



**KARAMOJA WOMEN  
UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION**

**COUNTING  
THE GAINS  
2007-2022**

**Executive Director**



# FOREWORD

Women constitute a significant segment of the pastoralist community in Karamoja, yet their full contribution to development of local communities remains curtailed by restrictively negative cultural practices. In this maiden publication of “...counting the gains”, we are excited to share with you the most significant stories of change since 2007, specifically show-casing voices of Karimojong women in development and their experiences, just to give you a peep into the personal testimonies of women and young girls in Karamoja. Tasked with the major responsibilities for household well-being, the women captured here are providing inspirational accounts of survival and resilience in the fast changing Karamoja.

Stories in this edition range from women`s first-hand experience of insecurity during cattle raids, struggles they are going through in the post disarmament period, and the struggles in providing for their families amidst extreme vagrancies and devastating food shortages. From the kraals to peri-urban centers, we hear their voices. From desperate women working in the mines, engaged in petty trade and livestock businesses, we witness the different life scripts of a common Karimojong woman and their struggles against oppressive cultural gender perceptions.

Trajectories of all these accounts and contrasting plots intersect at the critical juncture of what it means to be a Karimojong woman today and while these are not new narratives, the simplicity with which these stories are told offers a human face to the effects of the ongoing development crisis as well as possible solutions from the vantage point of women. Although this issue is mainly focused on women, we also highlight other issues affecting Karamoja region. We thank all individuals who contributed to the publication. We invite your feedback and encourage you to engage with us by sending an email or joining the conversation on our social media platforms.

**THOMAS Odelok**

# DISCLAIMER

The Change stories for Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO) was developed with financial support from the International Rescue Committee (IRC)



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# NURTURING KARAMOJA WOMEN TO TAKE UP LEADERSHIP ROLES

It's a Saturday, the time check is 2:10pm and our vehicle pulls upto Rapona Hotel at the heart of Moroto Town. Women are pacing up and down, one after another washing hands to prepare for lunch. It turns out too the women are attending a leadership training and suddenly one of the participants moves fast to us, beaming with a smile before cheerfully declaring that she had been expecting us, all along.

This is Achia Natalina, 35 years old, now a woman councilor for Nakadeli parish, Rupa Sub County in Moroto District, a position she has also held for a period spanning close to a decade. Achia speaks with authority, emancipated and now a shrewd representative of her community and particularly women at the Sub County where she comes from.

*"Before joining KAWUO trainings, I never had the courage, confidence and morale to take up any leadership role especially on the political arena because I thought it was a field meant for only men but after that, I had a different attitude to such responsibilities in the community,"* explains Achia.

During her first term in politics, Achia had also served as speaker of the Sub County council during which she championed elimination

of abuse and oppression of women, especially on property ownership and decision making processes.

Her peers, previously trained by KAWUO, encouraged her to contest for a political position in the community during which she won and eventually was elected Speaker of the Sub County. With her efforts, 28 girls were identified and taken for skilling programs, lobbied for increased funding of women targeted projects in the village and this has helped to create more awareness on issues like child labour, teenage pregnancies and girl-child marriages.

***“I once took part in an event of Karimojong elders, I was inspired by this and I think women too have great potential to contribute in such engagements,”***  
Achia attests.



**Achia Natalia**  
Councillor  
Nakadeli Parish  
Rupa Sub-county  
**Moroto District**

# ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN RIGHTS



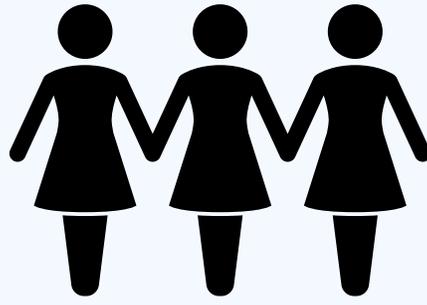
Since inception of the organization over 15 years ago, Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO) has championed women and girls' rights across Karamoja through various innovative women and girl models.

The most significant stories of change and experiences drawn from these interventions may have not been adequately showcased either through the period, however, there is so much still to delight with. KAWUO is also at the contrast of transforming from grassroots women lobby to a nationally recognized advocacy group for women and girl rights, self-sustained with reputation of global standing.



Over the years, at least 25 projects have been completed, about 1,200 women benefiting across the region with a mass membership comprising 617, initially registered local women groups and 15 women community-based organizations in all the nine (09) districts of Karamoja. Established to promote local women's participation in leadership, strengthen individual and collective action to prevent and respond to discrimination against women, KAWUO now boasts of being the leading women-serving organization in entire Karamoja.

With funding from International Rescue Committee (IRC), KAWUO has also embarked on developing capabilities for member organizations to be able to tell their own stories of change, targeting to inform local stakeholders.



***"We should be able to tell our own success. Women in Karamoja have done so much, contributing to peace building in the region and until the women are able to tell the story by themselves, the world will not know what we have done"***

Ms. Margaret Lomonyang, KAWUO founding member said.

Across Karamoja, women had previously been down-trodden and considered mere property with no voice to speak out on their rights.

***"Those were the times when in some circles, rape was legitimate. We have fought such mind-set, degrading to women and girls,"***

Adds Ms. Lomonyang.

# KARAMOJA SPEAR-HEADING END TO FGM



The environment is surrounded by imposing hills, cloudy skies threatening to fall and a young woman is curled on her chair, pensively lost in deep thoughts. It's a chilly weather too and she is shivering with a bundle of clothes firmly held to her chest. It turns out she is carrying a barely two weeks old baby.

This is Amuge Joyce, 23, a resident of Tapac, south-east of Moroto one of the communities in Karamoja known to strongly uphold traditional practices perpetuating violence against women and girls in the sub region.

***“They forcefully wanted to subject me to cutting (FGM), so I ran away from home. When I heard that some people (from KAWUO) had come to my village to sensitize people against cutting (FGM- Editor), it is then that I picked confidence to return to our home,”*** Amuge narrates

***“These groups were established to champion the fight against FGM in Moroto district”***, the chairperson of the network in Tapac, Sisto Lokiru said.

