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Anthropological Critique and the Karamoja Question: Reflections on the Post Disarmament Livelihood Sources and Gender Disparities in the North East Region of Uganda

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It is presumed that the Karamoja question is due to an anthropological lack of post-disarmament development strategies. This specifically applies to the mismanagement of gender relations. The paper concludes that the Karamoja Question persists because the post-disarmament development organisations prioritise women as change agents. This approach created gender disparities that resulted in a masculinities crisis. Consequently, gender as a social structure became dysfunctional and women have ended up being overwhelmed with both productive and reproductive roles while men are grappling with alcohol, violence, and social lethargy. These conditions cannot enable sustainable development. Anthropologically, gender is a vibrant social structure that determines the system of community governance and management of resources. Therefore, development interventions ought to analyse and incorporate accepted gender relations if they are to succeed in their programs. To resolve the Karamoja question, it is recommended that development agencies integrate social norms to enable hybrid approaches that are socially acceptable. This is because all matters of the Karamojong lifestyle revolve around participation and respect through dialogue and consensus.

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INTRODUCTION

Using an anthropological critique, this paper attempts to answer the "Karamoja question" which emanates from the paradox of the presence of multiple funded projects yet the living conditions remain pathetic. Karamoja is recorded as the poorest region in Uganda and has rampant gender-based violence.¹ The paper is based on analysing primary and secondary data collected between the years of 2014 -2024 through observation, interviews and literature review. Special thanks go to the Nordic African Institute in Uppsala, Sweden, for the post-doctoral fellowship of August 2018- December 2018 and the Library Visitor's Programme of June – July 2022. These fellowships enabled a conducive learning environment in which to review literature about the Karamoja region and the Karamojong. The research methodology beneath this paper is that of humanities, taking on descriptive, interpretive, and analytical approaches. These enabled an understanding of the social actions that people experience contextually. It was thus possible to comprehend what people think, do and feel when it comes to matters of gender and livelihoods.

Geo-ecological Landscape of Karamoja

Karamoja is a semi-arid area covering approximately 27,200 square kilometres. It comprises the districts of Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Abim, Kaabong, Amudat and Napak. It borders Sudan to the North and Kenya to the East

and North East. Karamoja has a total population of 1,500,000, comprised of eleven different ethnicities with largely similar dialects.² These include the Matheniko, Pian, Bokora, Pokot, Tepeth, Nyakwae, Jie, Dodoth, Ik (Teuso), Napore, and Labwor. Due to unfavourable climatic conditions, they are predominantly pastoral people. However, they practice agriculture by growing seasonal crops including sorghum, peas, vegetables and maize to the extent permitted by the constraints in the ecological conditions.

The social-cultural anthropological studies about the Karamojong argue that the establishment and regulation of the social structures are based on the social-economic and spiritual role of the herds of cattle. Novelli learned that for the Karimojong, all their being is involved in herding to the extent that freely changing from this activity and taking up another activity would first involve a personality change.³ Huisman observes that traditionally, the cattle raiding tradition was done on a small scale with traditional instruments such as spears and was an acceptable method for redistributing wealth, restocking herds, and recovering from climatic and ecological uncertainties. The exercise was regulated by the elders of the communities. Cattle raiding was thus an "economic as well as a socially acceptable institution".⁴ Originally, it was regulated with social sanctions; however, as society evolved in the areas of population growth, limited resources, and

¹ The Uganda Bureau of Statistics in 2019 reported that Karamoja suffers the highest poverty rate of 60.2 percent, way above Uganda's national average of 21.4 percent.

² Republic of Uganda, *The Third Karamoja Integrated Development Plan, 2021/22 – 2025/26* (Kampala: Office of Prime Minister, 2021),4.

³ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 81.

⁴ Carrie S. Huisman "Once Patriarchs and Worriers: Masculinity and Modernity in Karamoja, Uganda" *Praxis The Fletcher Journal of Human Security* Volume XXVI (2011):60-80, 65.

demands for survival, cattle raiding was seized as a social structure and became a survival strategy.

The relationship between the cows and the structural life of the Karamojong often makes cattle raiding unavoidable. However, as society evolves into broadly connected geopolitical spaces, traditional lifestyles become impracticable. Therefore, cattle rustling and possession of small arms have been not only a security issue but also an issue of gender dynamics, which at times lead to gender violence in the community. The practice of cattle rustling has been a critical security issue, putting Karamoja in dire need of social service delivery. The region, therefore, is grappling with poverty, famine, diseases, illiteracy, isolation, and social stigma.

The post-disarmament Development Programme and the Karamoja Question

To develop the region of Karamoja, the government of Uganda embarked on the disarmament program to avail peaceful conditions. The disarmament programme in Karamoja went into stages in the years 1955, 1961-1962, 1973, 1983-84, 2001-2003, and 2006-2010⁵, and the process continues. The disarmament activity has so far been successful and there is peace in the region. Based on this, the government established a comprehensive development program named the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP). The current and third KIDP3 provides a framework within which various development interventions can be coordinated and harmonised to contribute to the achievement of the overall goal of the KIDP3, which is: 'A Secure, Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient and Socio-Economically Transformed Karamoja'. To achieve

this, the following eight strategic objectives are to be pursued;

- Consolidating peace, security and governance;
- Strengthening the Karamojong pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods;
- Enhancing the development of human capital,
- Promoting agro-industrialisation and manufacturing,
- Undertaking sustainable energy and mineral development,
- Investing in tourism, trade and co-operatives development,
- Undertaking sustainable environment and natural resources management and,
- Enhancing roads, transport and communication services.⁶

The implementation of the KIDDP was taken up by multisectoral government departments and offices including The Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Defence, The Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, The Judiciary, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Police, Ministries such as Education and Sports; Works and Transport; Water and Environment; Lands, Housing and Urban Development; Agriculture, Animal industries and Fisheries; Gender, Labour and Social Development. Minister of State from Karamoja, NGOs including Danish International Development Agency, Irish Aid, USAID, WFO, UNDP, UNICEF, SIDA, Oxfam GB; Netherlands Development Organization, Lutheran World Federation, International Voluntary Service; Agency for Co-operation in Research and Development, The World

⁵ Republic of Uganda, *Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme: "Creating Conditions for Promoting Human Security and Recovery in Karamoja, 2007/2008-2009/2010"* (Kampala: Office of Prime Minister, 2007),5-12.

