



KARAMOJA TUMAINI NETWORK · KTN

Strategic Plan

IN BRIEF

2026 – 2030

A summary for donors and partners: the crisis, our model, and what five years will deliver.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every year, thousands of children leave Karamoja for the streets of Kampala. Most are sent. *Almost none are followed home*. KTN exists to change the part of this story that everyone else has stopped paying attention to.

15,476

children aged 7–17 counted living or working on the streets across four towns — the last rigorous enumeration, 2017/18

70–90%

of street children in Kampala are ethnically Karamojong

74.2%

poverty rate in Karamoja, the highest on record and over four times the national average

292 of 1,000

children processed through one government programme who could later be traced. The rest disappeared.

A crisis that has outlasted every response

For three decades, Uganda's answer to Karamojong children on the streets has been the same: round them up in Kampala, bus them back to Karamoja, close the file. The children return within months. The approach has failed by the government's own admission.

600,000

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

IPC, 2024

74.2%

of primary-aged children in Karamoja are out of school

2024 Census

~30%

adult literacy, against a national rate of 85.3 percent

2024 Census

What drives children to the streets

The drivers are structural and worsening. Karamoja is Uganda's poorest region by every measure, and the drought cycle that once recurred every five years now hits roughly every three. Five consecutive rainy seasons failed between 2020 and 2022. Against that backdrop, parents send children to beg as a survival strategy.

Trafficking networks have organised around the resulting flow. Girls are sold at open-air markets in the eastern region for as little as five US dollars, and an estimated 3,000 Karamojong girls work as domestic servants across the border in Nairobi. The street population is unusually skewed toward girls — in one 2019 roundup, girls were 65 percent of the children removed.

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

THE FULL EVIDENCE BASE

Scale, drivers, the migration corridor, trafficking, conditions on the streets, and the gender dimension are set out with full sourcing in Chapter 2 of the Strategic Plan.

Why the current response fails

The dominant model — forced removal, transport, repatriation, no follow-up — produces temporary decreases followed by return to baseline. The failure is operational, not conceptual. We know what works; the sector simply stops too soon.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

A child is rounded up, taken to a holding facility, and bused back to Karamoja. The file closes at the moment of handover to a relative. No household assessment, no mediation, no monitoring of whether the child stays.

WHY CHILDREN RETURN

No economic opportunity at home, untreated addiction and trauma, active re-recruitment by traffickers, and resettlement support that ends at the doorstep. The intervention targets the symptom in Kampala, not the cause in Karamoja.

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.

Office of the Auditor General

What works is already known

The evidence is not in doubt. UNICEF's Napak reintegration pilot has placed 637 children in school with psychosocial support. Dwelling Places Uganda has reintegrated 1,954 children into families since 2002, and reports that enrolling a child in school reduces the chance of return to the streets by around 95 percent. The gap is that almost no one resources the follow-up that makes those results hold.

637

children placed in school through UNICEF's Napak reintegration pilot

UNICEF

1,954

children reintegrated into families by Dwelling Places since 2002

Dwelling Places Uganda

~95%

lower chance of street return when a reintegrated child is enrolled in school

Dwelling Places

OUR POSITION

What KTN brings that no one else combines

Several child-focused organisations work in this space, yet the same gaps persist. KTN's case rests on three assets that are rarely found together in one organisation – and never, so far, in one that is Karamojong-led and present along the whole corridor.

1

Cultural & linguistic legitimacy. Nga'Karamojong fluency at every operational level – the gap most consistently cited across the sector.

2

Corridor-wide presence. Operational footing in both Karamoja source communities and Kampala destination areas, not one end only.

3

Data & MEAL discipline. The capacity to build the longitudinal child-tracking system the sector is missing.

The difference in one sentence

Where the sector measures activity — children rounded up, trainings delivered — KTN measures outcomes, and measures them at 6, 12, and 24 months after a child goes home, which is exactly when most programmes lose track. We follow each child for up to two years, long after others have closed the file.

HOW THIS ALIGNS WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

KTN's three assets map onto what leading 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 Hope for Justice and Family for Every Child), and outcome-level evidence (the direction of travel across Save the Children, World Vision, and BRAC). The distinctiveness is the combination of all three in one Karamojong-led organisation.

Behind every number is a child with a name.

