees.** KTN will support CPCs in selected sub-counties of Napak, Moroto, and Kotido, drawing membership from clan elders, women's representatives, teachers, faith leaders, and health workers, trained in case identification, referral, and Nga'Karamojong-language reporting, each operating against a documented terms of reference.
- **Family economic strengthening.** VSLAs tied to targeted households; climate-smart agriculture inputs and training; livestock restocking for households that have lost their herds; and adult skills training. The intent is direct, measurable household income improvement, not abstract empowerment.
- **Anti-trafficking awareness in Nga'Karamojong.** Community dialogues, radio, and printed materials naming the specific recruitment patterns: the aunty intermediary, the open-air market sale, the bus to Kampala. Awareness without specifics is ineffective.
- **Recruitment-point monitoring at markets.** Discreet, ethically managed monitoring at Arapai, Chapi, and Sire markets with a clear referral pathway into law enforcement, conducted in close coordination with COPTIP and the CFPU.
- **Early warning linked to food security data.** KTN will subscribe to IPC, FEWS NET, and UN OCHA feeds; CPCs will intensify monitoring during lean season and elevated IPC classification. Out-migration spikes during food crises; vigilance should spike with it.

- **Linkages to government social protection.** Many Karamoja households are eligible for the SAGE Senior Citizens Grant but not enrolled. KTN community workers will support enrolment and grievance handling.
- **School readiness and retention at source.** Working with district education offices and partners such as AVSI, KTN will support enrolment, retention, and re-entry of children who never enrolled or dropped out.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 establishes two pilot CPCs in Napak. Phase 2 scales to 8–10 CPCs across Napak, activates the first VSLA cohort, and pilots market monitoring at Arapai with COPTIP. Phase 3 expands to Moroto and Kotido with 20-plus CPCs and SAGE enrolment at scale. Phase 4 achieves full nine-district awareness coverage in partnership with peers, with the model documented for adoption.

Key partnerships

Napak District Local Government (MOU and joint operations), Moroto and Kotido District Local Governments, MGLSD Department of Social Protection (SAGE), COPTIP (market monitoring), Ministry of Karamoja Affairs, WFP (school feeding and food security data), Mercy Corps and other resilience actors, Hope for Justice and Dwelling Places (prevention coordination), and KAWUO.

Expected outcomes by 2030

- Functional CPCs in 30 sub-counties across three districts
- 1,200 households with active livelihood interventions and documented income improvement
- 40 percent reduction in trafficking recruitment incidents at monitored markets
- Sub-county-level migration trends measurable from CPC reporting data
- School enrolment uptick documented in CPC-served areas

BENCHMARK: PREVENTION AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING

The shift of resources toward prevention and household economic strengthening mirrors the evidence base built by Save the Children and World Vision on the economic drivers of child separation, and the VSLA-plus-protection model that BRAC has scaled across Africa and Asia. KTN's contribution is to embed it in Nga'Karamojong and tie it directly to trafficking recruitment patterns.

H

PILLAR · 9.4

Heal: Response in Urban Areas

Children already on the streets of Kampala, Jinja, or Moroto town need response that meets them where they are, not response that requires them to first submit to forced removal. The Heal pillar is built around a single operational premise: trust, in Nga’Karamojong, builds the relational ground on which everything else becomes possible.

The problem this pillar addresses

Current urban response is dominated by KCCA roundups, transport to Kampiringisa, and repatriation. The model has been documented as violent, dehumanising, and ineffective: only 292 of 1,000 children processed through one government programme could subsequently be traced. Children have correctly learned that engagement with the state means coercion. They scatter when uniformed officers approach.

Existing NGO outreach is better but faces three constraints. Few outreach workers speak Nga’Karamojong, repeatedly identified as the central service gap. Existing drop-in capacity does not match the population. And the relationship between outreach and case management is often weak.

Key actions

- **Nga’Karamojong-speaking street outreach.** Teams in Kisenyi, Katwe, Old Taxi Park, Owino Market, and Wandegeya, operating during the hours children are actually present, with the same workers over time so children can recognise and trust them.
- **Trust-building over forced removal.** A harm-reduction philosophy: meet the child where they are, address the immediate need, build the relationship, allow the child to choose their pace toward case management. Made explicit in our MOU with KCCA to avoid operational confusion.
- **Basic necessities.** Outreach teams carry food, blankets, first aid, sanitary pads, and clean water. These are not the intervention; they are the entry point that demonstrates engagement with KTN brings tangible benefit.
- **Health screening and bridging.** KTN nurses conduct basic screening and bridge children into formal services with chaperoned referral. MOUs with Mulago Hospital and the Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre will be developed in Phase 1.
- **Substance abuse peer support.** KTN will recruit and train former street youth in recovery as peer support workers. Clinical treatment is referred to S.A.L.V.E. International in Jinja rather than built in-house in the first three phases.
- **Voluntary drop-in centres.** Three centres across the Plan period — Kisenyi, central Kampala, then Moroto town — serving as case management entry points. Attendance is voluntary; no child is removed against their will.

- **Specific outreach for girls.** Female outreach workers conduct outreach in domestic-work hubs where girls are less visible, with dignity kits integrated and escalation to case management and the CFPU where sexual exploitation emerges.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 deploys the first outreach team to Kisenyi. Phase 2 opens the Kisenyi drop-in centre, expands outreach to Katwe and Old Taxi Park, and activates substance abuse peer support. Phase 3 opens a central Kampala drop-in centre and begins outreach in Jinja with S.A.L.V.E. Phase 4 opens a Moroto town drop-in, covers all major Kampala concentration areas, and documents the model for partial adoption by partners.

Key partnerships

KCCA (operational MOU and joint pathway), Uganda Police CFPU (training, referral, safeguarding), S.A.L.V.E. International (substance abuse referrals), Mulago National Referral Hospital and Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre (health bridging), Hope for Justice Lighthouse shelters (voluntary overnight referrals), Dwelling Places (learning exchange), and the National Drug Authority.

Expected outcomes by 2030

- 4,000 children engaged through KTN outreach
- Three drop-in centres with cumulative attendance over 12,000 child-visits
- 35-percent-plus voluntary case management entry rate from outreach
- Health screening and referral pathway operational for at least 2,500 children
- Documented reduction in aviation fuel and glue use among engaged children
- Female outreach reaching girls in indoor employment in measurable numbers

BENCHMARK: HARM REDUCTION AND STREET OUTREACH

Trust-based, relational street outreach as a gateway to case management, rather than rescue-by-removal, is the model documented by Retrak and Railway Children Africa and endorsed in UNICEF guidance on children in street situations. KTN extends it by making Nga’Karamojong fluency a non-negotiable design parameter, addressing the language gap that international actors operating in Kampala have rarely closed.

PILLAR · 9.5

Integrate: Reintegration Pathways

The Integrate pillar is the response to the sector’s single largest operational gap. The Auditor General’s finding that over 700 of 1,000 government-processed children could not be located afterwards is not a story about bad data systems. It is a story about an entire sector that has stopped paying attention to children at exactly the point when sustained attention matters most. KTN’s commitment is to be the organisation that stays.

The problem this pillar addresses

Reintegration in the current Uganda system means transport to Karamoja, handover to a relative or local authority, and the end of the file. There is no household assessment, no mediation when family relations have broken down, no monitoring of school attendance, no economic support to the receiving family, and no follow-up at 6, 12, or 24 months. The result is the well-documented return-to-street pattern.

Several organisations have built better reintegration models. Dwelling Places’ four-phase model is the most documented. UNICEF’s Napak pilot has integrated 637 children with psychosocial support. IOM provides livelihood training to families. But none operate at the scale of the problem, and crucially, none has dedicated long-term follow-up capacity to track outcomes across the 12-to-24-month window in which most failures occur.