⁶ Republic of Uganda, *The Third Karamoja Integrated Development Plan, 2021/22 – 2025/26* (Kampala: Office of Prime Minister, 2021),11.

Food Programme, the International Committee of Red Cross, Adventists Development Relief Agency and Development Co-operation of Ireland among others.

The government and its development partners embarked on implementing the KIDDP through the introduction of new sources of livelihood. As observed earlier, the Karamojong have always been pastoral nomadic, and migration is determined by the presence of pastures and water. However, due to geopolitical pressures, they became semi-nomadic, whereby it was mostly the men who performed activities connected to herds, such as grazing, treating, grabbing, and protecting, who migrated. Based on this, Novelli⁷ and Huisman⁸ affirm that all the respect accruing from the ownership of cattle goes to men; cattle raiding and keeping were [are] the nucleus of survival among men.⁹ Women make temporary houses, cultivate short-span crops and take care of the children. The gender roles and dynamics are thus tagged to cattle management and movement.

Based on the above, since the militant disarmament exercise and the immediate establishment of the development programmes, the Karamojong have found it straining to suddenly adapt to new economic activities, the methodologies involved and their consequential lifestyles. The development programmes caused sudden changes the Karamojong are grappling with. Among the several scholars, Stites and Akabwai¹⁰, Huisman¹¹ and

Senkaaba¹² document the shifts in lifestyles of the Karamojong from,

- nomadism to sedentary lifestyles,
- pastoralism to crop production [agriculture],
- traditional collective living to a cash economy where new economic activities like cash-for-work, splitting rocks, mining, fetching water, selling local brew started,
- informal education to formal education,
- gender as a social structure to gender disaggregation and mainstreaming in favour of women to men,
- community social protection and NGO care,
- worrier security to state security of the Uganda People's Defence Force and
- community governance to state management.

In the same lane, Crawford and Kasiko observe that the above changes expanded opportunities for the Karamoja people but have done so at the expense of deep-rooted resiliencies built up over time¹³. This negatively affected the Karamoja cattle culture and the Karamojong's identity and purpose. This is because the government policies and the donor agenda focus on sedentarism and the role of women in production. They have failed to create a space in which the Karamojong identity can evolve and use their social norms to change in line with a modern

⁷ Bruno Novelli, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 85 & 87.

⁸ Carrie S. Huisman "Once Patriarchs and Worriers: Masculinity and Modernity in Karamoja, Uganda" *Praxis the Fletcher Journal of Human Security* Volume XXVI (2011):60-80, 66.

⁹ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988),93-101.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Stites and Darlington Akabwai "We Are Now Reduced to Women": Impacts of Forced Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda Nomadic Peoples" (2010) Volume 14, Issue 2,

(2010): 24-43.

¹¹ Carrie S. Huisman "Once Patriarchs and Worriers: Masculinity and Modernity in Karamoja, Uganda" *Praxis the Fletcher Journal of Human Security* Volume XXVI (2011):60-80.

¹² John Ssenkaaba (2015) The Changing Livelihood of the Karamojong People of North-Eastern Uganda and its impact on the Survival of their Traditional Gender Roles (UiT-The Arctic: Centre for Sami Studies, UiT-The Arctic University of Norway, 2015), p?

¹³ Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen Dfid's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment in Karamoja Region, Uganda (London: Coffey International Development Ltd, 2016),64.

economy.¹⁴ There is, therefore, a gender disparity that is biased against men. Moreover, the Karamojong are patriarchal, so men are the key stakeholders in decision-making, control and management of family resources. Their participation has a significant impact on household welfare.

The integration of local culture is a landmark in community intervention and would give a cursor in the post-disarmament intervention development programmes. Crawford and Kasiko reveal that;

*A major concern underpinning our assessment of the situation in Karamoja is that a vast number of people suffer from a strong sense of social and cultural dislocation. Cultural depression has been used to describe people and societies affected by major disruption to the norms and values which have underpinned their existence. The destruction of social values in this way has a high degree of association with increased alcohol dependency and misuse, violence, economic disempowerment, lack of self-esteem and cultural belief and increasing powerless-ness.*¹⁵

In affirmation, Sites and Akabwai record Karamojong men crying that they have been reduced to women.¹⁶ This indicates a loss of their ability to fend, a loss of esteem and purpose. This is exacerbated by the exclusion of the development organisations that target women. To reaffirm their masculinities, men sometimes discreetly organise

and re-engage in cattle rustling. Ssenkaaba¹⁷ and Mkutu¹⁸ observe that women in Karamoja also instigate violence by putting pressure on men to prove their manliness by raiding. The inability of most men to meet this expectation is seen as a source of 'psycho-social problems' which manifest in domestic violence. The development programmes thus have an anthropological gap that leads to gender disparities. Prior knowledge about this fact could offer a theoretical framework on which the development agencies could have based their strategies. Below is an illustrative definition of the interplay between anthropology and the Karamoja question.

Conceptualising Anthropology and Gender Relations in The Karamoja Question

According to Shorter¹⁹ and Lenkeit²⁰, anthropology is the study of all aspects of human beings, including;

- the conscious and unconscious mind
- the human body, genetics, blood group and human evolution
- psychological response to the environment
- they learned aspects of human behaviour
- the study of social relationships
- whole cultures and learning theory

¹⁴ Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen Dfid's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment in Karamoja Region, Uganda (London: Coffey International Development Ltd, 2016),64.

¹⁵ Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, Support for Strategic Review and Planning To Strengthen DFID's Work On Gender Equality And Women And Girls Empowerment In Karamoja Region, Uganda (London: Coffey International Development Ltd, 2016), p.2.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Stites and Darlington Akabwai "We Are Now Reduced to Women": Impacts of Forced Disarmament In Karamoja, Uganda Nomadic Peoples" (2010) Volume 14, Issue 2, (2010): 24-43.