KTN guiding principle

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

Our theory of change

The cycle that brings children to the streets has six failure points. The logic of the plan is simple: address all six at once, with cultural and linguistic legitimacy, and the cycle breaks in ways that can be measured — and that shift sector practice beyond our own caseload.

1

If — we strengthen source communities

Child protection committees, household livelihoods, and anti-trafficking awareness weaken the structural drivers, so fewer children are recruited into the corridor.

2

And — we meet children with trust, not force

Nga'Karamojong outreach and voluntary drop-in centres reach children the current system drives underground, opening the door to voluntary return.

3

And — we stay through reintegration

Tracing, household assessment, mediation, and 12-to-24-month monitoring close the sector's largest gap, so return-to-street rates fall.

4

And — we make return sustainable

School enrolment, accelerated learning, and market-linked livelihoods reproduce the dramatic drop in street-return that education is known to deliver.

5

And — we lead on policy and evidence

Coordinated advocacy and shared data move the system, so the operating ground improves for every organisation, not just KTN.

6

Then — the cycle breaks, measurably

By 2030, children KTN engages are demonstrably more likely to be in school and with their families — and the sector has a model and a dataset it lacked.

TESTED EARLY, NOT ASSUMED

Two assumptions are tested in the Phase 2 pilot: that children choose voluntary engagement when offered a credible alternative, and that source-community livelihoods can outweigh the pull of urban begging. If either fails, the model is revised before it is scaled. The full pathways and indicators are in Chapter 7.

OUR MODEL

The SHIELD framework

Six interconnected pillars cover the full journey — from prevention in Karamoja, to response on the streets, to reintegration with real follow-up, and the long-term work that makes return stick. The pages that follow take each pillar in turn.

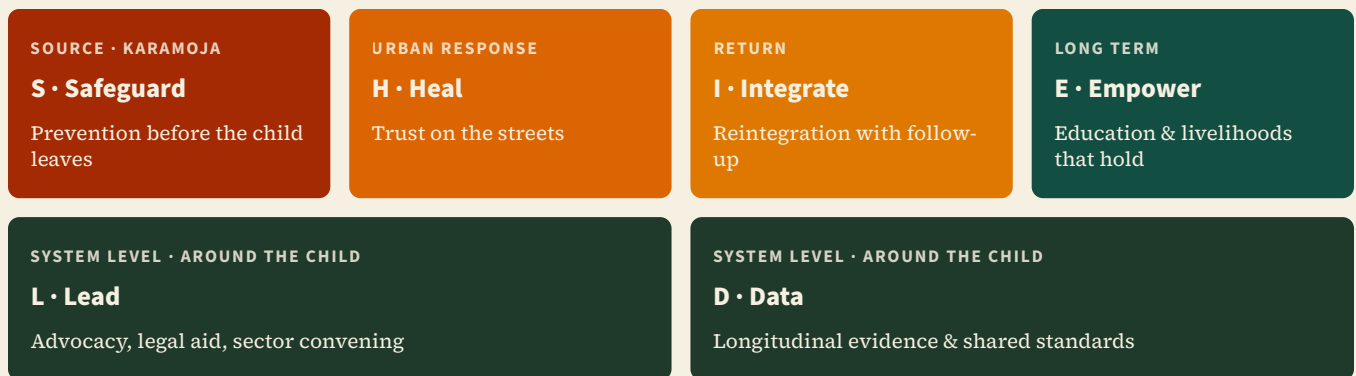


Figure 1. The SHIELD continuum. Safeguard, Heal and Integrate follow the child along the corridor; Empower sustains recovery; Lead and Data strengthen the system around the child.

Why an acronym, and why these six

SHIELD elevates the two things the sector has historically treated as back-office — advocacy and evidence — to pillar status, which is exactly why both have been weak. It separates reintegration from the longer-term education work so the two-year follow-up commitment is never hidden inside it. And it spans the whole corridor, with prevention in Karamoja and response in the city as distinct, funded pillars.

SHIELD PILLAR
S Safeguard
Prevention in Karamoja

The cheapest, most effective place to intervene — and the most under-funded.

THE GAP

Children leave because the drivers at home push them out: extreme poverty, tightening drought, schools out of reach, and an active trafficking economy. Urban-end interventions alone cannot address any of it.

WHAT KTN DOES

Village child protection committees, family economic strengthening through savings groups and climate-smart agriculture, anti-trafficking awareness in Nga’Karamojong, discreet monitoring of recruitment at markets, and early warning tied to food-security data.