Of approximately 1,000 children processed through one government programme, only 292 could be subsequently traced. The other 700 are the gap KTN is built to fill.

Key actions

- **Two-directional family tracing.** Tracing operates from both ends of the corridor. The Kampala team documents what the child knows about home; the Napak team, working with local CPCs, verifies family identity, location, and household composition. Conducted to documented evidence standards, not verbal confirmation alone.
- **Household capacity and safety assessment.** Before reunification, community workers assess the home environment, presence of perpetrators if abuse drove migration, household food security and income, and family willingness. If the household is not safe or willing, alternatives including supported foster care via Dwelling Places are pursued.
- **Mediation for family breakdown.** A structured process, conducted in Nga’Karamojong by trained mediators, offered before reunification rather than as an afterthought. Where mediation fails or is inappropriate, alternative placement is pursued without reverting to reunification by default.
- **Voluntary, individualised, supported reunification.** Reunification is the child’s decision, not an administrative requirement. The process is supported with a transition package and

accompanied by a KTN community worker who remains the child’s case manager for the next two years.

- **12-to-24-month post-resettlement monitoring.** The case manager makes contact at month 1, 3, 6, 12, and 24, documenting school attendance, family economic status, wellbeing, and return-migration risk. Where risk emerges, intensive intervention is triggered.
- **Longitudinal tracking through KoboToolbox and Power BI.** Every contact is recorded in the Data pillar’s database. Aggregate outcomes are visible on dashboards, and the database feeds applied research on what predicts sustained reintegration versus return.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 finalises case management protocols and places the first 20 children in active case management. Phase 2 reaches 100-plus children, completes first reintegrations, and collects 6-month follow-up data. Phase 3 reaches 500-plus children with 12-month follow-up on the first cohort and published interim outcomes. Phase 4 reaches a 2,500-plus cumulative cohort with 24-month follow-up data and a documented model ready for sector adoption.

Key partnerships

Dwelling Places (foster care referrals), Hope for Justice (cross-referrals through PREC), IOM (livelihood training for receiving households), UNICEF (Napak pilot integration), MGLSD (recognition of case management protocols), Napak District Local Government, and Makerere University (longitudinal research design).

Expected outcomes by 2030

- 2,500 children in active reintegration case management cumulatively
- School retention at 12 months post-reintegration of 80 percent or higher
- Return-to-street rate within 24 months below 15 percent
- Documented reintegration model adopted in modified form by at least three partner organisations
- Applied research on reintegration predictors published in 2028 and 2030

BENCHMARK: THE DURATION OF REINTEGRATION

International reintegration standards, including the Interagency Guidelines on Children’s Reintegration and the models of Hope for Justice, Retrak, and Family for Every Child, all stress that reintegration is a process, not an event, and that follow-up should extend well beyond reunification. The widely cited weakness across the sector is that few organisations resource that follow-up. KTN’s 12-to-24-month monitoring commitment is a direct, fundable answer to the gap the Auditor General quantified.

E

PILLAR · 9.6

Empower: Education and Livelihoods

The single most powerful intervention for preventing street return is school enrolment. Dwelling Places' Country Director has stated, on the basis of two decades of operational data, that enrolling a child in school reduces the probability of return to the streets by 95 percent. If a number like that is even approximately accurate, education is the central variable.

The problem this pillar addresses

According to the 2024 Census, 74.2 percent of primary-aged children in Karamoja are out of school. The regional literacy rate is around 30 percent against a national rate of 85.3 percent; net secondary enrolment is just 8 percent; and nearly 80 percent of women have no schooling or incomplete primary education. The 13-to-16 age band is statutorily neither required to be in school nor permitted to work. Children reintegrated from Kampala are typically over-age, frequently illiterate, and have had years of disrupted schooling; sending them back to a standard P3 classroom does not work.

For older youth (15 to 24), the question is livelihood. Karamoja's youth unemployment exceeds 40 percent, with 60 to 68 percent of young people neither employed, in education, nor in training. Vocational programmes exist but coverage falls far short of need, and many lack market linkage. Training a young person in skills for which there is no local market is not empowerment; it is a sunk cost.

Key actions

- **School enrolment and retention.** Reintegrated children are enrolled in appropriate schools, with fee gaps covered, supplies provided, and the household enrolled in a livelihood programme so economic pressure does not force re-withdrawal.
- **Accelerated learning for over-age returnees.** Over-age children cover two or three years of curriculum in one, in classrooms that do not stigmatise the child's history, with bridging into mainstream schooling once age-grade alignment is achieved.
- **School feeding linkages with WFP.** Where schools participate in WFP feeding, KTN links the child and family in; where they do not, KTN advocates with the district education office and WFP for inclusion.
- **Vocational training linked to market demand.** For 15-to-24-year-olds: tailoring, carpentry, motor mechanics, salon services, phone repair, agricultural value-addition, and construction trades – with market assessment, employer engagement, and placement support. We measure employment or enterprise outcomes at 6 and 12 months, not just completion.
- **Business start-up support and mentorship.** Graduates pursuing self-employment receive start-up kits and at least six months of mentorship from former programme graduates who have established enterprises.

- **Gender-responsive programming.** Safe spaces for girls; young-mother support including childcare; anti-early-marriage programming integrated with school retention; SRH information in Nga’Karamojong; and trauma-informed approaches for trafficking survivors.
- **Education advocacy at district level.** Where schools turn away returned children for being over-age or undocumented, KTN advocates for inclusive admission and feeds documented barriers into the Lead pillar.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 establishes partnerships with Napak district education offices and the first accelerated learning placements. Phase 2 activates the first vocational cohort, school retention monitoring, and the first young-mother programme. Phase 3 scales vocational training across skills areas, publishes a market assessment, and expands to Moroto and Kotido. Phase 4 documents the vocational model, formalises employer networks, and shares the gender-responsive curriculum across partners.

Key partnerships

Napak, Moroto, and Kotido District Education Offices, the Ministry of Education and Sports, AVSI Foundation (vocational training), WFP (school feeding), the Forum for African Women Educationists Uganda, the Freedom Fund (anti-early-marriage and survivor programming), local employer networks, and the Embassy of Ireland.

Expected outcomes by 2030

- 2,200 children enrolled in formal schooling or accelerated learning
- 600 young people aged 15–24 completing vocational training with documented outcomes
- 400 young mothers and adolescent girls in dedicated gender-responsive support
- School retention above 80 percent for reintegrated cohorts at 12 months
- Documented employment or enterprise outcomes for at least 60 percent of vocational graduates at 12 months

BENCHMARK: EDUCATION AS THE ANCHOR INTERVENTION

The centrality of education to preventing re-separation is consistent with the evidence base of UNICEF, Save the Children, and Educate A Child, while the market-linked vocational model echoes BRAC’s graduation approach and AVSI’s skilling work in Karamoja. KTN’s measurement of employment and enterprise outcomes at 6 and 12 months, rather than completion alone, aligns the pillar with the results standards donors such as the EU and Irish Aid increasingly require.



PILLAR · 9.7

Lead: Advocacy and Sector Leadership

Advocacy in this space has been a chronic disappointment. Several organisations work on Uganda’s street children, yet no unified policy voice has emerged. The most obvious gaps in the legal framework – the 13-to-16 age vacuum, the apprenticeship loophole, the under-disbursement of budgeted funds – have remained essentially untouched. The Lead pillar exists because evidence and good practice without advocacy do not change systems.

The problem this pillar addresses

Three failures define the current advocacy landscape. The first is fragmentation: many organisations advocate on adjacent issues with no shared policy agenda. The second is misallocation of effort: most advocacy focuses on awareness rather than specific legislative or budgetary asks. The third is the absence of legal accompaniment: when police or KCCA abuse street children, there is no organised mechanism for legal aid, paralegal support, or accountability.