¹⁷ John Ssenkaaba (2015) The Changing Livelihood of the Karamojong People of North-Eastern Uganda and its impact on the Survival of their Traditional Gender Roles (UiT-The Arctic: Centre for Sami Studies, UiT-The Arctic University of Norway, 2015), 38-39.

¹⁸ Kennedy A. Mkutu (2008) "Uganda: Pastoral Conflict & Gender Relations" Review of African Political Economy, no.35:116, (2008), 242.

¹⁹ Aylward Shorter, *African Culture: An Overview* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa, 2001)10.

²⁰ Robert Edwards Lenkeit, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology* (New York: MC Graw Hill 2004), 4.

- the material culture, economy, links with economics and human geography
- studies small-scale relationships and puts emphasis on ideas and
- large-scale relationships and emphasises behaviour.

Bodley recapitulates all the above, stating that anthropologists study all aspects of human life through examination of how people live, what they think, what they produce, and how they interact with their environments.²¹ This helps in learning how people meet day-to-day needs and plan how to live in the future. Based on these definitions, it is affirmed that a human being is multidimensional and never an isolated entity. His/her essence is based on the general environment and thrives in anthropologically grounded institutions as aligned by social structures such as family, gender roles, and relations. Precisely, anthropology deals with basic human needs of participation, identity, survival, and sustenance. Given the hardships in the Karamoja region, gender roles become more important for the people to cope with the challenges of meeting the demands of living.

The exclusion of men in the intervention projects is a mishap of gender conceptualisation because it causes gender disparities in Karamoja, which burden the women. This gender crisis could be postulated in the postcolonial debate where poor conceptualisation of Gender opened for the paternalistic imposition of the concept and practices of the donor communities. However, the local technical team has adopted these models without sieving them to the detriment of the Karamoja people. Moreover, the historical narratives also contribute to gender prejudices about the people of Karamoja. To the rest of Uganda, whenever it came

to slowness or sluggishness, people would joke, “We shall not wait for Karamoja to develop” Another was, “You enter Karamoja at your own risk”. These statements are not innocent of how the people of Karamoja are understood by the development organisations. The approach to developing Karamoja is marred with varied forms of colonialism (national and international). Thus, development organisations impose conditionalities based on preconceived biases that do not allow room for local participation through their social structures.

Consequently, the constructive masculinities such as courage, patience, meditation, and strength within the Karamojong culture that have sustained the community through the years cannot be brought on board for the development of the region. The Karamojong masculinities called for socialising men as providers, protectors, and decision-makers. The flipped approach that excludes men is what Kasiko and Craford refer to as cultural dislocation.²² When men are excluded from development projects, they are denied their rights to participate through their gender roles. Unaware of this, men are viewed as chauvinistic pastoralists. Moreover, cultural disruptions are responsible for the masculinity crisis. This affirms what Baaz argues; cultural identity is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, and culture. Identities are the names we give the different ways we are positioned by or position ourselves within the narratives of the past.²³ Therefore, the destructive masculinities of lethargy, alcoholism, and violence are a reaction to the post-disarmament approaches.

The approaches for Gender and development in Karamoja reveal a paternalistic effect where the dominant powers suppress local approaches and deny hybridity. It is thus important that the gender

²¹ Bodley, John H. "Anthropology." Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

²² Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen Dfid's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment In Karamoja

Region, Uganda (London: Coffey International Development Ltd, 2016),3.

²³ Maria Eriksson Baaz, *The paternalism of Partnership: A Post colonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*. (London: Zed Books LTD 2005).

issues in Karamoja be contextualised in a discourse narrative. For Baaz, the colonial power should be understood as a production of hybridisations rather than a noisy command of colonialist authority or salient repression of native traditions.²⁴ The struggle of the Karamojong cannot be exempted from the wider struggle of the negative consequences of the failure of the state, such as lack democracy, poor governance, economic instabilities and corruption. However, the intensity of suffering hit vulnerable communities like the Karamoja the most.

Like other parts of the country, the development approach in the Karamoja region is inconsiderate of the anthropological realities of the people because it targets women. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report reveals that this form of women's participation was an unintended beneficial consequence that changed women's fortune and economic opportunities in Karamoja. This accrued from men's dysfunctionality through the loss of cattle.²⁵ Despite the challenges of women's groups that are related to paperwork as a condition to qualify for group assistance, women's collective groups remain one of the strongest strategies. Hence, the power of collectiveness has attracted a number of development partners to continue targeting women with agricultural inputs and related support during the early recovery period.²⁶

The untimely shifts that were brought about by the disarmament exercise make gender as an anthropological structure more eminent to build the coping capacity of the community as well as fostering survival strategies. Excluding men is very detrimental to development, whereas the participation of women as imposed by the West is not appropriate because Western activists take

women's autonomy as their starting point. African women start from the imperative of relationship and community participation. Oyewumi reveals that the imposition of the Western gender system played a central role in the workings of colonial power. She suggests that transforming the gender systems in African societies is a crucial step in decolonising these societies.²⁷ In this lane, resolving the challenge of gender disparities that are burdening the women in Karamoja calls for a deliberate decolonising project that solves the masculinities crisis in the region. This calls for an overview of the conventional gender relations in Karamoja. The section below gives highlights of the key issues in gender relations in the Karamoja region.

Gender Dynamics in a Karamojong Perspective

The anthropological lack of conceptualising Gender from an African perspective causes a dichotomy in projects. Moreover, in an African system, Gender is a social structure that emphasises roles and responsibilities rather than one being a man or woman. It is about participating in the welfare of the community. The gender description that is individualistically operated based on man or woman is a postcolonial version of the Western perception. Oyewumi objects to a gender system with hierarchical dichotomies in which woman is the negative of man.²⁸ In this case, the overwork by the Karamojong women is an injustice of the modern economic and paternalistic paradigms of the West propagated by the local elites.