TARGETS TO 2030

30

functional child protection committees across three districts

1,200

households with livelihood support and measured income gains

-40%

trafficking recruitment incidents at monitored markets

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Safeguard is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

SHIELD PILLAR

H

Heal

Response in urban areas

Trust, in the child’s own language, is the ground everything else is built on.

THE GAP

Current urban response is dominated by forced removal, which children have correctly learned to flee. Few outreach workers speak Nga’Karamojong — the single most cited service gap — and drop-in capacity does not match the population.

WHAT KTN DOES

Nga’Karamojong-speaking street outreach by the same workers over time, harm reduction rather than coercion, basic necessities as an entry point, health screening and referral, substance-abuse peer support, and voluntary drop-in centres.

TARGETS TO 2030

4,000

children engaged through outreach

3

voluntary drop-in centres, 12,000+ child-visits

35%+

voluntary case-management entry rate

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Heal is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

SHIELD PILLAR

Integrate

Reintegration that lasts

The single largest gap in the current response – and KTN’s defining commitment.

THE GAP

Reintegration in the current system ends at family handover: no safety assessment, no mediation, no monitoring. The result is the well-documented return-to-street pattern the Auditor General quantified.

WHAT KTN DOES

Two-directional tracing, household safety and capacity assessment, mediation before reunification, voluntary and supported return, and 12-to-24-month monitoring with the same case manager – every contact recorded in the child-tracking database.

TARGETS TO 2030

2,500

children in active reintegration case management

80%+

school retention at 12 months

<15%

return-to-street rate within 24 months

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Integrate is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

SHIELD PILLAR



Empower

Education & livelihoods

School enrolment is the single most powerful predictor of staying off the streets.

THE GAP

Returned children are typically over-age and have had years of disrupted schooling; a standard classroom does not work. Older youth face above-40-percent unemployment, and training without market linkage is a sunk cost.

WHAT KTN DOES

School enrolment with fee and supply support, accelerated learning for over-age returnees, school-feeding linkages, market-linked vocational training with placement tracking, business start-up support, and gender-responsive programming including young-mother support.

TARGETS TO 2030

2,200

children in schooling or accelerated learning

600

youth completing vocational training, outcomes tracked

400

young mothers and adolescent girls supported

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Empower is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

SHIELD PILLAR



Lead

Advocacy & sector leadership

Evidence without advocacy changes nothing.

THE GAP

Advocacy has been fragmented and focused on awareness rather than specific asks. The clearest legal gaps — the 13-to-16 age vacuum, the apprenticeship loophole, under-disbursed budgets — have gone untouched, and abused children have no organised legal recourse.

WHAT KTN DOES

A concrete campaign to close the 13-to-16 legal age gap, legal aid and paralegal accompaniment for abused or arrested children, advocacy to shift budget toward prevention, conduct monitoring of roundups, and convening peers around shared standards.

TARGETS TO 2030

3

policy reforms substantively influenced

500

legal aid or paralegal accompaniment cases

10

sector coordination forums with documented outputs

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Lead is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

SHIELD PILLAR

D **Data**

Evidence & accountability

The sector measures activity. KTN measures outcomes — and shares the infrastructure.

THE GAP

There is no shared beneficiary database across the sector. Each organisation runs its own system, often paper-based and activity-only, and outcome measurement rarely extends past programme completion — the wrong measurement point.

WHAT KTN DOES

A longitudinal child-tracking database on KoboToolbox and Power BI, three-tier outcome dashboards, applied research with Makerere and Gulu universities, shared data standards offered to peers, and an annual State of Pastoralist Child Protection report from 2028.

TARGETS TO 2030

2,500

children tracked with 6, 12, 24-month outcomes

5+

research outputs published

10+

partners adopting shared data standards

IN THE FULL PLAN

Pillar Data is detailed in Chapter 9 with key actions, geographic phasing, partnerships, and expected outcomes, alongside a benchmark against international practice.

WHAT FIVE YEARS DELIVER

Targets to 2030, at a glance

The plan commits to quantified, outcome-weighted targets against a defined baseline – the form donors expect to evaluate. The full Results Framework, with indicators and means of verification, sits in Annex A.