Key actions

- **Closing the 13-to-16 legal age gap.** Compulsory schooling covers seven years (to about age 13); the minimum work age is 16. The three-year vacuum is when most migration intensifies. KTN’s priority ask is closing it, through extension of compulsory education to 16 or structured education-and-training for the band. A concrete legislative ask, not a general awareness call.
- **Full implementation of the anti-trafficking framework.** Uganda acceded to the Palermo Protocol in March 2024; implementation requires resources that have not materialised. KTN will advocate, in coalition, for operationalising COPTIP’s mandate, disbursing enforcement funds, and closing loopholes in the Employment of Children Regulations.
- **Shifting public budget from response to prevention.** Of the Shs 3.4 billion budgeted for the 2019 plan, only Shs 1 billion was released, almost entirely for response. KTN will push for prevention-weighted allocation against the MGLSD line items, the Karamoja Affairs budget, and the KIDP framework.
- **Legal aid and paralegal accompaniment.** Where children are arrested, beaten, or abused by police or KCCA, KTN-affiliated paralegals will accompany the child, support case documentation, and refer to legal aid partners. Patterns of abuse are aggregated for advocacy.
- **Monitoring of police and KCCA conduct.** Community paralegals monitor roundup operations, document conduct, and report to accountability mechanisms – evidence collection conducted in good faith through KTN’s MOUs, not antagonism.
- **Sector convening on shared standards.** KTN will convene, with UCRNN and CRANE, forums on shared case management protocols, data-sharing standards, common reintegration indicators, and joint advocacy positions – to reduce duplication and amplify common voice.

- **UPR engagement and treaty body reporting.** KTN will contribute civil society shadow reports under the UNCRC, the African Charter, and the Universal Periodic Review, in coalition, focused on the issues this Plan addresses.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 adopts the advocacy strategy and establishes coalition partnerships. Phase 2 issues first joint positions, makes the legal aid pathway operational, and trains community paralegals. Phase 3 sustains the 13-to-16 campaign, reports first budget influence, and documents conduct monitoring. Phase 4 substantively influences at least three reforms, runs legal aid at scale, and establishes KTN as a sector reference voice.

Key partnerships

UCRNN (network leadership and joint advocacy), CRANE Network (faith-based reach), Justice Centres Uganda and the Legal Aid Service Providers Network, the Uganda Law Society, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, DefendDefenders, the Parliamentary Committee on Gender, and selected international partners including Human Rights Watch and the Freedom Fund.

Expected outcomes by 2030

- Substantive contribution to at least three policy or legislative reforms, with the 13-to-16 age gap as priority
- 500 cases of legal aid or paralegal accompaniment for children abused or arrested by authorities
- 10 sector coordination forums convened or co-convened, with documented outputs
- Demonstrable shift in budget allocation toward Karamoja prevention in successive Ministry budgets
- KTN-led or co-led shadow reports submitted in two UPR and treaty body cycles

BENCHMARK: FROM FRAGMENTED ADVOCACY TO COORDINATED VOICE

Coalition-based advocacy with specific legislative and budgetary asks, backed by legal accompaniment, is the model that has delivered results for the Freedom Fund's anti-slavery work and for child-rights coalitions engaging UPR and treaty-body processes. KTN's approach is deliberately narrow and evidence-led, which is what distinguishes effective child-rights advocacy from the awareness-raising that has dominated, and failed, in this sector.

D

PILLAR · 9.8

Data: Evidence and Accountability

The sector measures activity. It needs to measure outcome. Trainings delivered, children rescued, families reached: these are activity counts, and they tell us nothing about whether children are actually staying off the streets. The Data pillar is built to be the sector’s missing evidence infrastructure for our work, and to contribute to the broader shift toward outcome accountability.

The problem this pillar addresses

There is no shared beneficiary database across the many organisations in this space. Each operates its own M&E system, often paper-based, often activity-only, almost always disconnected from peers. Duplication is rampant: the same child can be processed through multiple organisations’ programmes with no awareness on either side. And outcome measurement, where it exists, rarely extends past programme completion – the wrong measurement point, because most failures occur after that.

KTN has, as a founding asset, technical fluency in modern data tools and MEAL practice. We will use this not to build a proprietary platform but to model what the sector’s shared evidence infrastructure should look like, and to invite peers in on terms that protect data sovereignty and child confidentiality.

Many organisations work on street children in Uganda with no shared data systems, no unified case management, and no coordination mechanism. The Data pillar is built to change that.

Key actions

- **Robust outcome-level MEAL framework.** Built around outcome indicators – sustained school retention, return-to-street rate, household income, vocational employment – rather than activity. Activity is tracked for management but is not the basis of performance assessment.
- **Longitudinal child-tracking database.** Every child gets a unique identifier; every contact is recorded against it. Built on KoboToolbox for field collection and Power BI for analysis, with encryption, role-based access, and confidentiality protocols compliant with Uganda’s Data Protection and Privacy Act.
- **Real-time dashboards.** Three tiers – case manager (individual case status), programme leadership (cohort aggregates, exception flagging), and Board and donor (high-level outcomes). Dashboards are how case managers see which children need follow-up this week.
- **Applied research programme.** Questions the operational data uniquely allows: what predicts sustained reintegration versus return? What is the cost per sustained outcome? Outputs target both peer-reviewed publication and practitioner-accessible grey literature.

- **Academic partnerships.** Formal partnerships with Makerere (Public Health, Social Sciences) and Gulu (Education and Humanities) for joint research design, student placements, and co-publication, providing methodological rigour and advocacy credibility.
- **Sector-wide shared data system.** From Phase 3, KTN will lead, with UCRNN and willing peers, a process to develop shared data standards: common indicator definitions and agreed identification methods that protect confidentiality while preventing double-counting. Adoption is voluntary.
- **Annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report.** From 2028, an annual sector-level report bringing together KTN data, peer data shared on agreed terms, and government sources – the reference role no organisation currently plays.
- **MEAL consulting and AI for Social Impact training.** KTN’s data capacity offered to peers as a paid service, supporting sector capacity and generating earned income that diversifies the funding base.

Geographic scope and phasing

Phase 1 finalises the MEAL framework, designs and pilots KoboToolbox forms, and puts data protection architecture in place. Phase 2 makes the database operational with first dashboards and defines research questions with academic partners. Phase 3 publishes first applied research, launches the sector data standards process, and delivers first MEAL consulting. Phase 4 establishes the annual report, launches the AI for Social Impact programme, and sees the data system adopted by at least 10 peers.

Key partnerships

Makerere University, Gulu University, UCRNN (data standards), CRANE Network, MGLSD (national data architecture), the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the AfriChild Centre, and platform partners including KoboInbox, Microsoft Power Platform, and Google for Nonprofits.

Expected outcomes by 2030

- Longitudinal database with 2,500-plus children tracked, with 6, 12, and 24-month outcome data
- Five or more research outputs published (peer-reviewed and grey literature)
- Annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report established and circulated to over 200 stakeholders
- At least 10 partner organisations adopting KTN-supported data standards in modified form
- Earned income from MEAL consulting at 8 to 12 percent of organisational revenue by 2030

BENCHMARK: DATA GOVERNANCE AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

The move from activity counting to longitudinal outcome tracking, governed by encryption, role-based access, and a minimal-collection principle aligned with Uganda’s Data Protection and Privacy Act, matches the data-responsibility standards of UNICEF, IOM’s case management systems, and the interoperability ambitions of the wider humanitarian data community. KTN’s offer of shared standards to peers, rather than a closed proprietary platform, is the distinctive and sector-strengthening choice.