In the traditional African perspective, Gender as a social structure is not necessarily about competition for ownership of property, but it is about accessing it to play their gender roles for the wellbeing of the

²⁴ Maria Eriksson Baaz, *The paternalism of Partnership: A Post colonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*. (London: Zed Books LTD 2005), 56.

²⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Uganda Human Development Report 2015, Unlocking the Development Potential of Northern Uganda. (New York: UNDP: 2015), 40.

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme, Uganda Human Development Report 2015, Unlocking the Development

Potential of Northern Uganda. (New York: UNDP: 2015), 40-41.

²⁷ Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 37.

²⁸ Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 35.

family. Based on this, the Karamojong women milk the cows, own the milk, and can sell it to get their basic needs, after which they balance money with their husbands. This confirms what Connell claims that:

*... Gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture. It is an arena in which we face difficult practical issues about justice. Gender is a structure of social relations that concentrates on the reproduction arena and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes. Gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies and their continuity and the many consequences of that 'dealing' in our personal lives and collective fate. This implies that Gender, like other social structures, is multidimensional; it is not just about identity, work, power, or sexuality but all these things at once.*²⁹

The concentration on women in Karamoja took approaches that have been developed and implemented with insufficient attention to the underlying issues of power, Gender, and community governance. It has thus destabilised the relations between men and women through overburdening women and disempowering men.

The above is affirmed by the research by Kagaha and others²⁹ on the livelihoods, culture, and Gender in Karamoja. The data given presents Gender as a social structure as summarised below:

- Women own the chicken, granary and cooking utensils.
- Women can sell chicken and eggs.
- Women access the animals for milk and can sell the milk to buy personal or domestic items.
- When a daughter receives a cow from her father, it belongs to her husband and she is not

allowed to sell it or its offspring. This is because her father gave the cow to feed her family, and it is not hers, independent of her husband.

- This relationship in property ownership is linked to the fact that cattle are a resource that is taken care of, secured [through raiding], and protected by males. Some respondents noted that women do not know how to take care of animals; they cannot walk long distances to take care of them.
- Given the context of polygamy, if women-owned cows, it would be difficult to allocate to the boys who needed to pay dowry.
- Women assist in watering but cannot dig very deeply to get water, especially in the dry season, for the cows to drink.
- Other resources like land are also under the custodianship of the men. This is largely linked to the fact that upon marriage, a woman comes to stay in the land of her husband. If she is barren, she can't be part of that land. However, if she has children, they take control of the land.
- Some parents, especially mothers, give land to their children. This is, however, rare because land is held communally and cannot be sold by an individual. However, in urban centres, there are plots owned by women and men, and in these cases, a mother can sell or give land to a child.
- Upon marriage, a man distributes land to his married wives. Even when the man dies, the women remain with the right to access and use that land. In case the husband dies, if she is old, she stays at home, but if she is still young, the husband's brothers inherit her and the property.
- In Kadama, women and youths engage in selling abusive drugs such as miraa, while

²⁹Raewyn Connell, *Short introduction to Gender* (Cambridge: polity press, 2009), 11.

others sell Waragi (local gin) in order to get the money needed to buy the basic necessities for the family. However, upon selling, women in this community have to keep their money with their husbands after buying the necessities. Sometimes, such money accumulates and animals are bought, but such animals belong to the husband. The major concern in these relations is that many men often engage other women when selling the animals. Even when you give him the responsibility to keep the money, he instead spends it with other women in towns who sell themselves.

- However, men also complain about the behaviours of women when they get the money. Like many men, some women also resort to drinking Waragi and thus lose the trust of their husbands.³⁰

The data above confirm Gender as a social structure for community governance to enable the fulfilment of basic human needs of survival, identity, participation and sustenance. Gender is being described from a communal, family perspective. It goes beyond the limited specifications of men and women in a separate manner. It is not about strict ownership of property. However, in the last two bullet points, it is observed that gender relations are getting tense as the community adopts the money economy. Gender in the Karamoja region connotes what Namasiko urges: gender relations, struggles, and research in Africa should all be geared towards solving the challenges of underdevelopment³¹. In this lane, Oron and Welbourn argue that in the

process of promoting gender equality in Karamoja, concentration should not focus on the survival of women, girls, men, and boys but on getting rid of cultural depression and creating a sense of new and positive identities in Karamoja.³² There is a need to promote positive masculinities as well as to empower women.

The data also disproves the development organisations and local elites' mentality that, in the traditional sense, women in Karamoja are marginalised in community governance. Mkutu reports that although the formal decision-making process is mainly carried out by men in a forum known as the *akiriket*, women have informal influences on decision-making through husbands, sons, and prospective spouses. Through the *akiwor*, where individuals are initiated into an age-set group, women ascend levels of seniority and get status, solidarity, protection of their rights, and the right to perform certain traditional ceremonies. Furthermore, quoting Christina Yeung's research on the gendered effects of weapons proliferation in Karamoja, Ssenkaaba narrates that women as mothers have a role in social administration, especially as regards land distribution and raiding episodes³³. The organisations that target women put them in trouble with gender burdens. This is what Oduyoye regards as the new problem for modern women in Africa.³⁴ Amadiume and Dube implied the same.³⁵ Moreover, the Karamojong have not been given time to evolve to conventional modernity because the initial interventions of disarmament were through the use of military engagements. Productive interventions in Karamoja

³⁰ Alexander Kagaha, Jacqueline Mugisha, and Sylvia Atugonza, *Livelihoods, Culture and Gender: A Situational Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities for addressing Gender-Based Violence in Karamoja Region*, (Pokot Zonal Integrated Development Programme (POZIDEP): Karamoja Dioceses Development Services, 2009).

³¹ Kisiangani, E.N Waswa, "Decolonising Gender Studies in Africa" *Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms* (2004): 9-26, 8.

³² Baron Oron and Alice Welbourn, "Interpersonal neurobiology and the prevention of gender-based violence" Mangesh Kulkarni, Rimjhim Jain Eds. *Global Masculinities*.

Interrogating and Reconstructions, (New York: Routledge 2018), 99-115, 66.