Like Amuge, many girls in the communities still continue facing the dehumanizing cultural practice, though.



## Milestone

According to Sisto Lokiru, the Chairperson of COMBATS in Tapac Sub County, before the project intervention in 2019, an estimated 30 girls were being mutilated annually, but following the intervention, the incidences have reduced to about 2-3 girls annually, largely performed in the hidden



## Milestone

Communities have been mobilization to attend awareness meetings, monitor and report incidences of FGM



## Milestone

The combats also refer survivors to legal aid service providers to access justice

# ONE ON ONE WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**THOMAS ODELOK**

Mr. Odelok Thomas who has been at the helm of seeing the organization through much of the milestones attests in this publication.

## **What would you do with a \$200,000 grant in just one month?**

We would construct a training center for women, providing them with various skills such as tailoring, carpentry, bead-making and poultry. With such a grant KAWUO would also be able to secure land and construct offices for the organization to ease her from the burden of rent and as well purchase a car for easy coordination of our activities across the vast region.

## **What would you do with a \$200,000 grant in just one month?**

The organization has impacted lives of 2,900 women faced with Gender Based Violence (GBV) and directly supported 8 women groups with grants.

Through the time, KAWUO has also been able to grow her annual funding portfolio from UGX 8,520,000 to UGX 1,280,000,000, all injected in women empowerment with a strong staffing of 25 (20F & 5M) employees on full-time terms.

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## **What are the most significant strengths for KAWUO?**

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Among others, these include, cordial relationship cultivated with our key stakeholders (government, local authorities, donors and CSOs), legal recognition by Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) and the NGO Bureau.

### **Where do you see KAWUO in the next one decade?**

With an ambitious and realistic resource mobilization strategy that we have developed, we see KAWUO with a self-sustenance capacity at 20% of the organization's annual budget. It is our dream too that in the next 10 years KAWUO will be operating a women training center, to impart practical knowledge and skills to women in the areas of tailoring, carpentry, bead-making, poultry and a hotel.

### **How would you describe KAWUO?**

The organization has grown and now a force of change, driving empowerment of women across entire Karamoja.

### **How do you plan to push further the agenda of women in Karamoja?**

KAWUO has put in place a five-year strategic plan with a robust resource mobilization strategy, running from 2023 to 2027, put together in consultation with the stakeholders and enlightened by lessons learnt from the previous strategic plan of 2018-2022.

Our focus during the period will be on strengthened women economic empowerment through financial literacy training, bankable business plan financing, amplifying women's participation in decision-making and political participation through collaborative partnership with men, boys and elders, district local government and CSOs.

# FORMER FGM PERPETUATOR VOWS TO FIGHT FGM IN KARAMOJA



Anna Nakong does not know her exact age but she estimates it is between 50 to 55 years. She had been one of the perpetrators of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in her community. Nakong had been administering mutilation of young girls' genitalia, despite government banning such practices in the country until her lucky days ran out. "She was a popular FGM "surgeon" from Tapac Sub County in Moroto until 2014 when she was arrested, sentenced and jailed for 7 years."

Nakong now regrets subjecting young girls to such backward practices, saying she had all along acted in ignorance.

Nakong adds; "the pain, suffering and trauma that the girls underwent through my hands keep haunting me. I call upon whoever is still stuck in the practice to abandon subjecting our girls to such inhuman practice," said Nakong who has since joined many others advocating for elimination of FGM.

Nakut Margret is also among those FGM surgeons jailed in the past, although unlike Nakong, had been given a lighter sentence by the court. As a champion of the anti FGM crusade, the two move around the communities, sensitizing elders mostly on the negative consequences of FGM. KAWUO, through engagement with the elders, community influencers, key decisionmakers, older women involved in cutting girls, religious leaders and young men has tremendously contributed to reduction of FGM and other associated violence against women and girls in Moroto.



"I suffered so much (while) in prison, was tortured and I don't think anyone can ever convince me to return to such bad practice," Nakong narrates.

# TALE OF A GBV SURVIVOR IN KARAMOJA

Looking frightened, Jennifer Korobe quickly rose up from the seat, looking terrified and wanted to run away. *“He is there, if he sees me now, he is going to come here to beat me”*, Jennifer said while pointing at the direction where her husband, Lokoru Peter was coming from.

Jennifer’s reaction is as a result of the daily beatings, verbal abuse and threats inflicted on her by her husband.

*“That man has ruined my life. He has infected me with HIV. All the scars you see on my body are from that man’s beatings. One time I even wanted to commit suicide so that I can rest from his torment”*, Korobe narrates with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Jennifer is also 33 years old and a mother of seven, from Karinga “A” Parish in Moruita Sub County in Nakapiripirit District and among the hundreds of women who have benefited from the GBV response and prevention project funded by UNFPA through IRC in partnership with KAWUO.

The survivor, one of the 345 women that KAWUO has supported with counseling and linkages to support services has since turned out to be one of the volunteer community mobilizers creating more awareness around gender based violence.



**Note: Jennifer consented and allowed KAWUO to disclose her HIV status.**

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*"I move around my community sharing with women issues of gender-based violence and I refer those who tell me the horrible treatment they undergo to KAWUO for further support and guidance," says Korobe.*



A total of 24 Start Awareness Support Action (SASA) activists, 15 volunteer case managers and 50 members of the Male Action are in the communities as first point of contact for such survivors, offering them counseling and information, while referring them for other services to respective partners like Police, health units and other CSOs that offer psychosocial support.

Jennifer Korobe tells her plight during an interview in Nakapiripirit Town Council. Such experiences are not common with only Korobe among the Karimojong, a dominantly patriarchal community.