10

CHAPTER TEN

CROSS-CUTTING COMMITMENTS

Five commitments that run through every SHIELD pillar rather than sitting in any one: gender, Karamojong voice, safeguarding, climate, and disability inclusion.

Cross-Cutting Commitments

Five commitments run through every SHIELD pillar rather than sitting in any single one. They are not add-ons or compliance boxes. Each responds to a specific feature of the Karamoja crisis documented in Chapter 2, and each shapes how the pillars are designed and delivered.

10.1 Gender-Responsive Programming

The Karamojong street child population is unusual internationally in its high proportion of girls. In one 2019 roundup, girls were 65 percent of the children rescued. The trafficking economy specifically targets girls: they are sold at markets for USD 5 to 14 and channelled into commercial sexual exploitation from as young as 12, and over 3,000 are estimated to work as domestic servants in Nairobi’s Eastleigh for around 50 US cents a month. Yet girl-specific services reach an estimated 30 percent of the affected population.

KTN’s response is to make gender-responsiveness a design parameter rather than a reporting category. At least 55 percent of children in our case management will be girls. Female outreach workers conduct specific outreach in domestic-work hubs. Young-mother support is built into the Empower pillar. Anti-early-marriage programming is integrated with school retention. And our data systems disaggregate every indicator by sex so we can see when programming is failing girls or boys differentially.

Boys are not an afterthought. Boys face more frequent physical violence, higher exposure to forced substance use as gang initiation, and recruitment as armed cattle raiders in Karamoja itself. Gender-responsive does not mean girl-only; it means designing for the distinct trajectories that boys and girls actually experience.

10.2 Centring Karamojong Voice

The dominant intervention model is top-down by design and has been documented as dehumanising. Decisions about Karamojong children are overwhelmingly made by non-Karamojong actors who do not speak Nga’Karamojong, do not have standing relationships in source communities, and do not stay long enough to be accountable. KTN’s central differentiator is the reversal of this pattern.

What centring voice means in practice

- Nga’Karamojong fluency at every operational level, not just among field workers.
- Karamojong representation on the Board, with genuine decision authority rather than token presence.
- Community participation in programme design, tested before external best practice is applied.
- Engagement with clan structures and local leadership rather than around them.
- Child-voice mechanisms that document what children say about services, in their own language, feeding into operational decisions.

10.3 Child Safeguarding

KTN works with children who have experienced trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence from authorities, and substance dependence. The safeguarding stakes are correspondingly high, and our safeguarding architecture is operational from day one, not phased in.

SAFEGUARDING ARCHITECTURE — OPERATIONAL FROM DAY ONE

- A board-approved Child Safeguarding Policy and a PSEA Policy.
- Rigorous background checks for all staff and volunteers.
- Mandatory safeguarding induction and annual refresher training.
- A documented reporting and response protocol with escalation to the Board and to independent review.
- Child-accessible reporting channels in Nga’Karamojong.
- Zero tolerance and independent investigation of incidents involving KTN personnel — never managed internally to protect reputation.

10.4 Climate and Resilience

Climate change is not a backdrop to the Karamoja crisis; it is a primary driver. The drought cycle has tightened from once-in-five-years to once-in-three-years. Five consecutive rainy seasons failed between 2020 and 2022. By 2024, 600,000 people faced acute food insecurity. Any child protection strategy in Karamoja that ignores climate is addressing symptoms while the underlying driver intensifies.

KTN integrates climate resilience primarily through the Safeguard pillar’s family economic strengthening: climate-smart agriculture, diversification away from pure pastoralism where appropriate, and early warning tied to IPC and FEWS NET data. We are not a climate adaptation organisation and will not pretend to be one. But we will design our livelihood interventions to be robust to the climate trajectory, and partner with specialist resilience actors rather than building that expertise in-house.

10.5 Disability Inclusion

Children with disabilities are over-represented among the most vulnerable in any crisis and are frequently invisible in street-children programming. KTN commits to disability-inclusive programming: physically accessible drop-in centres, screening for disability during health assessment, referral pathways to specialist services, and disaggregation of programme data by disability status. This is the least developed of our cross-cutting commitments at the point of this Plan’s adoption, and we state that honestly. Building genuine disability inclusion will require partnership with Uganda’s disabled persons’ organisations and is a development priority for Phase 2 onward.

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE INTEGRATION

Read together, the cross-cutting commitments give KTN a coherent ESG posture that institutional donors increasingly assess. **Environmental:** climate-resilient livelihoods and early warning embedded in Safeguard. **Social:** gender-responsive design, child safeguarding, disability inclusion, and the centring of Karamojong voice. **Governance:** the accountability, transparency, and ethics architecture set out in Chapters 11 and 16. These are not bolted on for compliance; they are built into how the pillars are delivered.

11

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

The foundation behind the pillars: governance and accountability, human resources, financial sustainability, partnerships, digital presence, and a safeguarding culture — not just a policy.

Institutional Strengthening

The SHIELD pillars deliver results only if the organisation behind them is well governed, adequately staffed, financially sustainable, and culturally serious about safeguarding. This chapter sets out the institutional foundation.

11.1 Governance and Accountability

KTN is governed by a Board of Directors with ultimate responsibility for strategy, financial oversight, safeguarding, and the conduct of the Secretariat. The Board's composition is deliberate: it combines Karamojong professionals who bring cultural legitimacy and community standing with external technical advisors who bring child protection, finance, MEAL, and legal expertise.

Board governance during the Plan period

- Quarterly Board meetings with documented minutes and decisions.
- Sub-committees for finance and audit, programmes, and safeguarding.
- An annual Board self-assessment and a conflict of interest policy with annual declarations.
- Term limits to ensure renewal; the Board appoints and oversees the Executive Director.
- Beneficiary accountability through Nga’Karamojong feedback mechanisms, community scorecards, and an accessible annual report.

GOVERNANCE AND DONOR DUE DILIGENCE

The governance architecture — a balanced board, audit and safeguarding sub-committees, conflict-of-interest declarations, term limits, and independent audit — maps directly onto the institutional capacity and due-diligence assessments used by the EU, UNICEF, Irish Aid, FCDO, and Global Affairs Canada. Building these structures from inception, rather than retrofitting them under a first grant, is what positions a young organisation to pass partner-capacity assessment and to absorb institutional funding responsibly.

11.2 Human Resources

KTN’s staffing model is built around the organisation’s central differentiator: Nga’Karamojong speakers at every operational level. This is a recruitment constraint we accept deliberately, because the alternative — hiring for technical skill and treating language as a trainable add-on — is precisely the model that has failed across the sector, where one major Kisenyi intervention reportedly had only two Nga’Karamojong-speaking staff.

The staffing structure scales across the four phases, from a lean Phase 1 core (Executive Director, Programme Manager, MEAL Officer, Finance and Administration Officer, and the first Kisenyi outreach team) to a stable establishment with documented succession planning by Phase 4. Two commitments are specific to this work: community volunteers and peer educators, including recovered former street youth, are a structural part of the model with training, stipends, and a

pathway toward formal roles; and staff psychosocial support is funded and real, because staff working daily with trafficked and exploited children experience vicarious trauma.

11.3 Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is the binding constraint on everything in this Plan. The strategy rests on three legs: institutional and bilateral donors (UNICEF, Irish Aid, the EU); child-protection foundations (the Freedom Fund, Oak, Comic Relief); and earned income from MEAL consulting and a planned AI for Social Impact training programme. Earned income is targeted at 8 to 12 percent of revenue by 2030 — modest in proportion but strategically important, because unrestricted earned income funds the long-term follow-up that defines our Integrate pillar. Financial controls are non-negotiable from the start: annual independent external audit, documented procurement and financial policies, segregation of duties, and transparent public reporting.