³³ John Ssenkaaba (2015) *The Changing Livelihood of the Karamojong People of North-Eastern Uganda and its impact on the Survival of their Traditional Gender Roles* (UiT-The Arctic: Centre for Sami Studies, UiT-The Arctic University of Norway, 2015), 38-39.

³⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*. (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books 1995), 11.

³⁵ Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, (St. Louis Missouri: Charice Press, 2000).

thus call for the healing of gender relations, especially masculinity.

Masculinities in Crisis and Gender Healing

The national reports reveal that there is a high level of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Karamoja region^{36 37}. The UNDP too observes that the high sexual and physical violence that peaked during the conflict period continues to act as deterrence to women's political and economic participation, as well as a violation of their dignity³⁸. For men, the war period destroyed the positive masculine identities, leaving the majority of men clinging to destructive identities as their defining characteristics. In affirmation, Crawford and Kasiko assume that GBV is exacerbated by a) the dislocation of society, b) the loss of cultural identity and purpose, and c) the misuse of alcohol.³⁹ Thus, the negative changes have contributed to persistent gender-based violence as a means of asserting men's culturally defined identities.

Masculinities related to patriarchal societies are the same all over Africa and are purposeful for the fulfilment of male gender roles of protection, provision, and leadership. Men are thus socialised to acquire qualities such as courage and brevity, among others, to fulfil their roles. In Karamoja, the qualities of an ideal man come up as a process of socialisation, which is crowned by ritual performances of the rites of initiation to adulthood.⁴⁰ The construction of masculinities

among men is a collective endeavour of the community. The research by Carlson et al.⁴¹ in Karamoja revealed that the Karamojong youth feel a lack of authenticity [even when they are men now] because they have not been initiated into adulthood.⁴¹ This is blamed on the disruptions caused by the disarmament process and as a result, they do not feel commissioned to participate in the gender social structure. The men in Karamoja confess that they are suffering a masculinities crisis because they lack the qualities of a confident man.

Although consequent reflections may change the outlook of masculinities, the Karamojong men refer to what is popularly referred to as hegemonic masculinity. According to Crawshaw and Scott-Samuel et al., hegemonic masculinity refers to hierarchies of power, authority, and recognition among men, and between men and women. Hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practice that embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men⁴². The Karamoja community is still governed by the age-set system that accrues from the initiation rituals. As remarked earlier, Gender is a social structure that is meant for community governance⁴³. Thus, the collapse of gender institutions, especially among men, is a crisis that causes a dysfunction of the entire society. For Oduyoye, patriarchy to an African woman is more of a resource than a liability.⁴⁴ It enforces the gender structure and governance that provide for the

³⁶ Saferworld, "Peace, Security and Justice in Karamoja: Amplifying the voices of women and girls" Briefing (Kampala: 2020).

³⁷³⁷ Africa Borderland Centre, The Karamoja Cluster Rapid Conflict Analysis and Gender Assessment in Kenya and Uganda, (New York: UNDP, 2022), 4.

³⁸United Nations Development Programme, Uganda Human Development Report 2015, Unlocking the Development Potential of Northern Uganda. (New York: UNDP: 2015), 62 &69.

³⁹ Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen Dfid's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment In Karamoja Region, Uganda (London: Coffey International Development Ltd, 2016),3.

⁴⁰ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988),42-44.

⁴¹ Khristopher Carlson, Keith Proctor, Elizabeth Stites, and Darlington Akabwai, *Tradition in Transition: Customary Authority in Karamoja, Uganda*. (Feinstein International Center: Tufts University, 2012),8-19.

⁴² Paul Crawshaw, Alex Scott-Samuel, and Stanistreet Debbi. 'Masculinities, hegemony, and structural violence', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 81 (1), (2010),2-4, 2.

⁴³ Kennedy A. Mkutu (2008) "Uganda: Pastoral Conflict & Gender Relations" *Review of African Political Economy*, no.35:116, (2008), 242.

⁴⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*. (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books 1995),11.

community. Therefore, the disempowered men led to a masculinity crisis expressed through the current gender-based violence and social lethargy.

Since the rise of feminism elsewhere in the world, the masculinity crisis is not limited to Karamoja. While meditating on the current crisis in homogenous masculinity, Crawshaw and Scott-Samuel et al. note that besides ruthless competition, anger, violence, and aggression, it also includes the inability to express such emotions as the desire to admit weakness or dependence on another (especially a woman).⁴⁵ Gender-based violence in Karamoja is thus an expression of men on the defensive in response to the development programmes that deprived them of their identity in the patriarchal community. Men are responding to the structural violence that is imposed by the development organisations through economic discrimination.

For Crawshaw ⁴⁶, structural violence is;

*the discrimination, oppression, and suffering caused by structural relationships such as the civil, social, and economic relations of public policy. It brings together in a single concept issues as diverse as poverty and income inequality, unacceptable living and working conditions, aggressive economic and trade policies, institutionalised forms of discrimination, denial of human rights, sickness or disability caused by unaffordable health care, and the suffering resulting from war and genocide, and significantly for this discussion, the likelihood of exposure to crime and fear of crime and insecurity.*⁴⁶

For centuries, the Karamojong men had thrived in the confines of homogenous masculinities as streamlined by the patriarchal system. They were

socialised and initiated into manhood as prescribed by the authorisations of the system. They had a purpose in life because the social structures in the *akiriket* assemblies endowed them with statuses, roles, rights, responsibilities and resources to operate in society. The *akiriket* assemblies represent the active political, social and religious organisation of the Karamojong people.⁴⁷ The sudden destruction of the patriarchal, political and economic domination of men through the disarmament process collapsed the vibrancy and roles of the *akiriket* assemblies and disoriented men in Karamoja. However, the development agencies did not pay attention to the prevalent social structures and instead took up a different approach to empowering women without healing the men first. The approach became pathological because it created toxic masculinities through structural violence against men. There is thus rampant spread of gender-based violence manifested in men sabotaging women's economic endeavours as a way of asserting their dominance. These malignant behaviours may not be out of malice but a manifestation of a crisis and pain within.

