Gender Based Violence baseline survey report – Kotido District 2012

Refugee Law Project (RLP) with funding from the Norwegian Government through UNFPA is implementing GBV prevention, response and coordination activities in Kotido District. Prior to the start of activity implementation, the RLP needed to have an understanding of what the communities in Kotido perceive as violence and the response mechanisms existing within the community. Assessing the attitudes, definitions, values and perceptions of GBV is meant to inform the RLP’s programming in Kotido, so as to engage the gender realities and incorporate the community’s mechanisms into the RLP’s GBV intervention strategy for better support to the communities in Kotido.

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## List of Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSAS</td>
<td>Clinical Care for Sexual Assault Survivors</td>
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<td>CDO</td>
<td>Community Development Office</td>
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<td>CPS</td>
<td>Central Police Station</td>
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<td>Focused Group Discussion</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infections</td>
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Foreword

Karamoja remains one of the mysteries of Uganda, a zone which few fellow citizens reach, and where few travelers venture. It is an area, an economy and a culture which for many outsiders is captured in a few simplistic terms; “cattle raiders,” “warriors” and “courtship rape.” All three suggest violence, disregard for fellow human beings, and in particular for women. There is little understanding of complex cultural patterns and leadership systems, and how these impact on gender dynamics, relations and identities, and how these in turn are reflected in patterns of sexual and gender based violence and responses thereto. In exploring these questions for the purposes of designing more context relevant and appropriate responses to SGBV, this report by Patricia Nangiro and other members of the RLP team sheds considerable light on gender dynamics among the Jie in Kotido district, and thus offers an important contribution to our understanding of these issues not just in that particular community, but also in agro-pastoralist communities in the wider region.

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Acknowledgements

The Gender Based Violence (GBV) baseline survey carried out in Kotido was based on the responses from many actors in the sub-counties of Kotido District. Appreciation to the Director Refugee Law Project - Dr. Chris Dolan, Head Legal and Psychosocial Department – Eunice Owiny, Head Research and Advocacy Department – Oola Stephen, the Gender and Sexuality team, Research and Advocacy team of the Refugee Law Project, who worked hard to develop the survey tools for assessing the attitudes, definitions, values and perceptions surrounding GBV. We thank the women, men, girls, boys and the key informants in Kotido who contributed invaluable responses which formed the findings of this survey. We express our appreciation to the RLP data collection team: Akol Caesar, Auma Celestine, Ngole Charles, Okema Robert and Nangiro Patricia for taking time interacting with the community in search of a deeper understanding of what the people in Kotido perceive as violence and how they have dealt with it.

Appreciation also goes to the funders of the GBV program in Kotido. This survey was made possible with funding from the Norwegian Government through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The findings of this survey formed a basis on which Refugee Law Project’s GBV interventions will focus in contributing towards improved engagement of the people of Kotido in ending Gender Based Violence in their communities.
Executive Summary
The Gender Based Violence (GBV) baseline survey was conducted in October 2011 by the Refugee Law Project (RLP) in Kotido district prior to activity implementation for the GBV project funded by the Norwegian government through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The survey was carried out with a view to establishing which community capacities and capabilities should inform RLP program implementation strategies. The main objective of the survey was to assess the attitudes, definitions, values and perceptions of GBV among the people of Kotido. Specifically it aimed at;

a) Understanding what the community perceives as violence
b) Understanding community practices relating to women, men, girls’ and boys’ social lives in terms of marriage, initiation, response to and prevention of GBV.
c) Developing community-driven recommendations on what should be done together for long term support to the most vulnerable groups in Kotido for better program implementation strategies.

The baseline survey targeted all the six sub-counties that make up Kotido District, namely Kacheri, Kotido, Kotido Town Council, Panyangara, Rengen, and Nakapelimoru. A total of 8 focus groups of men (3), women (3) and youth (2) were conducted in Kacheri, Kotido and Kotido Town Council, while 48 key informants including CDOs, Religious leaders, opinion leaders, parish chiefs, police officers, health staff, women group chairpersons and teachers were interviewed in all the sub-counties.