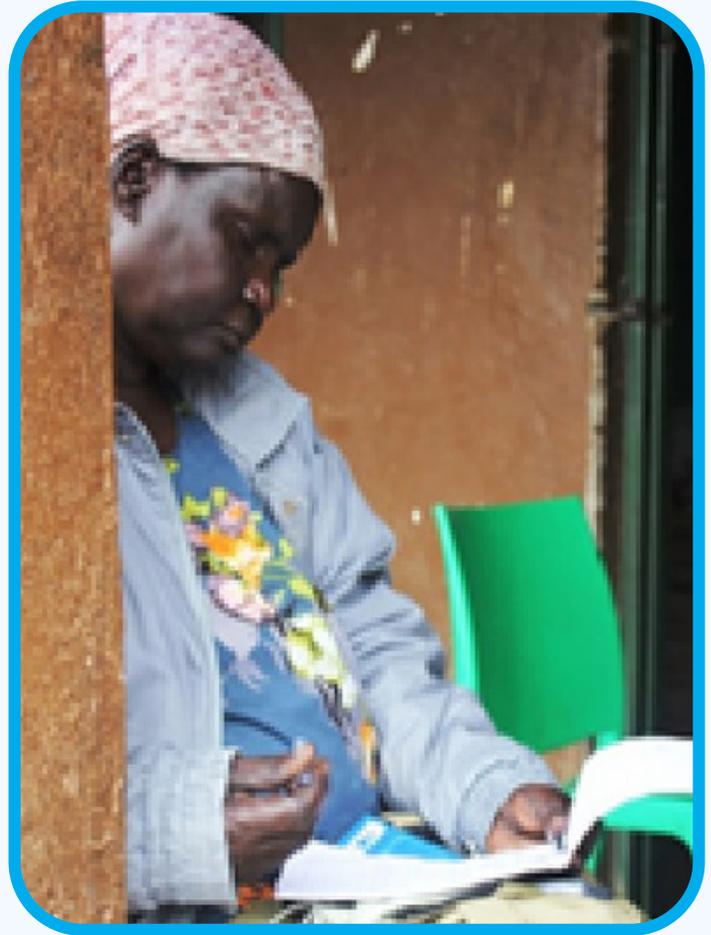
**Note: Jennifer consented and allowed KAWUO to disclose her HIV status.**

# WOMEN VOW TO PACIFY KARAMOJA

Two decades ago the situation had been disparate and characterized by wanton killings by marauding Karimojong warriors. It was the order of the day and with a majority of the victims being men, this left many women widowed. There were several orphans too who eventually had to grow without a parent and in dire situations, both of them.

“Women were the most affected and that is when the idea of forming a women-led organization struck our minds. We started mobilizing women from different districts and that’s how KAWUO came into play through active and full participation of women in dialogues, lobby and advocacy for peace,” Ms. Margaret Lomonyang, a long time peace activist recalls.

Moving from kraal to kraal and community to community across Karamoja, the women groups engaged in dialogues with the warriors, literally begging them to return the guns to government for the



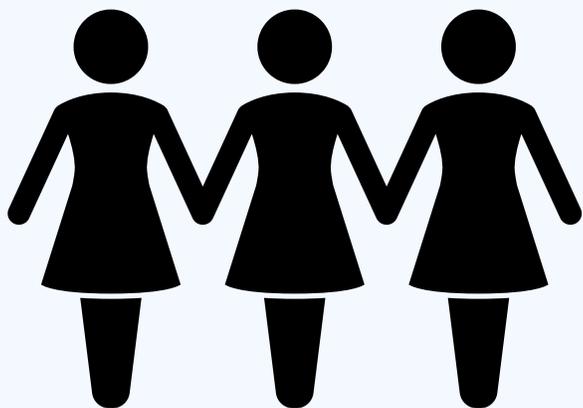
**Bole one of the founder members of Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization.**

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sake of their children and wives. *“These efforts contributed to the voluntary surrender of illegal guns by the warriors,”* Lomonyang adds.

Moving in clusters of about 10 members, the women activists advocated for peace within families and across the region. Through lobby and advocacy for peace, unity and good governance, right from the grassroots, the women are now pushing for abolishment of bad cultural practices and norms that are oppressive to women in Karamoja. Over time, womenled activism has gained recognition and gradually starting to attract attention of many.

The women boast of receiving the prestigious leadership award from Indigenous International Forum for Women (IIFW) in the USA tagged with a grant of US \$11,000 to accelerate women activism in Karamoja. *“The most valuable thing that women have*



*groups in Karamoja benefited is capacity building in organizational management,”* Lomonyang stresses. She says that most of the grassroots organizations led by women have also been able to scale up their visibility through exchange visits which is a key best practice in capacity building

# 15 YEARS, WALKING THE LONG PATH



“Many of us lost husbands to cattle raids and although Karamoja can now safely be characterized as a post-conflict region, the most noticeable changes brought about by the relative peace, is owed to the women” narrated Ms. Lomonyang. Stringently conservative and meticulously traditional, Karimojong are also among the few undefiled cultures left in Uganda.

She gestures, through much of the discussion, reflective pauses frequently interjecting with piercing gazes into the listeners. She is built of a towering physique, chocolate complexion and a commanding demeanor. This is Margaret Lomonyang, one of the women peace activists in Karamoja who have braved all situations to ensure peace prevails among the Karamojong.

She is also the Chairperson for Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO), a women founded peace advocacy and promotion group established in 2007 to champion peace and development in Karamoja.

**Lomonyang seated at her traditional hut in Moroto, says with songs and dialogues, grassroots women groups conducted mobilization of warriors to stop the violence and raiding neighbouring communities.**

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“P r e d o m i n a n t l y pastoralists too, Karimojong people have jealously kept to the old ways of living, and critics argue these are partly responsible for the dragging pacification in Karamoja.

“The journey (for peace and development in Karamoja) has been long and Karamoja is still one of the least developed parts of Uganda. Despite the many obstacles, Karimojong women are now determined to demand for increased women inclusion and participation,” she adds.

The contribution of Karimojong women, particularly towards removal of illegal guns in Karamoja is one such indelible writings that will last ages, with numerous a c h i e v e m e n t s including championing of Karimojong women and girl rights, raising women’s voices for effective participation and formulation in gender sensitive governance and accelerating protection of minority groups.

With songs and dialogue, the woman traversed the region and across to neighbouring places like Acholi and Teso, preaching peace and reconciliation among Karimojong and other ethnic groups.