11.4 Strategic Partnerships

KTN's model depends on partnership rather than self-sufficiency. We do not intend to build residential shelters where Hope for Justice operates Lighthouse facilities, or substance abuse clinics where S.A.L.V.E. has the only dedicated capacity, or vocational infrastructure where AVSI runs programmes at scale. The institutional point is that partnership management is a core function requiring dedicated capacity, not a diplomatic nicety. KTN will assign clear partnership ownership and review partnership health annually.

11.5 Digital Presence and Thought Leadership

KTN's website is designed as a resource hub rather than a brochure. It will host the data dashboards at appropriate aggregation, the annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report, research outputs, and accessible summaries of what is and is not working. The intent is that a donor, journalist, policymaker, or researcher looking for credible information on Karamojong child migration finds KTN's resources first. Digital presence is a function of the Data and Lead pillars made public, not a separate marketing exercise.

11.6 Safeguarding Culture

Chapter 10 set out the safeguarding architecture. The institutional point is the difference between a policy and a culture. A safeguarding policy that staff have signed but do not internalise protects no children. KTN's intent is a culture in which concerns are raised early and without fear, reporting is normalised rather than treated as disloyalty, and the response to incidents is consistent regardless of the seniority of the person involved.

We would rather discover a problem through our own audit than have it discovered for us.

12

CHAPTER TWELVE

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Four phases over five years, built on one discipline the sector has often ignored: build small and measurable before scaling. We would rather track 100 children well than reach 1,000 we cannot account for.

Implementation Roadmap

The Plan is implemented in four phases over five years. The sequencing is deliberate and follows a discipline the sector has often ignored: build small and measurable before scaling. We would rather track 100 children well in Phase 2 than reach 1,000 children we cannot account for.

12.1 Phase 1 – Foundation (Months 1 to 6)

Phase 1 Foundation

Months 1 – 6

The foundation phase establishes the institutional and operational base. Nothing is scaled in this phase; the work is constituting the organisation properly so that everything afterwards rests on solid ground.

- Board fully constituted, with Karamojong and technical representation; governance policies adopted
- Child Safeguarding and PSEA policies adopted; background-check procedures operational
- MOUs signed with KCCA and Napak District Local Government
- MEAL framework finalised; KoboToolbox forms designed and piloted; data protection architecture in place
- First Nga’Karamojong-speaking outreach team recruited and deployed to Kisenyi
- First two pilot Child Protection Committees established in Napak sub-counties
- Core Secretariat hired; initial funding secured to cover Phases 1 and 2
- Child-voice and community-participation mechanisms designed and initiated

12.2 Phase 2 — Pilot (Months 7 to 18)

Phase 2 Pilot

Months 7 – 18

The pilot phase tests the full SHIELD model on a bounded scale. The defining commitment is that every child engaged is tracked in detail, so that by the end of Phase 2 we have real outcome data, not activity counts, on which to base the scaling decisions of Phase 3.

- 100-plus children in active case management with full longitudinal tracking
- 50-plus families receiving livelihood support through VSLAs and climate-smart agriculture
- Child Protection Committees operating in two to three Napak sub-counties
- Child-tracking database fully operational; first dashboards live
- Kisenyi drop-in centre operational; outreach expanded to Katwe and Old Taxi Park
- First reintegrations completed with 6-month follow-up data collected
- First vocational training cohort active; first young-mother support programme running
- Substance abuse peer support active; S.A.L.V.E. referral pathway operational
- First joint advocacy positions issued in coalition with UCRNN and CRANE
- Market monitoring pilot at Arapai with COPTIP partnership

12.3 Phase 3 — Scale (Months 19 to 36)

Phase 3 Scale

Months 19 – 36

The scale phase extends the validated model across the migration corridor. Scaling decisions are evidence-based: components that demonstrated outcomes in Phase 2 are expanded; components that underperformed are revised before expansion rather than scaled regardless.

- 500-plus children reached across the corridor in active case management
- Geographic expansion to Moroto, Kotido, and Jinja
- Central Kampala drop-in centre operational; planning for Moroto town presence
- 12-month reintegration follow-up data on the first cohort published
- Reintegration outcome data published; first applied research output released
- Child Protection Committees active in 20-plus sub-counties
- Vocational training scaled across multiple skills areas; market assessment study published
- Sustained advocacy campaign on the 13-to-16 legal age gap; first measurable budget influence reported
- Sector data standards process launched with UCRNN and willing peers
- Diversified funding base established; first MEAL consulting engagements delivered

12.4 Phase 4 — Lead (Year 4 to 5 and Beyond)

Phase 4 Lead

Year 4 – 5 +

The lead phase consolidates KTN’s position as the reference organisation on pastoralist child protection in East Africa. By this point the operational model is validated, documented, and partially adopted by peers, and KTN’s contribution shifts from doing the work to also shaping how the sector does it.

- KTN recognised as the go-to reference on pastoralist child protection
- SHIELD model fully documented and shared for sector adoption
- Cross-border programme with Kenyan child protection actors operational
- Annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report established (from 2028)
- 24-month reintegration follow-up data on the original cohort published
- At least three policy reforms substantively influenced; legal aid operational at scale
- Sector data system adopted by 10-plus partner organisations
- AI for Social Impact training programme launched; earned income at 8 to 12 percent of revenue
- Moroto town drop-in centre operational; corridor-wide presence achieved
- Documented succession planning and stable organisational establishment

12.5 A Note on Sequencing Discipline

The strongest temptation a young, ambitious organisation faces is to scale before it has proven the model. The sector is full of programmes that grew fast, reached impressive activity numbers, and produced little verifiable outcome. KTN’s roadmap is deliberately structured to resist that temptation.

THE GATE BETWEEN PHASE 2 AND PHASE 3

The gate is not the passage of time but the demonstration of outcomes. If the pilot does not produce the school-retention and return-to-street results the model predicts, Phase 3 is a revision phase, not a scaling phase. This discipline is the difference between an organisation that learns and one that merely grows.

13

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING

KTN extends reach through strategic collaboration, not duplication. In a crowded sector with weak coordination, value is highest where KTN complements rather than competes.

Partnerships and Networking

KTN extends reach through strategic collaboration, not duplication. This is a strategic position, not a courtesy. In a crowded sector with weak coordination, the marginal value of another organisation doing the same things is low. The value KTN can add is highest precisely where it complements existing capacity.

13.1 Government Partnerships

Government partnership is essential because government holds the statutory mandate, the convening authority, and the budget levers that determine whether prevention is funded. KTN's key relationships are with the MGLSD (national policy), KCCA (Kampala operations via an MOU clarifying KTN's harm-reduction approach), Napak District Local Government (joint case management), the Uganda Police CFPU, COPTIP, and the Ministry of Karamoja Affairs. The MGLSD's stated 2024 shift toward a prevention-withdrawal-rehabilitation approach creates an alignment opportunity KTN will actively cultivate.

13.2 UN and Bilateral Partnerships

UNICEF is both a potential major funder and an operational partner whose Napak reintegration pilot is directly complementary to KTN's Integrate and Empower pillars. IOM's Coordinated Response to Human Trafficking offers a referral pathway and a cross-border partner for Phase 4. The Embassy of Ireland, with a USD 12 million education commitment for 2026, is a priority strategic funder. The World Food Programme remains key for school feeding, food security data, and livelihood complementarity — a role made more important by the 2025 closure of USAID and the end of the Apolou Activity.