In the above lane, Stones and Bell, in their report on the programme about Skills, Income and Livelihoods in Karamoja Programme (SILK), reveal that women's attendance was higher and that they were more committed students who were more likely to apply the knowledge they gained through the training. However, many dropped out of the groups because they were being stopped by their husbands⁴⁸. According to Carrigan and Connell et al., the upheaval in sexual politics of the last twenty years has mainly discussed a change in the social position of women. Yet, a change in one term of a

⁴⁵ Paul Crawshaw, Alex Scott-Samuel and Debbi. (2010) 'Masculinities, hegemony, and structural violence', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 81 (1), pp.2-4.

⁴⁶ Paul Crawshaw, Alex Scott-Samuel, and Stanistreet Debbi (2010) 'Masculinities, hegemony, and structural violence', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 81 (1), pp.2-4,3.

⁴⁷ Ben Knighton, "Belief in guns and warlords: freeing Karamojong identity from Africanist theory" *African Identities*, 4:2, (2006) 269-286.

⁴⁸ Liz Stones and Laurie Bell, *Skills, Income and Livelihoods in Karamoja Programme (SILK)*, (Concern Worldwide, 2017), 27 & 36.

relationship signals a change in men.⁴⁹ Therefore, the analysis of masculinity needs to be related as well as to other currents of feminism. If the development programmes in Karamoja that have focused on the sexual division of labour and sexual politics of workplaces continue this way, it will continue to produce social lethargy, gender-based violence and development antagonism because the theme of masculinity only makes sense in the context of the larger project.

Optimistically, some development agencies tried to engage men in research and pilot studies that enabled them to give their opinions and indeed, the results were promising. Stites and Marshak's research implies that those who would be "Karachuna" worriers and needed to assert their masculinities through cattle rustling in the pre-disarmament phase ended up becoming "Lonetia" thieves in the post-disarmament period⁵⁰. Research revealed that

Case 1:

....All motivated by the need to marry and meet the requirements at marriage. In addition, lonetia were more likely to provide clothing for their households. While the population as a whole bought fewer heads of livestock, guns or spears, and beads or other items of jewellery over time, the lonetia purchased more of these over the same time period. We found a number of potentially important variations based on the frequency of theft in the characteristics of individuals classified as lonetia. Last, those who reported stealing four times were more likely to exchange the loot for money than to use

*it to acquire food or other household essentials.*⁵¹

In the above case, although men were involved in the theft of cows and property, it was all in the fulfilment of their demand to take care of families and the community. In the last phase of data collection, it was discovered that the largest percentage of men in the research sample had stopped stealing. This implies that in the post-pastoral sources of livelihood, men were not given the opportunity to adequately participate in decent sources, so they resorted to crime. Availing themselves for the four phases of data collection after intervals of research is a clear sign of men's need for attention. However, after data collection, the concerns of men did not materialise in a specific project implementation to address their personal concerns.

In the second case, Stites et al.⁵³ report that

.... The Stepping Stones package was adapted for use with younger and older men and women in Karamoja. Qualitative evaluation showed that the 9-month course was extremely well received by participants, many of whom felt that it was essential to go through the course before embarking on skills or vocational training courses. A number of the young men involved felt able to open up about the crime they were involved in, and they developed new self-esteem and the ability to reflect honestly and openly on themselves and the lives they were leading. Over time, we saw a shift from agriculture to the collection of building poles as the most important activity for survival. We found that

⁴⁹ Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee., "HARD AND HEAVY. Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity" Whitehead, S., Ed. *Men and Masculinities: Critical concepts in Sociology*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 306 – 331.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Stites, Anastasia Marshak, Emily Nohner, Simon Richards, and Darlington Akabwai (2014) *Engaging Male Youth in Karamoja, Uganda. An Examination of The Factors Driving the Perpetration of Violence and Crime by Young Men in Karamoja and the Applicability of a Communications and Relationships Program to Address Related Behavior*,

(Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2014),4-5.

Elizabeth Stites, Anastasia Marshak, Emily Nohner, Simon Richards, and Darlington Akabwai (2014) *Engaging Male Youth in Karamoja, Uganda. An Examination of The Factors Driving the Perpetration of Violence and Crime by Young Men in Karamoja and the Applicability of a Communications and Relationships Program to Address Related Behavior*, (Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2014),4-5.

the notion of an "ideal man" was closely associated with economic status and that young men are under significant pressure to acquire wealth (in livestock, wives, and children). However, the idealised routes to economic sustainability were not in line with what men were actually doing. In other words, men feel tremendous pressure to accumulate assets but find the means through which to do so largely unsatisfactory and insufficient.^{52 53}

The authors further report that the Stepping Stones program improved respect and communication across multiple relationships. The cross-gender impact was seen through voluntary shifts in gendered roles within households and in better conflict resolution at the household level. Further approach with the stepping stones package revealed that the participants were responsive to adopting new gender dynamics. This affirms that in anthropology, gender is a social institution for survival, participation, identity and sustenance. It is thus dynamic and contextual. There is a need for an approach that resonates with the current livelihood sources of men and builds their ability to perform their gender roles.

Towards a New Anthropological Gender Construction in Karamoja

It is confirmed that there is an anthropological lack in the post-disarmament development programs in Karamoja that empower women and exclude men.

This bypasses the gender reality of the community. This donor condition to get help affirms Baaz's assertion that paternalism in development projects mars the beneficiary's capacity to develop.⁵⁴ The Karamojong had/have a vibrant social structure responsible for the construction of the accepted masculinities. Unfortunately, this institution of cultural reproduction has been ignored. In this institution, the men are initiated to participate in formal political, social and religious assemblies known as *akiriket*. In the *akiriket*, power is invested in groups of people depending on their age class and never in an individual because decisions are collectively made.^{55 56} Therefore, in the Karamojong community governance, including any changes in society, the aspects of dialogue and consensus are very important. Akiriket assemblies would have laid a foundation for development intervention through a participatory approach and process.

