

BY ISMAIL BATEGEKA

MASINDI. The government has intensified efforts to bolster local conflict early warning mechanisms in a renewed push to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development across the country.

Through the Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU) under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, regional training sessions are being rolled out in Karamoja, Bunyoro, and northern Uganda. The programmes aim to equip district leaders, security officers, and technical staff with the skills to detect and prevent disputes before they escalate into violence.

Officials say the initiative is based on the understanding that many community-level conflicts, often dismissed as minor disagreements, can quickly spiral out of control if early warning signs are ignored.

Speaking during a training session in Masindi District last week, CEWERU conflict analyst Joseph Muhumuza said conflicts rarely erupt overnight; they develop gradually, with clear indicators.

“Early signs include sudden changes in behaviour, formation of exclusive cliques, provocative language, and repeated negative conduct that fuels mistrust,” Mr Muhumuza explained.

“These signals may seem minor, but when ignored, they accumulate and can lead to open confrontation,” he

Govt boosts local conflict early warning systems

Justification. Conflict prevention should be treated as a daily duty, not an occasional activity. Early action not only saves lives but also reduces the financial and administrative burden that prolonged disputes place on government institutions,” **Musa Kyamiza, Principal Assistant Chief Administrative Officer**

added.

He noted that local leaders and technical officers, due to their close interaction with communities, are often best placed to identify these warning signs, making them key actors in conflict prevention.

Drivers of conflict

Beyond behavioural triggers, CEWERU encourages districts to tackle deeper structural drivers of conflict, such as misinformation, unequal access to power and resources, breakdown of relationships, lawlessness, and greed.

“Many disputes over land, leadership, and economic opportunities stem from these underlying tensions,” Mr Muhumuza said. “Effective early warning involves collecting accurate data, analysing trends, and ensuring



Officials from the Internal Affairs ministry with Masindi District leaders after the meeting last week. PHOTO/ISMAIL BATEGEKA

timely dissemination so preventive action can be taken before violence erupts,” he added.

He stressed mediation as a crucial tool, but cautioned that mediators must be individuals of integrity and credibility, trusted by all parties involved.

CEWERU national head Ben Turyahumura said the unit has been

operational for over two decades, initially focusing on insecurity in the Karamoja cluster, particularly cattle rustling. Its mandate has since been expanded to cover nearly 60 districts as new forms of conflict emerge nationwide.

“We conduct consultations to identify challenges on the ground and report

to the ministry based on five key categories of conflict,” Mr Turyahumura explained.

The categories include governance disputes, economic conflicts, environmental tensions, social disputes, and security-related crimes such as murder and aggravated robbery. Understanding these classifications enables authorities to design targeted interventions that address root causes rather than reacting after violence occurs.

Land ownership

In Masindi, local leaders identified land ownership disputes, youth unemployment, political competition, and limited access to resources as recurring sources of tension.

Principal Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Musa Kyamiza urged leaders to view conflict prevention as a continuous responsibility.

“Conflict prevention should be treated as a daily duty, not an occasional activity. Early action not only saves lives but also reduces the financial and administrative burden that prolonged disputes place on government institutions,” Mr Kyamiza said.

He warned that unresolved conflicts disrupt service delivery, stall development projects, and erode public trust in government.