2,500

children in active reintegration case management, tracked individually

INTEGRATE

80%+

school retention at 12 months after reintegration

INTEGRATE

<15%

return-to-street rate within 24 months

INTEGRATE

1,200

households with livelihood support and measured income gains

SAFEGUARD

30

functional village child protection committees

SAFEGUARD

4,000

children engaged through Nga'Karamojong outreach

HEAL

2,200

children in schooling or accelerated learning

EMPOWER

600

young people completing vocational training

EMPOWER

3

policy reforms influenced — priority: the 13–16 age gap

LEAD

MEASURED DIFFERENTLY ON PURPOSE

Every indicator is disaggregated by sex and, where relevant, by age, district, and disability. The headline measure is not children rescued but children who, two years on, are still in school, still with their families, and no longer at risk of the streets.

HOW WE GET THERE

A four-phase roadmap

The sequencing is deliberate: build small and measurable before scaling. We would rather track 100 children well than reach 1,000 we cannot account for. The gate between pilot and scale is the demonstration of outcomes, not the passage of time.

Phase 1

Months 1–6

Foundation

Board and safeguarding policies in place; MOUs with KCCA and Napak District; MEAL framework and data architecture built; first outreach team in Kisenyi; first child protection committees in Napak.

Phase 2

Months 7–18

Pilot

100-plus children in full case management with longitudinal tracking; first reintegrations with 6-month follow-up; first drop-in centre, vocational cohort, and joint advocacy positions. The model is tested on a bounded scale.

Phase 3

Months 19–36

Scale

500-plus children across the corridor; expansion to Moroto, Kotido and Jinja; 12-month outcome data published; sector data-standards process launched; diversified funding base established.

Phase 4

Year 4–5 +

Lead

2,500-plus cumulative cohort with 24-month follow-up; cross-border programme with Kenya; annual sector report established; KTN recognised as the reference organisation on pastoralist child protection in East Africa.

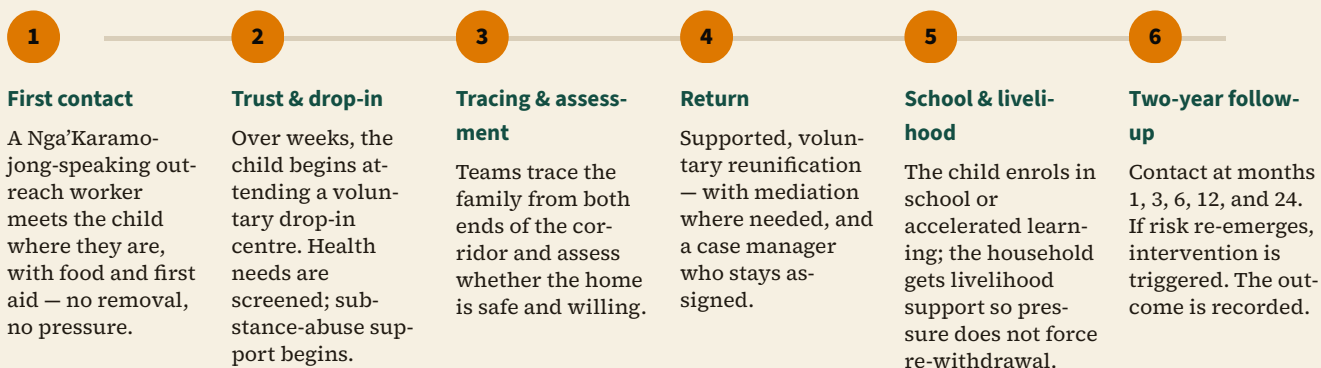
THE DISCIPLINE THAT MATTERS

If the Phase 2 pilot does not produce the school-retention and return-to-street results the model predicts, Phase 3 becomes a revision phase, not a scaling phase. The willingness not to scale a failing model is itself the safeguard.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE FOR ONE CHILD

From the street back to school

The pillars are not separate programmes. For an individual child, they are one continuous relationship — the same organisation, often the same case manager, from first contact on the street to a stable place two years later. This is the path SHIELD is built to walk.



Why the follow-up is the point

Most programmes end at step four. The children who return to the streets almost always do so in the year or two after reintegration — which is precisely the window the rest of the sector stops watching. KTN's

commitment to steps five and six is what turns a handover into a durable outcome, and it is the part the budget is deliberately built to protect.