Anthropologically, rituals are particularly important at the moment when social structure is at its weakest. Any social transition creates a chain of reactions in the social system. This is what justifies rites of passage to help the actors understand and accept their new roles in society and also help other members learn to treat them in new ways. Refer to Radcliffe-Brown⁵⁷, Bartfield⁵⁸, Desmond⁵⁹

⁵²Sheena Crawford and Margaret Kasiko, *Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen DFID's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment in Karamoja Region, Uganda* (London: Coffey International Development Ltd 2016), 34.

⁵³ Elizabeth Stites, Anastasia Marshak, Emily Nohner, Simon Richards, and Darlington Akabwai (2014) *Engaging Male Youth in Karamoja, Uganda. An Examination of The Factors Driving the Perpetration of Violence and Crime by Young Men in Karamoja and the Applicability of a Communications and Relationships Program to Address Related Behavior*, (Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2014), 5-6.

⁵⁴ Maria Eriksson Baaz, *The paternalism of Partnership: A Post colonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*. (London: Zed Books LTD 2005), 56.

⁵⁵ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 18.

⁵⁶ Augusto Pazzaglia, *The Karamojong: Some Aspects* (Bologna: Museum Combonianum, 1982), 98.

⁵⁷ Reginald A. Radcliffe-Brown, *A. Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses*. Oxford: Free press 1965.

⁵⁸ Thomas Bartfield, *The Dictionary of Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

⁵⁹ William Desmond, *Being and the Between*. New York: Routledge 1995.

Lugira⁶⁰, Turner^{61 62 63}, Goldschmidt^{64 65}, Karenga^{66 67}, Magesa⁶⁸ and Malidoma.⁶⁹ Moreover, as earlier observed, in the Karamoja gender social structures, women also have room for decision-making and participation.⁷⁰ This implies that initiation into age-set systems is a gist of community governance and development in the Karamoja region. The policymakers and development partners need to be awakened to this anthropological fact.

Unfortunately, since the disarmament process, the rituals that vitalise the *akiriket* assemblies have not been performed and this has left men in confusion and masculinities crisis. Novelli⁷¹ and Pazzaglia⁷² reveal that initiation rituals into age sets can only be performed during peaceful times when there is a sufficient harvest. The last time men of Karamoja experienced a shift in power from one generation set to the next was in 1956. This implies that since then, Karamoja region has been peaceless and or with minimal harvests. This failure to relinquish power to the next generation results in a large number of men who cannot be initiated. There are about four generations of men who have not been initiated, an indication that there is masculinity confusion among multiple cross-generational men who are not able to take social, political, and economic affairs into account. These men do not have the power to

participate in important activities of the *akiriket* assemblies.

Rituals are significant tools of social empowerment and community governance. As Barfield enumerates, rituals serve the purposes of enhancing identity formation, enabling people to express their emotions, availing room for reconciliation, teaching the ignorant about the social functioning of the society, healing the sick, cementing social relations, maintaining the status quo and maintaining the cosmic order⁷³. Brinkerhoff and White further remark that every society must deal with the problems of producing new generations. This involves caring for the infants and other dependents, providing food and shelter and maintaining social order. They further point out that the solutions to these problems are implanted in enduring social structures that provide ready-made arrangements to address basic human needs.⁷⁴ In other words, the African system of self-governance, which comprises the principles of associating with self, community, environment and nature, is transferred to the people concerned through rituals.

As learnt from the importance of the *akiriket* assemblies, it is during initiations that the underlying social structure components such as statuses, roles, social cohesiveness, social

⁶⁰ Aloysius Lugira, *African Religion: World Religions*. New York: Facts On File, Inc 2004.

⁶¹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. London: Cornell 1967. University Press.

⁶² Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*. London: International African Institute 1986.

⁶³ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company 1969.

⁶⁴ Walter Goldschmidt, *Sebei Law* Berkeley: University of California Press 1967.

⁶⁵ Walter Goldschmidt, *Culture and Behaviour of the Sebei: A Study in Continuity and Adaptation*. London: University of California Press 1976.

⁶⁶ Maulana Karenga, *Kawaida: A Communitarian African Philosophy*. Los Angeles: University of Sankore 1997.

⁶⁷ Maulana Karenga, *Kwanzaa: A celebration of Family, Community and Culture*. Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press 1998.

⁶⁸ Laurent Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 1998.

⁶⁹ Some Malidoma, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose through Nature, Ritual and Community*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Pautnam 1998.

⁷⁰ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 63-72.

⁷¹ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 44-49

⁷² Pazzaglia, Augusto. *The Karamojong: Some Aspects*. Bologna: Museum Combonianum, 1982.

⁷³ Thomas Bartfield, *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 410-411.

⁷⁴ David B. Brinkerhoff, Lynn White, *The Essentials of Sociology*, (New York: West Publishing Company 1989), 45.

responsibility, social hierarchies and collective consciousness are concretised. During ritual practices, means of social protection for family and community members are streamlined. It is through these that structural development emanates. It is, therefore, an error to segment families when development agents dwell on sections of family members in programs such as the Uganda Women Empowerment Programme⁷⁵, Youth Livelihood Programme, and Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) under which the Senior Citizens Grant was implemented. These may not apply or thrive in Karamoja, which is still homogenous and devoted to its cultural practices of community/family solidarity.

In the above lane, Baaz and Palmberg argue that the break in cultural reproduction is a well-known tragic phenomenon in Africa, where the rituals that inspired the artists are dying out⁷⁶. In cultural reproduction, the continuity of cultural experience [shared outlook, beliefs, knowledge, and skills] is sustained across time. The process transfers wealth, human, cultural, and social capital from generation to generation. Among the Karamojong, the disarmament process discontinued the initiation process. Many men are not initiated and feel they are at the periphery of society. As Gray notes, several male informants complained that they were nothing more than “rat” (ngidoi), or uninitiated men, without a formal identity in the traditional power structure of Karimojong society⁷⁷. The Karamojong men are not only suffering a masculinity crisis but also an identity crisis.

