

Land and Gender Dynamics in Karamoja:

Gender studies in Karamoja reveal the complex interplay between culture, land, and gender roles. While some narratives highlight the negative impact of Karamoja's culture on gender relations, other studies acknowledge both positive and negative influences. As an Indigenous Organization, we conducted an independent gender training exercise to explore these dynamics.

In Karamoja, both men and women hold a stake in the land, but their roles and responsibilities differ significantly. Cultural norms and practical necessities shape their interactions with the land. Here are the key insights:

When women marry, they often acquire land. This practice recognizes their critical role in food production for the family. However, this connection between marriage and land ownership can create challenges during poor harvest years. If a woman hasn't harvested enough food, marriage ceremonies may be postponed, this is because, such a woman may not be having enough food to start a family.



Figure 1 Women picking up meat during the Karimojong "akiriket" session

Men secure their share of land through their paternal lineage. A portion of this land is allocated to their wives for cultivation (the garden) and another part for the homestead. In Karamoja, all gardens are designated for women. It is rare to find a garden specifically identified for men among pastoralist and agro-pastoral Karimojong. In fact, if a garden is associated with a man, it is considered a disgrace, warranting intervention by elders.

However, in crop-based communities like Iriir (Napak district) and Namalu (Nakapiripirit district) of southern Karamoja, large plantations may be linked to men due to cash crop cultivation.

Women manage their gardens entirely. They can share produce with friends and relatives, rent out portions, and make decisions about cultivation. However, major decisions require consultation and consent from their husbands. Men oversee the homestead, considering the extended family's needs. Joint decision-making ensures harmony and prevents domestic conflicts. If part of the garden needs to be sold for family needs, both spouses must agree. It's important to note that nowadays, Greedy individuals (regardless of gender) have been reported to sale family property. Also, with modernity

cropping in, development of the mining industries, the pressure to formalise and title land are increasingly placing women at a disadvantage.

Widows control land, often in collaboration with their eldest sons. The clan plays a crucial role in guiding land use and transfers. In Karamoja, land is not typically sold. Instead, it is held for future generations. The focus is on responsible management rather than individual ownership. As land passes to the next generation, the clan's overarching role ensures continuity and sustainable use.

Over all, Karamoja's gendered land dynamics reflect a delicate balance between tradition, practicality, and community welfare. Both men and women access and utilize land independently, but joint decision-making is essential to avoid family disputes.

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