13.3 NGO and Civil Society Partnerships

The operational backbone is KTN's relationships with established NGOs, each chosen for a specific complementarity. Hope for Justice brings enumeration data, Lighthouse shelters, and PREC. Dwelling Places brings two decades of reintegration experience and foster-care capacity. S.A.L.V.E. International brings the country's only dedicated substance abuse rehabilitation, to which KTN refers rather than duplicating. AVSI brings vocational training at scale. The Freedom Fund, KAWUO, and Rahab Uganda bring gender-specific programming.

13.4 Network and Coordination Partnerships

KTN will be an active member of the UCRNN (a broad child-rights coalition) and the CRANE Network (a faith-based coalition with over 3,000 workers). Membership is not passive: KTN intends to lead specifically on data-sharing standards and joint advocacy, the two areas where its distinctive capabilities add the most value, helping these platforms move from information-sharing toward genuine harmonisation.

13.5 Academic Partnerships

Makerere University and Gulu University are KTN’s research partners for the Data pillar, providing methodological rigour, advocacy credibility, peer-reviewed publication routes, and student placements that build the next generation of Karamojong child protection researchers. The AfriChild Centre is a further research collaborator.

13.6 Partnership Principles

Principle	What it requires
Clarity	Every significant partnership is documented with defined roles, expectations, and review points.
Complementarity	KTN partners where partners are stronger and leads where it is stronger, without ego about which is which.
Data sovereignty	Data-sharing partnerships protect child confidentiality absolutely and respect the data rights of partner organisations.
Honesty	When a partnership is not working, KTN says so and either fixes it or ends it, rather than maintaining the appearance of collaboration while duplicating quietly.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

This Plan is fundable — but fundability is not the same as funded. How KTN intends to convert real donor interest into a sustainable, diversified resource base over five years.

Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability

This Plan is fundable. The Karamoja crisis attracts real donor interest, the SHIELD model addresses gaps donors increasingly recognise, and KTN’s cultural-legitimacy differentiator is genuinely scarce. But fundability is not the same as funded. This chapter sets out how KTN intends to convert interest into a sustainable resource base.

14.1 Five-Year Resource Envelope



This is a range, not a budget, and it reflects the phased model: modest in Phase 1, growing through Phases 2 and 3, and stabilising in Phase 4. The allocation is deliberately weighted toward two areas the sector under-funds: prevention in Karamoja and the Integrate pillar’s long-term follow-up. This weighting is itself a strategic statement, and KTN will seek donors who share it.

14.2 Funding Strategy

KTN’s funding strategy diversifies across three sources to avoid the fragility of single-donor dependence.

Source	Targets and rationale
Institutional and bilateral donors	The primary source. UNICEF (co-funding aligned with its Napak pilot), Irish Aid (2026 Karamoja education commitment), and the EU (child protection and anti-trafficking calls, building on PREC). KTN will pursue both direct grants and consortium roles with larger INGOs.
Foundations and trusts	Child-protection philanthropy: the Freedom Fund (anti-trafficking and child marriage), the Oak Foundation (child abuse prevention), and Comic Relief. Often more flexible than institutional funding, and able to support unrestricted core costs and long-term follow-up.
Earned income	The distinctive leg. MEAL consulting monetises KTN’s data capacity while building sector capability; the AI for Social Impact programme generates income while extending thought leadership. Targeted at 8 to 12 percent of revenue by 2030 – modest, but it funds precisely the activities donors under-fund.

14.3 Sustainability Beyond Funding

Financial sustainability is necessary but not sufficient. KTN’s deeper sustainability rests on three assets that do not depend on any single funding stream: the cultural and linguistic legitimacy that cannot be quickly replicated, the longitudinal data asset that compounds in value over time, and the sector relationships that position KTN as a connector rather than just another implementer.

14.4 Value for Money

KTN commits to demonstrating value for money on terms that matter for this crisis: cost per child sustained off the streets at 24 months, not cost per child rescued. The sector’s dominant metric, children rounded up, is cheap per unit and worthless per outcome, since most of those children return.

We expect our cost per sustained outcome to be higher than the cost per rescue — but dramatically lower than the cost per rescue multiplied by the number of times each child is rescued before anyone tracks whether it worked.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

RISK ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT

Every risk below could materially affect delivery. The register rates each on likelihood and impact and states the mitigation — without pretending that mitigation eliminates risk.

Risk Analysis and Management

Every risk below could materially affect delivery. The register rates each on likelihood and impact (High, Medium, Low) and states the mitigation. We have not pretended that mitigation eliminates risk; several risks in this environment are simply structural, and the honest response is to manage rather than to claim to solve them.

Category	Risk	L	I	Mitigation
Funding	Initial cash flow insufficient to cover Phase 1 to 2 before scale-up funding arrives	H	H	Secure 18-month runway before launch; phased model keeps Phase 1 lean; diversify across institutional, foundation, and earned income; maintain a three-month operating reserve once established.
Funding	Donor preference for visible outputs (rescues) over slow trust-building	M	H	Lead with outcome data from the Phase 2 pilot; target donors who fund duration; use earned income to protect the follow-up model from funding pressure.
Political	Compressed civil society space around the 2026 general elections	M	M	Maintain politically neutral child-protection framing; build government partnerships before elections; avoid partisan positioning; keep advocacy evidence-based.
Operational	Difficulty recruiting sufficient Nga’Karamojong-speaking technical staff	M	H	Train community members in technical skills rather than only hiring technicians; build a pipeline through university partnerships; offer competitive packages for scarce skills.
Security	Staff safety during market monitoring and anti-trafficking work	M	H	Risk-managed protocols; close coordination with COPTIP and police; never expose staff to direct confrontation with traffickers; clear escalation procedures.
Security	Cross-border and remote-area operational risks in Karamoja	M	M	Security assessments before expansion; local guidance from CPCs and clan structures; phased entry; partnership with established actors in new areas.
Safeguarding	Safeguarding incident involving KTN staff or volunteer	L	H	Rigorous background checks; mandatory training; zero-tolerance enforcement; independent audits; child-accessible Nga’Karamojong reporting; immediate Board escalation and independent investigation.

Category	Risk	L	I	Mitigation
Partnership	Sector competition turns intended collaboration into rivalry	M	M	Document complementarity explicitly in MOUs; lead with the data-sharing value proposition; avoid duplicating partner activities; manage partnerships as a dedicated function.
Programmatic	Pilot fails to demonstrate predicted reintegration outcomes	M	H	Treat the Phase 2 to 3 gate as evidence-based; revise rather than scale if outcomes disappoint; build learning loops; the discipline to not scale a failing model is itself the mitigation.
External	Worsening climate and food security overwhelms prevention capacity	H	M	Integrate climate-resilient livelihoods; partner with specialist resilience actors; link early warning to programming; accept that KTN manages but cannot solve the climate driver.
External	Trafficking networks adapt faster than law enforcement and KTN can respond	H	M	Treat trafficking as a long-term adversary, not a solvable problem; combine awareness, monitoring, and law enforcement support; feed pattern data from the Data pillar into COPTIP.
Reputational	Association with a government roundup that turns abusive	M	M	Clarify KTN's harm-reduction role in the KCCA MOU; document KTN's distinct approach publicly; monitor and report conduct rather than participate in coercion.
Financial	Currency depreciation and global aid budget contraction	M	M	Budget conservatively; hold reserves; diversify currency exposure where possible; build earned income as a partial hedge against aid budget cycles.
Data / Cyber	Data protection breach exposing confidential child information	L	H	Encryption and role-based access; compliance with Uganda's Data Protection and Privacy Act; staff training; a minimal-data-collection principle; regular security review.

L = Likelihood, I = Impact. H = High, M = Medium, L = Low.