**The most significant evidence of impact and experiences drawn from e m p o w e r i n g women is more evident among the community based groups, mostly led by young women at the grassroots, however, due to inadequate l e a d e r s h i p capabilities these have had to be supported by KAWUO with funding from donors including UNFPA, USAID and IRC among others.**



# MEN BACK GENDER EQUALITY

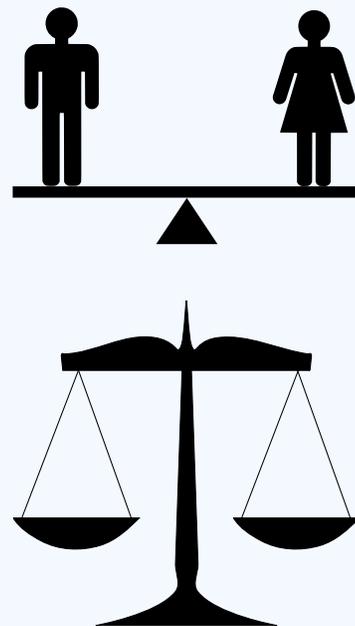
Teresa Nakiru had sought all ways to relieve herself of endless abuse by the husband but in vain, her parents arguing that abandoning her marital home would be humiliation to them. She had been into the marriage for over 10 years, a mother of 7 children and third wife; the more reason she could never walk out of the marriage.

"In Karamoja, a woman is property of the community where she is married and has to endure whatever conditions she may be faced with," explains Charles Topoth Angella a male gender rights champion based in Moroto.

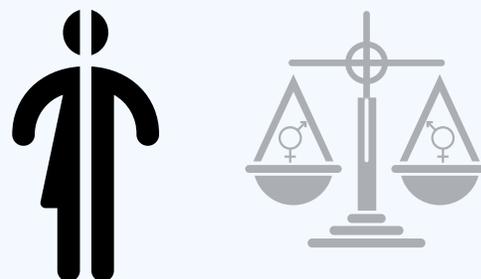
With such conservative gender perspectives, it was clear Nakiru had no option but to endure the abusive marriage.

Gender equality is a human right, but the world around still faces a persistent gap in access to opportunities and decision-making power for rural women and girls. For pastoral communities like Karimojong the reality of gender inequality and especially gender based violence is that it is increasingly becoming as complex and multifaceted as it is heart breaking.

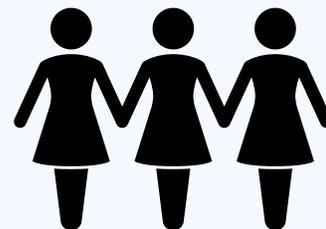
In equal measures, the women have fewer opportunities for economic participation as compared to their male counterparts.



**"Women and girls have to lead the way. it means equipping women groups to champion their own rights| KAWUO Board member Charles Lokoroi said**



# LEADING WOMEN'S CAUSE



Since inception of the organization over 15 years ago, Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO) has championed women and still to delight with. KAWUO is also at the contrast of transforming from grassroots women lobby to a nationally recognized advocacy group for women and girl rights, self-sustained with reputation of global standing.

Over the years at least 25 projects have been completed, about 1,200 women benefiting across the region with a mass membership comprising 617, initially registered local women groups and 15 women community- all the nine (09) districts of Karamoja. Established to promote local women's participation in leadership, strengthen individual and collective action to prevent and respond to discrimination against women, KAWUO now boasts of being the leading women-serving and led organization in entire Karamoja.

With a funding from International Rescue Committee (IRC), KAWUO has also story by themselves, the world will not know what we have done," Ms. Margaret Lomonyang, KAWUO founding member said. In the region, women had previously been downtrodden and considered mere property with no voice to speak out on their rights.



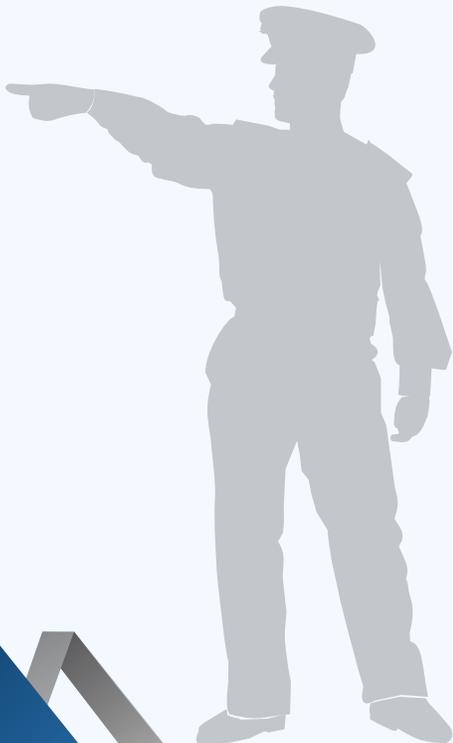
**KAWUO BOD: Margaret Lomonyang, Hellen Bole and Moses Aleper**

# POLICE HAS HELPED IN CURBING THE VICE



Annually, 321 women experience gender-based violence including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Amudat district with an average of a case reported to police daily. The incidence of FGM is highest in Karamoja than in any other part of Uganda with Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Amudat combined having the highest prevalence rate.