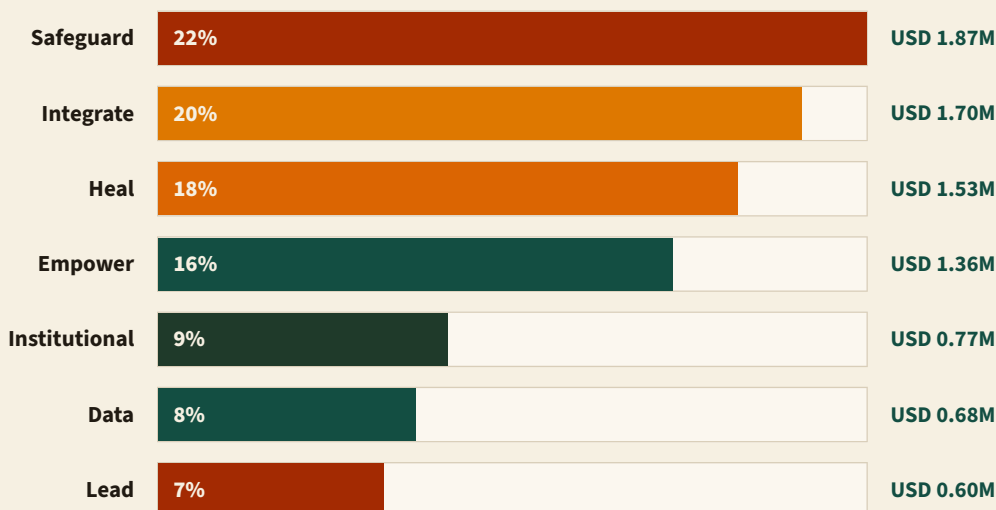
We stay with children for the two years after reintegration, the period in which most programmes lose them.

KTN core value — long-form commitment

THE INVESTMENT

Where the money goes

The five-year envelope is an indicative USD 7.5 to 9.5 million. The allocation makes two deliberate statements: prevention in Karamoja receives the largest single share, and reintegration is funded for the full two-year follow-up rather than ending at handover.



Share of the mid-range USD 8.5M envelope. Bars scaled to the largest allocation. Full breakdown in Annex C.

Prevention first

Safeguard takes the largest share because prevention in Karamoja is the cheapest and most effective point to intervene — inverting the sector pattern in which Kampala response dominates spending.

Funded for follow-up

Integrate is resourced for the full 12-to-24-month monitoring period, which is why its share exceeds what most reintegration budgets allocate. Duration separates durable reintegration from recirculation.

DIVERSIFIED, NOT SINGLE-SOURCE

Funding draws on three streams: institutional and bilateral donors (UNICEF, Irish Aid, the EU); child-protection foundations (the Freedom Fund, Oak, Comic Relief); and earned income from MEAL consulting, targeted at 8 to 12 percent of revenue by 2030 to protect the long-term follow-up donors tend to under-fund.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How we know it is working

KTN measures outcomes at the points where the sector loses children. Every child in case management has a unique record; every contact is logged; and the results — including the unwelcome ones — are published.

EACH CHILD IS FOLLOWED AT FIVE POINTS AFTER RETURN

1	3	6	12	24
MONTH 1	MONTH 3	MONTH 6	MONTH 12	MONTH 24
Settling-in check	Early-risk review	First outcome data	School-retention milestone	Durable-outcome confirmation

Outcomes, not activity

The sector counts trainings delivered and children rounded up. KTN counts children who stay in school, families whose income improves, and young people who find work — measured against a baseline established in Phase 1.

Independent evaluation

A mid-term evaluation at month 18 informs the decision to scale; a final evaluation in year five informs the successor strategy. Both include an independent external component.

Built on modern tools

Field data is collected on KoboToolbox and analysed in Power BI, with three-tier dashboards — case manager, programme leadership, and Board and donor — and full compliance with Uganda's Data Protection and Privacy Act.

Accountable both ways

Upward to donors through audited reports against the framework; downward to children and communities through Nga'Karamojong feedback channels and community scorecards.

An organisation that only publishes its successes is not learning; it is marketing. We intend to publish our failures as well.

KTN measurement philosophy

CREDIBILITY

Built for due diligence from day one

KTN is a young organisation that has built its governance and safeguarding architecture from inception rather than retrofitting it under a first grant — which is what positions it to absorb institutional funding responsibly.