15.1 Risk Governance

The risk register is a living document reviewed quarterly by the Board's Finance and Audit Sub-Committee and updated as the operating environment changes. Two risks are flagged for standing Board attention because they are both high-likelihood and structural: the climate and food security trajectory, and the adaptiveness of trafficking networks. Neither can be eliminated. Both require KTN to design for resilience rather than assume stability.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LEARNING

Not a reporting obligation but the Data pillar made operational — the discipline that distinguishes this Plan from the activity-counting that has characterised the sector.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning

MEAL is not a reporting obligation for KTN; it is the Data pillar made operational, and it is the discipline that distinguishes this Plan from the activity-counting that has characterised the sector. This chapter sets out how we will know whether the strategy is working.

16.1 Measurement Philosophy

The sector’s measurement failure is specific and consequential: it counts activities (children rescued, trainings delivered, families reached) rather than outcomes (children who stay off the streets, families whose income improves, young people who find work). Activity counts are easy to inflate and tell us nothing about whether the work succeeded. KTN measures outcomes, and it measures them at the points where the sector loses children: 6, 12, and 24 months after reintegration.

16.2 The Results Framework

Annex A contains the full results framework, structured around the six SHIELD objectives. For each objective it specifies outcome indicators, baselines (to be established in Phase 1 where they do not yet exist), annual targets, means of verification, and data collection responsibility. The framework is deliberately modest in the number of indicators per objective: we would rather measure a few things well than many things badly.

RESULTS-FRAMEWORK INTEGRITY AND EVALUATION READINESS

The framework is built to be SMART and evaluation-ready in the terms institutional donors apply: outcome indicators with baselines and means of verification, sex and age disaggregation, and independent evaluation at mid-term and endline. This is the structure UNICEF, the EU, Irish Aid, and Global Affairs Canada expect to see, and it is what allows a future evaluator to assess KTN against its own stated targets rather than against shifting goalposts.

16.3 Data Systems

Data collection runs on KoboToolbox for field-level mobile collection, feeding a central child-tracking database with unique-identifier records for every child in case management. Analysis and visualisation run on Power BI, with the three-tier dashboard structure described in Chapter 9. The architecture complies with Uganda’s Data Protection and Privacy Act, uses encryption and role-based access, and follows a minimal-collection principle.

16.4 Evaluation

Evaluation moment	Timing	Purpose
Baseline study	Phase 1	Establishes the starting position against which all change is measured.
Mid-term evaluation	End of Phase 2 (month 18)	Assesses whether the pilot has demonstrated the outcomes required to justify scaling; informs the Phase 2-to-3 gate decision. Includes an independent external component.
Final evaluation	Year 5	Assesses overall achievement against the strategic objectives and informs the successor strategy. Includes an independent external component.

16.5 Accountability

Accountability runs in two directions. Upward accountability to donors and regulators is met through audited financial reports, narrative reporting against the results framework, and compliance with grant conditions. Downward accountability to the children and communities KTN serves is met through Nga’Karamojong-language feedback mechanisms, community scorecards administered through the CPCs, child-voice documentation, and a complaints procedure accessible to people who may not read or write. Downward accountability is the one the sector neglects, and the one KTN treats as constitutive of its model.

16.6 Learning

Learning is the point of the whole MEAL system. KTN commits to acting on what the data shows, including when it is unwelcome. Quarterly programme reviews examine outcome trends and trigger course correction. The applied research programme turns operational data into transferable knowledge. And the annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report shares learning beyond KTN, including learning about what did not work.

An organisation that only publishes its successes is not learning; it is marketing. KTN intends to publish its failures as well.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CONCLUSION

The crisis has defeated every intervention for three decades. KTN does not propose to overcome those odds through scale or force, but through something narrower and more durable: taking the long view.

Conclusion

The Karamoja street children crisis has defeated every intervention thrown at it for over three decades. The poverty rate in the source region is at its highest recorded level. The climate is worsening. The trafficking networks are adaptive and, in places, protected. By any honest reckoning, the structural odds against meaningful change are long.

KTN does not propose to overcome those odds through scale, funding, or force. We propose to do something narrower and, we believe, more durable: to be the organisation that finally takes the long view. To speak the language. To stay with children through the two years after reintegration when everyone else has closed the file. To measure what actually happens to them. To tell the sector the truth about what works. And to push, persistently, for the policy and budget changes that would let prevention in Karamoja finally receive the resources that response in Kampala has absorbed for decades.

The SHIELD framework is our answer to a sector that has been busy without being effective

- **Safeguard**, because prevention in Karamoja is cheaper and better than response in Kampala.
- **Heal**, because children on the streets need trust before they need removal.
- **Integrate**, because reintegration that ends at family handover is not reintegration.
- **Empower**, because school enrolment cuts street return dramatically, and a young person without livelihood options will migrate regardless.
- **Lead**, because evidence without advocacy changes nothing.
- **Data**, because a sector that does not measure outcomes cannot learn from its failures.

We are clear-eyed about what this Plan does not do. It does not solve Karamoja's poverty. It does not end trafficking. It does not reverse the climate trajectory. What it does is build an organisation that the children of Napak, Moroto, Kotido, Kaabong, Amudat, Abim, Nakapiripirit, Nabilatuk, and Karenga can rely on for the long journey from street to school to self-sufficiency, and that the sector can rely on for the evidence and coordination it has lacked.

The measure of our success in 2030 will not be how many children we rescued. It will be how many children, five years on, are still in school, still with their families, and no longer at risk of the streets.

That is a harder number to produce and a slower one to report. It is the only one that matters.

A— E

ANNEXES

OPERATIONAL ANNEXES

The results framework, the five-year implementation timeline, the indicative budget envelope, key references, and a glossary of recurring terms.

Annex A — Results Framework

The framework below summarises the outcome indicators against each SHIELD objective. Baselines marked TBE are to be established during the Phase 1 baseline study. Targets are cumulative five-year figures unless otherwise stated. All indicators are disaggregated by sex; most are additionally disaggregated by age band and district.

Objective	Outcome indicator	Target 2030	Means of verification
Safeguard	Functional village-level Child Protection Committees across Napak, Moroto, Kotido	30	CPC reports; quarterly monitoring visits
	Households with active livelihood support and documented income improvement	1,200	VSLA records; household income surveys
	Reduction in trafficking recruitment incidents at monitored markets vs baseline	-40%	Market monitoring logs; COPTIP referral data
Heal	Children engaged through KTN street outreach	4,000	Outreach records; unique-ID database
	Cumulative drop-in centre attendance (child-visits)	12,000+	Drop-in centre attendance logs
	Street-engaged children entering voluntary case management	35%+	Case management database
Integrate	Children in active reintegration case management (cumulative)	2,500	Child-tracking database
	School retention at 12 months post-reintegration	80%+	Follow-up monitoring; school records
	Return-to-street rate within 24 months of reintegration	<15%	24-month follow-up data
Empower	Children enrolled in formal schooling or accelerated learning	2,200	School enrolment records; AL programme data
	Youth (15–24) completing vocational training with documented outcomes	600	Training records; 6 & 12-month placement surveys
	Young mothers and adolescent girls in dedicated support	400	Programme records

Objective	Outcome indicator	Target 2030	Means of verification
Lead	Policy or legislative reforms substantively influenced	3	Policy documents; coalition records
	Legal aid or paralegal accompaniment cases	500	Legal aid case files
	Sector coordination forums convened or co-convened	10	Forum reports; partner confirmations
Data	Children in longitudinal database with 6, 12, 24-month outcome data	2,500	Child-tracking database
	Research outputs published (peer-reviewed and grey literature)	5+	Publications; university partner records
	Partner organisations adopting KTN-supported data standards	10+	Partner MOUs; adoption records

Annex B — Five-Year Implementation Timeline

The matrix below maps the major activities to the four implementation phases. A filled marker indicates the phase in which an activity begins or is a primary focus; activities generally continue once started.