The law enforcement in Amudat is pleased working with KAWUO to reduce cases of GBV and FGM in Amudat. "Whenever we are stuck because of lack of fuel for going to the field to carry out investigation and arrest suspects or perpetrators of gender based violence and other harmful cultural practices, KAWUO has always supported us" says Mwesige



**Assistant  
Superintendent of  
Police (ASP),  
James Mwesige,  
officer in charge  
Amudat Police  
Station.**



**“At times, the survivors are asked to pay money to access the Police Form 3. To address this challenge, KAWUO has printed the Police Forms and distributed to all Police Stations across Karamoja from where they can be accessed free of charge. We are doing this in order to facilitate quick access to justice to survivors of GBV, FGM and defilement,” KAWUO**

**“Those were the times when in some circles, rape was legitimate. We have fought such mindset, degrading to women and girls,” adds KAWUO Chairperson.**

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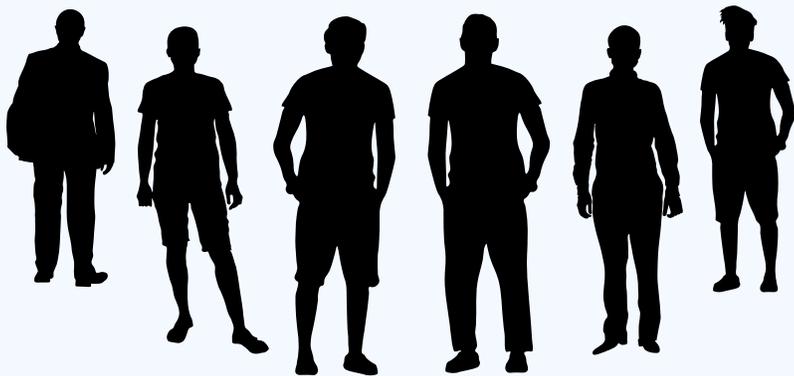
“Whenever we are stuck because of lack of fuel for going to the field to carry out investigation and arrest suspects or perpetrators of gender based violence and other harmful cultural practices, KAWUO has always supported us” says Mwesige

“KAWUO also supports us to transport survivors of GBV and pay hospital bills. We are now receiving few cases of domestic violence, rape, defilement and FGM in the District”, Mwesige adds.

Across the districts in Karamoja, KAWUO works with Police, Health Facilities and other CSOs, availing critical support to survivors of GBV, FGM, defilement and early marriages.

In addition, survivors of GBV, FGM or defilement always face challenges to access the Police form 3(PF3) from police stations.

# MEN HAVE JOINED THE RACE



Most men in Karamoja spend much of the time during day at trading centers, drinking alcohol, the wives left home to grapple with household chores.

But Emmanuel Morale, a resident of Karita Town Council in Amudat district, it is a different story and Hellen Obemere, 31 and mother of 5, is his wife, perhaps one of the few happily married couples in Karamoja.

*"I don't drink any alcohol like most men here, even when I disagree with my wife we resolve it inside our house, not outside. I take full responsibility of my children and participate in all family activities", says Morale.*

## QUICK FACTS

- **60% of women in Uganda experience gender based violence**
- **Some of the contributing factors to the violence include couple arguments arising from reduced food rations, poverty.**
- **Engaging men and boys continues to be a key prevention strategy for GBV.**
- **Majority of those affected by GBV are women and girls**
- **Gender Based Violence is a vast and intersecting issue that impacts all members of society.**

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Morale is also one of the men KAWUO has engaged to champion ending gender stereotypes that are abusive to women.

“I’m not regretting attending KAWUO trainings on gender issues and now a role model inspiring other men to be supportive to their wives.



**CAPTION: Emmanuel Morale with interlocked fingers above.**

# FROM THE VILLAGE DRAMA GROUP...

NARWOA is one of the 617 initially registered local women groups and 15 Women-led community-based organizations in all the nine districts of Karamoja (Moroto, Napak, Amudat, Nakapiripirit, Kotido, Kaabong, Abim, Karenga and Nabilatuk), and a member of KAWUO. Partners like USAID, Mercy Corps and GIZ-CUSP have supported such grassroots initiatives. From a small group of largely illiterate mothers and young girls, NARWOA is now nationally incorporated with a secretariat currently with 25 employees most of whom are women and implements women advocacy and empowerment programs, mostly facilitated with funds from USAID, Mercy Corps and the GIZ CUSP.



**“We were identified by KAWUO who continuously trained our members on..**

It started as a village drama group, touched by the plight of women and children suffering from the wrath of guns in wrong hands. Back then in 2012, members of the group led by Ms. Jessica Ataa, would walk to different hotspots of insecurity and sleep in kraals so as to get access to the men and boys who were involved in causing insecurity in the region.

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*“The women would talk to their husbands and sons at home to surrender their guns and also encourage them to convince others to do the same”, Ataa said.*

According to Ataa, the group’s efforts talked many worriers into surrendering back the funds to government. *“We were identified by KAWUO who continuously trained our members on group dynamics and other aspects of group management while linking the group to different economic empowerment opportunities, trainings and exchange visits,”* Ataa explains.

The group has since grown in strength and number, held several annual general meetings and also developed advocacy strategies



# POLYGAMY HAS BEEN MITIGATED



Karamoja is an extremely patriarchal society and women suffer extreme life conditions. The vast majority of women is subject to authority of their husbands, a reality they are meant not to challenge.

Although polygamous marriages are known to predispose women to the increased risk of HIV infection and other STDs, men can marry as many women as they wish among the Karimojong. However, in Abim district, a 28 year old Gladness Jean rose up to challenge her husband, Peter Ocen from marrying another wife.

Gladness' husband admitted his fault and apologized to his wife during a mediation meeting organized by KAWUO. He dropped the idea of adding on another wife which would have affected the household earnings. He also promised he would help Gladness start a business for the good of the family. They are now happily staying together with the first co-wife. Through many other mediations and dialogues, such couples have been put to peace with each other.



“I attempted to advise my husband against bringing a third wife, but instead he battered me. He wasn’t doing well financially and it is the reason I was not comfortable him marrying another wife because the family (livelihood) would be affected,” Gladness said.

Like other women in Karamoja, Gladness is not alone. With support from KAWUO, Gladness started receiving psychosocial support and through linkages with the field field officers.

# YOUTH SMILE GAINED IN KARAMOJA

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Josephine Leese, 30, runs a blue comb through her hair as she strokes it while looking into a small mirror she is holding with quiet excitement, like a teenager expecting her suitor, as her four children play around her at their home. Leese's excitement is borne out of relief from her husband's previously endless unprovoked beatings. In the past her husband, Ben liko, 37 years, used to beat her almost daily but this is no longer the case.