This affirms what Baaz and Palberg assert: that identity is relational and constructed. Identities are

not static but change and modify as a result of shifting social configuration and power relations.⁷⁸ As such, cultural identities have, of course, changed as a result of exposure to education and the international community. This is expressed in the two research studies that included men, i.e., the Lonetia and the Stepping Stones. The research findings revealed that the Karamojong men are capable of changing, but they are denied the opportunity. Therefore, there is a need to address the Karamoja question by deliberately involving men in projects. This still calls for defining Gender as anthropologically lived rather than theoretically stated by the West and propagated by the local elites. This will relieve the women's burden and will open up for better relations and gender construction.

Moreover, a lot of precious minerals have been discovered in the region. A 2011 survey by the Uganda Department of Geological Survey and Mines at the Ministry of Energy found that Karamoja has gold, limestone, uranium, marble, graphite, gypsum, iron, wolfram, nickel, copper, cobalt, lithium and tin. Other mineral deposits in Karamoja are mica, green and red gannets, tin, marble, beryl, cuprite, hematite, limestone, talc graphite, columbite, magnetite, platinum, and zircon.⁷⁹ There are many other opportunities, including tourism. Therefore, there is room for men's participation in development opportunities, which actually require masculine qualities such as strength, patience, and others. However, this will not apply when they are still struggling with the masculinity crisis and its consequences.

It is on record that Karamoja has now adopted formal education, which they had sworn never to

⁷⁵ Government of Uganda, Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Community Development, (2024). Refer to the links of: <https://mglsd.go.ug/> [<https://mglsd.go.ug/uwep/> <https://mglsd.go.ug/ylp/>, <https://mglsd.go.ug/esp/>]

⁷⁶ Maria Eriksson Baaz, “African Identity and The Post-Colonial” Mai Palmberg and Maria Eriksson Baaz (Eds) *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001), 5-21.

⁷⁷ Sandra Gray, “A Memory of Loss: Ecological Politics, Local History, and the Evolution of Karimojong Violence”. *Human Organization*, (2000): 401-418, 401.

⁷⁸ Maria Eriksson Baaz, “African Identity and The Post-Colonial” Mai Palmberg and Maria Eriksson Baaz (Eds) *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001).

⁷⁹ Government of Uganda, *Karamoja Investment Profile 2016*, (Kampala: Uganda Investment Authority, 2016).5.

take up. The government intervened in 1998 by facilitating a ritual performance so that the elders could unearth the buried pen and see the initiation of the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK). ABEK curriculum was grounded in the Karamojong pastoralist and agro-pastoralist lifestyle and culture. This operated for seven years and then gradually transcended into the conventional formal education of Uganda.⁸⁰ Brown and Kelly et al. report that a 2014 tracer study of ABEK graduates found commendable impacts through changes in attitudes towards education, increased literacy levels, opened room for formal employment and success of other health awareness programmes, as beneficiaries found it easier to disseminate important information.⁸¹ This success affirms that with a political will to work with the elders, the masculinity crisis and gender disparities in Karamoja can as well come to an end.

The government and its development partners, therefore, need a consorted effort to solve the problem of the masculinities crisis, which is a hinge in the development of the region. It is recommended that through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Community Development, the government should involve the akiriket assemblies in human development programmes. This ought to start with initiation rituals to enable the healing⁸² and reconstruction of masculinities in order to enable men to authentically participate in development programmes. In his analysis of the causes of domestic and gender-based violence spread by men, Onyango Otieno narrates that men participate in these vices because of the inner pain caused by trauma, especially those grounded in unresolved historical narratives. These historical narratives often involved humiliation and alteration of the personhood and the corresponding masculinities.⁸³

⁸⁰ Victoria Brown, Marion Kelly and Travor Mabugu, *The Education System in Karamoja*. (Oxford: HEART, a consortium of: Oxford Policy Management, 2017), 12-13.

⁸¹ Victoria Brown, Marion Kelly and Travor Mabugu, *The Education System in Karamoja*. (Oxford: HEART, a consortium of: Oxford Policy Management, 2017), 12-13.

Therefore, deliberate strategies to heal men are timely in order to enable them to participate harmoniously and productively in a peaceful society.

The word **PARTICIPATION** is highlighted here because, in its entirety, it is vital in the lifestyles of the Karamojong. In the akiriket assemblies, decisions regarding community governance and changes are reached collectively through consensus. Furthermore, in his over 30 years of work and stay among the Karamojong, Novelli reveals that the Karamojong do not respect one who gives them gifts without building a prior relationship. Gifts to them are personified and are part of respect and reciprocity; therefore, they are given or received within a relationship. Otherwise, they will be obliged to receive it because it is given. They satirically refer to this as giving the way a cow avails itself for milking.⁸⁴ In this case, the government and development partners that avail of grants and loans to the Karamojong without prior involvement evade the conventional principle of respect and reciprocity. This very positive principle would have laid a strong foundation for the development programmes. However, the lack of this anthropological fact has led to a development approach that is predatory and unstable. This is what Crawford and Kasiko refer to as social dislocation, and it could be the reason for social lethargy towards many development projects because they are not owned by dialogue and participation.

For Karamoja to develop, the Karamojong needs to participate from an authentic perspective, and they can own the programs. This is emphasised based on the fact that if the Karamoja region is to realise its

⁸² Onyango Otieno. *African Masculinity, Trauma, and Healing*. Posted on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhCg9562E5k> [accessed on 27/4/2024].

⁸⁴ Novelli Bruno, *Aspects of Karamojong EthnoSociology* (Verona: Museum-Combonianum, 1988), 111-113.

KIDP3 Strategic Objectives⁸⁵, it will need the full participation of the entire community, especially of men. This will revitalise the gender social structure where men and women play their roles and live within agreed gender role shifts. It will also relieve women from the socio-economic burden of sustaining the community when the men are grappling with a masculinity crisis. In conclusion, if the masculinity crisis is not solved in Karamoja, the development approach that concentrates on empowering women will fail. The Karamoja question will not be answered, gender disparities will remain and the entire community will continuously suffer. Therefore, solving the problem of the masculinity crisis will be the answer to the Karamoja question. Otherwise, resources will be invested in the region to no avail.

⁸⁵ Government of public of Uganda, *The Third Karamoja Integrated Development Plan, 2021/22 – 2025/26* (Kampala: Office of Prime Minister, 2021), 4.