Activity	P1	P2	P3	P4
Board constitution and governance policies	●			
Safeguarding and PSEA policies operational	●			
MOUs with KCCA and Napak District	●			
MEAL framework and data architecture	●	●		
First outreach team in Kisenyi	●	●		
First Child Protection Committees (Napak)	●	●		
Children in active case management		●	●	●
Family livelihood support (VSLAs)		●	●	●
Child-tracking database and dashboards		●	●	●
Drop-in centres operational		●	●	●
Reintegration with 6, 12, 24-month follow-up		●	●	●
Vocational training cohorts		●	●	●
Geographic expansion (Moroto, Kotido, Jinja)			●	●
Reintegration outcome data published			●	●
Advocacy campaign on the 13–16 age gap		●	●	●
Sector data standards process			●	●
Applied research publications			●	●
Cross-border programme with Kenya				●
Annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection Report				●
AI for Social Impact training programme				●

P1 = Foundation (Months 1–6) · P2 = Pilot (Months 7–18) · P3 = Scale (Months 19–36) · P4 = Lead (Year 4–5 and beyond).

Annex C — Indicative Budget Envelope

The figures below are indicative planning estimates, not a fixed budget. They express the five-year resource envelope of USD 7.5 to 9.5 million as an approximate allocation across the SHIELD pillars and institutional costs. The allocation is deliberately weighted toward Safeguard (prevention, the most cost-effective intervention point) and Integrate (long-term follow-up, the sector’s largest gap). The mid-range figure of approximately USD 8.5 million is used for the percentages below.

Area	Indicative 5-yr (USD)	Share	Notes
Safeguard (prevention in Karamoja)	1,870,000	22%	CPCs, VSLAs, climate-smart agriculture, market monitoring, awareness
Heal (urban response)	1,530,000	18%	Outreach teams, drop-in centres, harm reduction, health bridging
Integrate (reintegration and follow-up)	1,700,000	20%	Tracing, assessment, mediation, 12 to 24 month case management
Empower (education and livelihoods)	1,360,000	16%	School support, accelerated learning, vocational training, young-mother support
Lead (advocacy and legal aid)	595,000	7%	Advocacy, legal aid, paralegals, sector convening
Data (evidence and systems)	680,000	8%	Database, dashboards, research, academic partnerships
Institutional and governance	765,000	9%	Board, leadership, finance, HR, safeguarding, premises, staff wellbeing
TOTAL (mid-range)	8,500,000	100%	Range USD 7.5M to 9.5M across five years

TWO DELIBERATE STRATEGIC STATEMENTS IN THIS ALLOCATION

- Prevention in Karamoja (Safeguard, 22 percent) receives the largest single share, inverting the sector pattern in which Kampala response dominates spending.
- Integrate (20 percent) is funded for the full 12 to 24-month follow-up period rather than ending at reintegration, which is why its share exceeds what most reintegration budgets allocate.

Annex D — Key References

This Plan draws on the foundational research synthesis prepared for KTN and the sources it cites. Principal sources are listed below by category. Full citations are held in the foundational research report.

Enumeration and statistics

- Retrak, MGLSD and UBOS (2017/18). National Street Children Enumeration Study.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. National Household Survey 2023/24 and Multidimensional Poverty Index Census Monograph 2024.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2024 National Population and Housing Census.
- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reports for Karamoja, 2022 to 2024.

Trafficking and exploitation

- U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports, 2019 to 2025.
- U.S. Department of Labor (2024). Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Uganda.
- Government of Uganda (2023). Annual National Report on Countering Trafficking in Persons.
- Kenyatta University (2023). Study of trafficked Karamoja women and girls in Nairobi.
- Eastern Africa Child Rights Network. Estimates on Karamojong girls in Nairobi's Eastleigh.

Conditions, health, and rights

- Human Rights Watch (2014, 2019). “Where Do You Want Us to Go?” and follow-up documentation.
- AfriChild Centre. Research on the abuse of street children by authorities.
- Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Studies on disarmament and pastoral livelihoods.
- Uganda Youth Development Link and partners. Studies on substance use, HIV, and mental health among street and slum youth.

Interventions and sector

- UNICEF. Napak reintegration pilot reporting.
- Dwelling Places Uganda. Reintegration model documentation, 2002 to 2025.
- IOM. Coordinated Response to Human Trafficking in Uganda (CRTU) reporting.
- Hope for Justice. PREC project and Lighthouse shelter documentation.
- S.A.L.V.E. International. Substance abuse rehabilitation programme documentation.
- AVSI Foundation. VESP vocational training programme reporting.
- Mercy Corps and consortium partners. Apolou Activity documentation, Karamoja.
- Office of the Auditor General. Review of government street children programme outcomes.

Legal and policy framework

- Government of Uganda. The Children Act (Cap. 59), as amended 2016.
- Government of Uganda. Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009).
- Kampala Capital City Authority. Child Protection Ordinance (2022).
- Government of Uganda. National Child Policy (2020); Karamoja Integrated Development Programme (KIDP III).

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; Palermo Protocol (acceded March 2024).

KTN documents

- Karamoja Tumaini Network. The SHIELD Framework: Strategic Thematic Areas and Institutional Strengthening Plan (February 2026).
- Karamoja Tumaini Network. Street Children from Karamoja: A Foundational Research Report.
- Karamoja Tumaini Network. Evidence and Source Validation Annex (2026).

Annex E — Glossary

The terms below recur throughout the Plan. Several are drawn from Nga’Karamojong or from Ugandan usage and are defined here for readers outside the immediate context.

Term	Definition
Accelerated learning	A compressed education programme allowing over-age children to cover several years of curriculum in one, used to mainstream children who have missed years of schooling.
Aunty	An adult woman, who may or may not be an actual relative, who facilitates a child’s migration to the city and then manages their begging or labour. A common intermediary in the trafficking economy.
Bayaaye	A Ugandan slang term meaning vagabond, used pejoratively and often interchangeably with Karamojong identity in Kampala.
Child Protection Committee (CPC)	A village-level structure of community members trained to identify children at risk, refer cases, and disrupt trafficking recruitment.
Disarmament campaigns	Government operations between 2001 and 2013 to remove firearms from Karamoja’s pastoral communities; brought relative peace but undermined livelihood resilience.
Harm reduction	An approach that meets people where they are and reduces the harms associated with their situation, rather than requiring abstinence or removal as a precondition for support.
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a standardised scale (Phase 1 Minimal to Phase 5 Famine) for classifying the severity of food insecurity.
Kikaramoja	Local name for Kisenyi, a Kampala neighbourhood, reflecting the size of its Karamojong community.
Mafuta	Aviation fuel or petrol, sniffed by street children to suppress hunger, stay warm, and cope with trauma. A common substance of dependence.
Nga’Karamojong	The language of the Karamojong people. Fluency in it is KTN’s central operational differentiator.
Pastoralism	A livelihood system based on the herding of livestock, traditionally the economic foundation of Karamoja.
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, a standard safeguarding framework governing the conduct of personnel toward the people an organisation serves.
Reintegration	The process of returning a child from the streets to family and community, including tracing, assessment, reunification, and follow-up. KTN extends it to 12 to 24 months post-reunification.
SHIELD	KTN’s strategic framework: Safeguard, Heal, Integrate, Empower, Lead, Data.

Term	Definition
Stepping-stone migration	A documented pattern in which children from remote districts migrate first to a regional town (often Moroto) before continuing to larger cities.
Swoop or roundup	A police or KCCA operation to remove street children from urban areas, often conducted at night and documented as frequently coercive.
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association, a community-based group savings and credit mechanism used in family economic strengthening.



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