"Before, fighting was the order of the day between me and my husband; sometimes over small issues. Back then, every morning, instead of going to the garden, we would be at the village court settling the previous night's fight", Leese recalls. Increasing community awareness to utilize available sources to respond and prevent

Gender Based Violence, KAWUO supports women in Karamoja to rise against abusive marriages with aid from the UNFPA through IRC in the nine districts of Karamoja namely; Moroto, Napak, Nakapiripirit, Nabilatuk, Kotido, Amudat, Abim, Karenga and Kaabong. The overall goal of the program is to help survivors of GBV to access services which include healthcare, counseling and psychosocial support. The project which started in 2021 has so far benefited 180 women across the region.

KAWUO carries out awareness campaigns, community sensitizations and dialogues about GBV prevention and response.

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"My husband is now guarding me jealously and never beats me as before. He has even stopped drinking alcohol and is a changed man, completely. I kept attending the community meetings that, my husband also started to attend.



# STEREOTYPES BROKEN IN POKOT

Humming audibly while seated on a pile of crashed stones, Nachap Agnes 23 keeps pounding the rocks into smaller pieces with a sledge hammer. The pounding continues until the heap of bigger stones is no more, before embarking on another heap.

Breathing heavily and soaked in sweat, Nachap beckons one of the women waiting for her turn to embark on the strenuous energy draining means of livelihood. "Bring for me water. My throat is drying up. Oh! It's hectic," exclaims Nachap.

Although perceived to be a male dominated job elsewhere in the country, for Nachap it is more than just a means of survival but the sole livelihood for her family. Women in Karamoja are also the key bread winners for their families and yet many among the grassroots lot are locked out of the local mining opportunities.



**Nachap Agnes crashing stones at the site of a quarry in Motany Ward, Karita Town Council, Amudat District**

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*The imbalance creates conditions for sexual harassment and exploitation, with very little being done to change the culture operating within the closed mining environment,"* states recent expert findings on inclusion of women in artisan mining as alternative livelihood for Karimojong women and with economic empowerment and financial literacy that women like Nachap continue to acquire in Karamoja, the gender stereotypes will be no more.

## CHANGING THE TIDES..

Several stakeholder engagements and dialogues have been held and aiming to create space for women in the local mining sector. These have yielded into what the women now celebrate as the triumph over some of the stereotype barriers to economic emancipation of women in the region. In Amudat alone, a number of women groups have been registered and one of these; Karita Women Mining Association has grown stronger with a 30 women membership. In barely six months, this group has made a savings of about \$800 (UGX3 million) which they now lend among themselves and other non-member women in need of money for business.

# MAKAL, STANDING ALONE...

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The entrenched conservative culture in Karamoja sets up men to be dominant decision makers and sometimes a man's say on issues considered as women's issue means a lot in tilting opinion and practice.

In communities where female genital mutilation is practiced, it's always embedded in the need to have women under control but this is not the conviction Musa Makal, 64 year elder among the Pokot in South Karamoja holds against the cultural gender perceptions in the region

Makal has since become a strong advocate against female genital mutilation, a value so much cherished among the Pokot in Karamoja.

The practice has serious consequences, though, and can result into infection, hemorrhage, permanent physical damage and sometimes death.

"For a long time I had a feeling that our women are suffering from different types of violence, however, I thought life was like that", Makal said.



**'A resident of Chemoni village in Karita Sub County, Amudat District...**



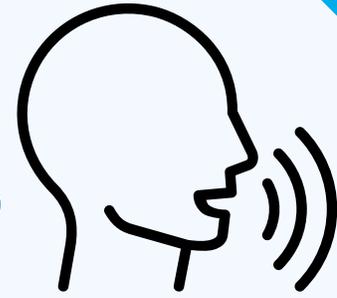


### **About Makal**

- *He is a respected elder and community influencer among the Pokot. - In 2019, he participated in a region-wide dialogue with other elders on ending FGM.*
- *He has instrumentally contributed to designing of a strategy to end FGM in the country.*
- *He is an ardent champion against FGM and has discouraged young girls and women from being subjected to the practice.*
- *None of his 8 daughters has ever been subjected to FGM.*

***“It’s never too late and together we can end the practice against women,”***

# VOICES FROM THE FOREBEARERS



*"There were so many cases of gender-based violence. Hygiene and sanitation was very poor in families and our husbands were dying because of owning illegal guns. We said, this cannot continue, we must do something about it and that is how KAWUO came up."*

**A resident of Naupala Cell, Naupala Ward in Nabilatuk Town Council, Anna Nancy Boyo is 48 years old and married to Charles Lotee with 8 children.**



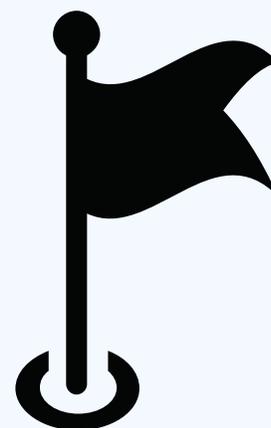
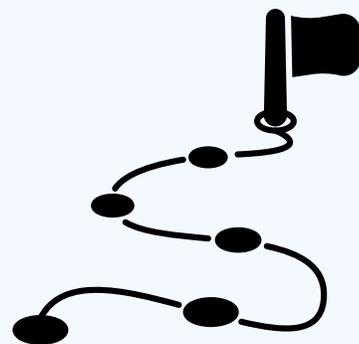
*"We formed KAWUO in order to protect the rights of women and children. When my husband died, his relatives grabbed all his property from me. This used to be a norm here but when we formed KAWUO, we embarked on sensitizing the community on the rights of women. The situation has since changed*

**Rebecca Lotte is 60 years old, a widow and mother of 4. She is a resident of Cucu village in Nabilatuk Sub County, Nabilatuk District.**

# THE STATISTICAL MILESTONES...

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- 1,902 (1844 women, 58 men) GBV survivors supported through a multi sectoral process including referrals to appropriate services and making follow ups after obtaining the consent to access legal services, medical support, transport services and basic needs like soap, nickers, pads and smearing oil to vulnerable women and girls.
- Out of the 1,902, about 154 survivors received Post Exposure Prophylaxis and emergency contraceptives with over 120 GBV survivors linked to other programs like economic empowerment.
- KAWUO worked collaboratively with the community-based offices at each district and 2,888 cases were entered successfully into the Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) between 2020 and 2022.
- 3,385 (2,044 women, 1,341 men) community members were reached and declared to end GBV incidences in their communities.
- A total of 563 cases reported in last three years, and taken to court, of these 150 cases were followed up to conclusion.
- 30 success stories documented and supported Central police stations in Karamoja with 5,600 Police Form 3(PF3) to ease documentation of the GBV cases.