Governance

- A balanced Board combining Karamojong legitimacy and external technical expertise.
- Finance and audit, programmes, and safeguarding sub-committees.
- Conflict-of-interest declarations, term limits, and annual independent external audit.
- Beneficiary accountability through Nga’Karamojong feedback and community scorecards.

Safeguarding

- Board-approved Child Safeguarding and PSEA policies, operational from day one.
- Rigorous background checks and mandatory training for all staff and volunteers.
- Child-accessible reporting channels in Nga’Karamojong.
- Zero tolerance and independent investigation – never managed internally to protect reputation.

An ESG posture donors can assess

Read together, KTN’s commitments give it a coherent posture on the dimensions institutional donors increasingly evaluate: climate-resilient livelihoods and early warning (environmental); gender-responsive design, child safeguarding, disability inclusion, and the centring of Karamojong voice (social); and the accountability, transparency, and audit architecture above (governance).

THE TEST KTN SETS ITSELF

If the organisation name and logo were removed, would this still read as the work of a mature, well-governed, internationally benchmarked institution? The full plan is built to make that answer yes.

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

KTN safeguarding principle

WHO WE WORK WITH

A model built on partnership, not duplication

In a crowded sector, the marginal value of another organisation doing the same things is low. KTN partners where others are stronger and leads where it is stronger – without ego about which is which. We do not build what competent partners already run.

Government

Working with **MGLSD** on policy, **KCCA** on a harm-reduction MOU for Kampala, **Napak District** on joint case management, and **COPTIP** and the **Police CFPU** on anti-trafficking.

UN & bilateral

Aligning with **UNICEF's** Napak pilot, **IOM's** anti-trafficking response, the **Embassy of Ireland's** 2026 education commitment, and **WFP** on school feeding and food-security data.

NGO & civil society

Referring substance-affected children to **S.A.L.V.E. International**, drawing on **Dwelling Places'** reintegration experience and **Hope for Justice's** shelters, and **AVSI** for vocational training.

Networks

Active in the **UCRNN** and **CRANE** coalitions, leading specifically on the data-sharing standards and joint advocacy where KTN's capabilities add the most value.

Academic

Research partnerships with **Makerere** and **Gulu** universities and the **AfriChild Centre** for methodological rigour, joint publication, and student placements.

Communities

Clan and faith leaders, women's representatives, teachers, and recovered former street youth – embedded in the child protection committees rather than consulted around them.

THE TEST OF SUCCESS IS SECTORAL

KTN measures itself by whether children across the corridor are better protected – not only by its own caseload. That is why the Data and Lead pillars give shared standards and advocacy to peers rather than keeping them in-house.

THE INVITATION

Walk the corridor with us

KTN does not propose to do everything. We propose to do the things no one else is positioned to do well, and to coordinate honestly with the organisations doing the rest. There are several ways to be part of this.

For	The opportunity
Institutional & bilateral donors	Co-fund a model aligned with locally led delivery, continuity of care, and outcome-level evidence – with a results framework built for your evaluation standards.
Foundations & trusts	Fund the parts the sector under-funds: prevention in Karamoja and the two-year follow-up that makes reintegration durable.
Government & UN partners	A Karamojong-led operational partner along the whole corridor, ready to formalise MOUs and share data on terms that protect children.
Peer organisations	Shared data standards, joint advocacy, and reintegration learning – offered openly rather than held proprietary.
Researchers & universities	A longitudinal dataset and field partnership on questions the sector has never been able to answer at scale.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR

Durable, diversified funding that rewards trust-building and follow-through over visible outputs – and partners willing to judge success by how many children are still in school and with their families in 2030, not by how many were rescued.

Read the full plan

This summary tracks the complete Strategic Plan 2026–2030, which contains the full evidence base, the six pillars in detail, the results framework, the risk register, and the five-year budget.

Start a conversation

We would welcome the chance to discuss where your priorities and ours meet.

info@karamojatumaini.org

Kampala & Napak, Uganda

www.karamojatumaini.org



HOPE · HEAL · EMPOWER

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

A Karamojong-led child protection organisation working the whole corridor — from the villages children leave to the streets they reach, and all the way home again.

Karamoja Tumaini Network

info@karamojatumaini.org · www.karamojatumaini.org

Kampala & Napak, Uganda

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