## VOICES

### **In a crisis with nowhere to seek for redress**

*"He beat me badly that day and since I was bleeding profusely, I ran to police to report a case of gender based violence. I was given a Police Form 3 but I didn't know what to with it and where to go to seek for redress."*

### **Misleading cultural gender stereotypes**

*"I grew up knowing that its women's responsibility to provide for a family's needs. That's what I have grown knowing it is the order of life in Karamoja."*

### **Dealing with cultural barriers to managing malaria**

*'Statistics here was availed for this publication by the Monitoring and Evaluation unit at KAWUO, reflecting some of the successes in figures.'*



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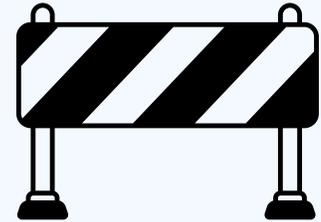
## Dealing with cultural barriers to managing malaria

*"My mother in-law hurried to one of the old women in the village known for treating new born babies using herbs. The old woman came and told us that someone in the village was envious of the baby and had thrown a spell at the infant."*



## Going against the odds

*"I attempted to advise my husband against bringing a third wife but instead he battered me. He wasn't doing well financially and it is the reason I wasn't approving of his idea,"*



# DEALING WITH MALARIA MYTHS



Five years into her marriage, Maria Nachuge almost gave up with hopes of bearing children when without knowing she had conceived. It is until she missed her periods for two months, one following another that she suspected a conception could have taken place and her fears were only confirmed by the traditional birth attendant.

Days and months went by and soon the family would be rejoicing when Nachuge finally dropped a bouncing baby boy.

“It was a joyous moment. My husband, so excited slaughtered a bull to celebrate arrival of a new member in the family whom he immediately named after himself,” Nachuge narrates but the joy never lasted long, the baby died of malaria.

“In the past many children lost lives because of ignorance and their mothers rarely bringing their babies even for immunization,” Sr. Antonieta Korobe, in charge Lotome Health Center II explains.

**The situation at Lotome Health Centre III, before and after the malaria management project...**

- *Before coming of the project 500 malaria cases of children were reported every month.*
- *Of these, children bellows 5 years accounted for nearly 85%.*
- *There were 100 cases of pregnant mothers then.*
- *The cases have since dropped from 500 to 150 for children below 5 years and 100 for pregnant women.*

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With support from UNICEF through Malaria Consortium Uganda such deaths have been reduced through a behaviour change campaign encouraging mothers to take their children to nearby health facilities at any rise of a child's body temperature.

For the good performance in encouraging mothers to bring their children for treatment at the health facility instead of opting for risky traditional alternatives, Lotome Health Center III in 2021 received an award from the district for best performance in malaria management.

"There is great improvement now, we have many first visits and once they come we quickly treat them," the health center in charge adds.

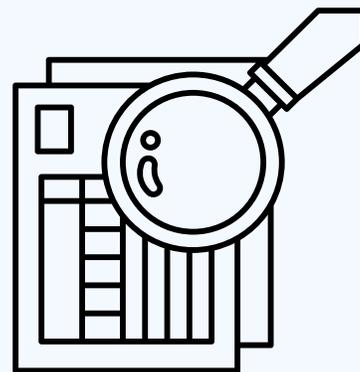


***Inset - Sr. Korobe Antonieta, in charge of government owned Lotome Health Centre II.***

# OBSERVATIONS & LESSONS LEARNT

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- Empowerment of women by KAWUO has built a largely irreversible momentum.
- Integration of men into leading women empowerment is making a huge difference.
- Community involvement in the program has built community ownership of interventions.
- Excellent relationship with law enforcement and local government.
- Membership strength counts in creating impact.
- Some of the contributing factors to GBV include couple arguments arising from reduced food rations and poverty.
- Engaging men and boys is a key prevention strategy for GBV.
- Gender based violence is a vast and intersecting issue that impacts all members of society.
- It is important for organizations such as KAWUO to acquire high quality equipment to enable their staff undertake documentation of success stories, lessons learnt and best practices with products of high quality.
- Documentation is a critical and integral activity that KAWUO should consider as part of their day to day processes.
- Taking high quality pictures should always be done throughout project life.
- It is a good practice to map stakeholders for the organization since it forms a list of / data base of those KAWUO will always share their success stories with.
- Impact focused pictures are more powerful than narrative explanations..
- It is everyone's responsibility to contribute to the documentation of success of an organization.



# RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES



## Documentation Brief

Compilation of KAWUO success stories, lessons learnt and best practices resulting from interventions by the organization between 2007 and 2022 was facilitated by Weaverbird Communications Ltd, the firm engaged to carry out this activity, purpose of which was also to provide the staff with field-based and hands-on experience with regard to undertaking field documentation of project processes, experiences and impacts, considering too that this exposure would enable the staff to conduct such activities, in future with efficiency and effectively.

- Collect and collate, store and use data authoritatively as KAWUO.
- Reflect on need for professional communications staff.
- Plan for sustained communication skills enhancement.
- Rewarding fast adoptees of the interventions helps to keep the momentum of success; consider support for reformed “surgeons”.
- Having a communications strategy in place is critical.
- Strengthen stakeholder engagement.
- Acquire the right and recommendation equipment.
- Develop a institutional documentation guide.
- Harness digital communication benefits for the organization.
- Train staff on reputation safeguards for KAWUO.
- Budget for communications functions and consultancies.

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## Objectives

- Document stories of change and lessons learnt from various interventions including lessons learnt.
- Provide a compilation of the stories and visuals that communicate KAWUO achievements over the years.
- Train KAWUO staff on how to conduct documentation of stories of change.

# KAWUO PROFILE



KAWUO is a women's network formed in 2007 to build and promote participation of grassroots women in democratic governance and leadership, enhance their access to justice, increase economic empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention response through lobby and advocacy, capacity building, networking and partnership.

## Vision



"Empowered, Dignified and Informed Women of Karamoja in sustainable Development"

## Mission



To empower and promote the participation of indigenous Women of Karamoja in sustainable development through, lobby and advocacy, capacity building, networking and partnership.

## Thematic Focus



1. Women's Governance and Leadership
2. Women's Protection and Empowerment
3. Women's Economic Empowerment.
4. KAWUO Institutional Development

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## Projects Implemented

1. Raising Women's Voices for effective Participation and Formulation in Gender Sensitive Governance: funded by EU and GIZ.
2. Increasing the community awareness to utilize available sources to respond and prevent Gender Based Violence in Karamoja: funded by UNFPA through IRC.
3. Women Networks working for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: Funded by UN WOMEN through National Association of Women's Organizations in Uganda.
4. Rising to protect rights of Tipin and Kor's in Amudat and Moroto: funded by IRISH AID through National Association of Women's Organizations (NAWOU) in Uganda Implemented in Moroto , Amudat and Nakapiripirit.



## Achievements

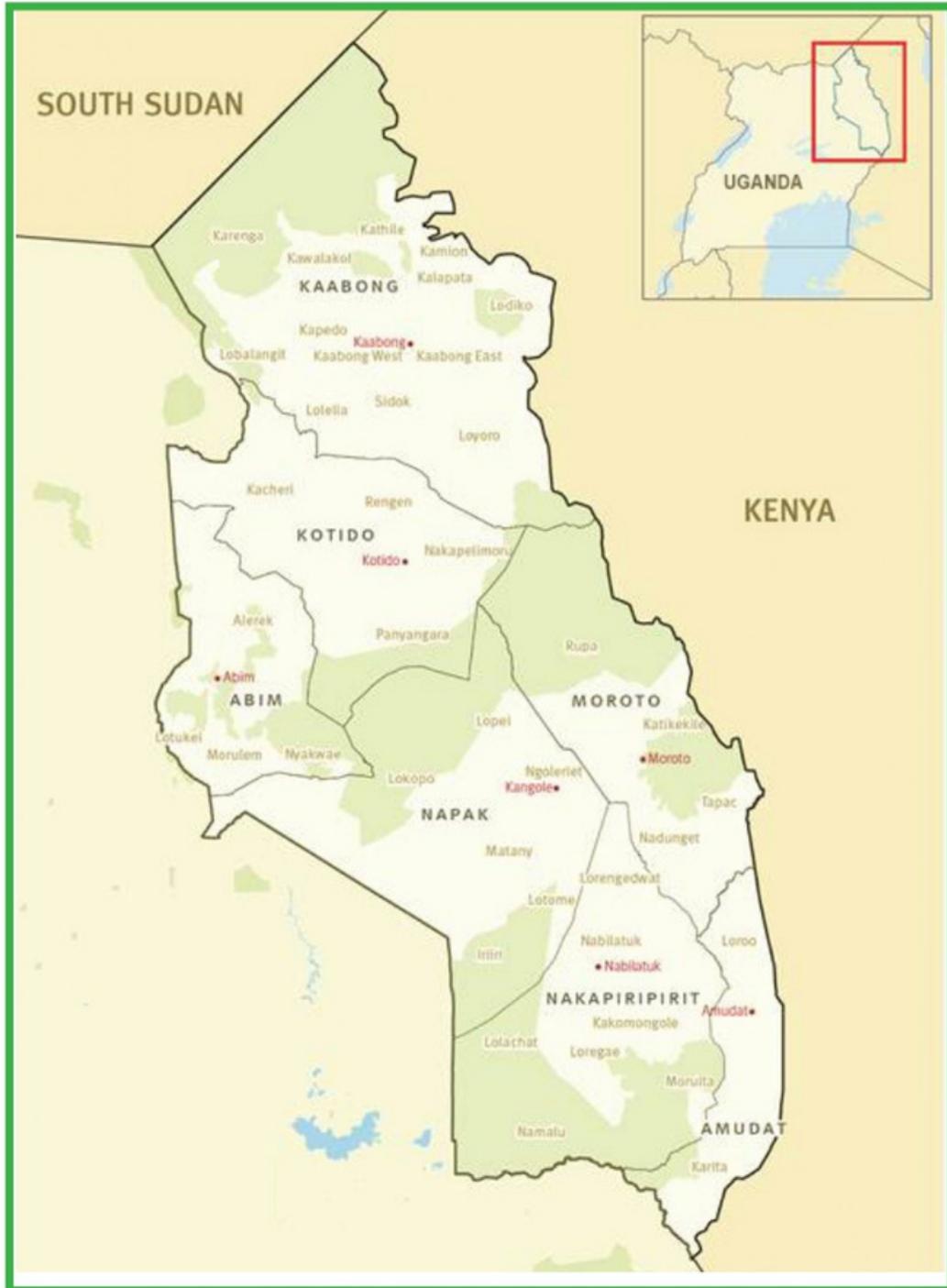
- Building community engagement on Preventing and responding violence against women and girls;
- Promoting women's participation and influence in leadership at the district and sub county level.
- Coordination of women's movement in the Karamoja region
- Setting up robust institutional structure which has contributed to a stronger civil society in Karamoja Region.



**Inception of KAWUO comprised two categories, the literate and grassroots women. The two groups combined, working to ensure they champion inclusion of women in pacification and development of Karamoja**

## MAP OF KARAMOJA

### Karamoja Women Umbrella Organisation





# COUNTING THE GAINS+

-  +256 772 174 660 | +256 775 197 194
-  infoekawuo.org | thomasodelokekawuo.org | thomasodeloke@gmail.com
-  www.kawuo.org
-  KaramojaWomen
-  Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization
-  Plot 41, House No. 228, Circular Road, Senior quarters, Moroto