There are a number of social-cultural values that might be contributing to or preventing violence in Kotido. The social relationships existing in the communities of Kotido are guided and directed by the hierarchy of elders culturally empowered to sanction what is perceived as acceptable and un-acceptable. By virtue of their responsibilities, elders within the wider Karamoja region are the key players in community prevention of violence and they hold authority to punish perpetrators of violence.

The institution of marriage is another key element of social ordering in Karimojong societies. Within its highly ritualistic attributes and requirements, and the long process leading up to the ritual, there are numerous unequal power relationship and conditions that make several categories of women, girls, men and boys vulnerable to all sorts of gender based violence and abuses. The marriage process starts from identification of a suitor, a complex set of courtship affairs including courtship wrestling which determines acceptance and readiness to marry. This courtship wrestling in particular, however culturally adored, is at times abused by men to rape women who do not consent to their marital advances. It therefore accounts for some forced marriages happening in Kotido, and mostly favours men who are in a position to pay bride price of between 40-80 heads of cattle. The high dowry requirement has also left many young boys who cannot afford the
required number of cattle vulnerable because they cannot get the girls of their choice. Many young men nowadays end up forcing girls into sex so as to take their virginity. Girls as well as boys have suffered the trauma of forced marriage; some have ended up disappearing from home to un-known locations or even committing suicide.

Community decision making is the preserve of those men who have undergone the initiation process. During initiation, rituals are performed to hand over authority to the young men to join the council of elders who wield power to enforce discipline and administer justice within the community. The council of elders, known as ekokwa, is composed of only men and yet it makes most of the important decisions governing each community. Women are thus often left out of decision making process even on issues that affect them directly. Discussions suggest that women and girls experience most of the violence identified by the community, including wife battering, rape, premarital sex, forced marriages, and defilement.

According to the discussants, most of this violence happens in the bushes while women and girls are collecting firewood, fetching water, at home and at local brewing places. It was also stated that the majority of women in Kotido are burdened with family roles and responsibilities compared to men. Providing food for the family has only increased community vulnerability. This has been further exacerbated by changing livelihood strategies which are impacting on gender roles. Whereas women traditionally grew crops and had control over the granary and thus food security in the home, this is changing as men are seen ploughing, hoeing, planting, harvesting and marketing produce. Men without cows cannot become a man or marry which will impact on masculine identity and behaviour. The position of women as family assets to be exchanged for cattle results in oppressive cultural practices such as child or forced marriage or entrapment into marriage through rape and widow inheritance. All these subjugate and silence women and girls and make them extremely vulnerable during this period of change.

Violence affects not only individuals but the community as a whole and the consequences can be far reaching. GBV is a traumatic event that people who experience it find hard to deal with if they cannot access support from within the family, community support groups, leaders, government structures. To be able to provide the best support to those who experience it is thus important for all these actors to understand violence as a community problem not an individual problem. One of the many ways the community has offered support to the survivors is ensuring they receive compensation from the perpetrator through the traditional justice court of elders. The traditional justice system, although informal by nature, is widely appreciated and accepted in the community because it is within their reach and witnesses are quickly accessible.

The community is not just watching but is also doing something to prevent violence for example; the elders/kraal leaders hold community meetings to discuss violence issues affecting women and men. The elders are critical in upholding and enforcing some very
positive traditional gender practices and values which include the requirement that when a man is married and staying at the village of the wife, he must never disrespect her by quarreling or fighting at the in-laws’ place. Also beating and fining of perpetrators heads of cattle (ranging from 8 to 60 depending on the violence they have committed) is seen as warning or caution to other potential perpetrators.

In order to improve and strengthen GBV prevention and response programming, the community suggested a number of activities which can be achievable in their settings. These included continuous awareness raising on GBV and support and legal education so as to give knowledge on legal response to GBV. It was obvious that this lack of information increases vulnerability of people to violence. Capacity building of GBV service providers and community groups to be able to face up to the challenge of GBV prevention and response. It also undermines access and usability of the formal justice mechanisms for addressing some prevalent forms of GBV.
1.0 Introduction and background to the study

This Baseline Survey aims to inform and guide Refugee Law Project GBV prevention and Response programme in Kotido district targeting three sub counties of Kacheri, Kotido and Kotido Town Council. The GBV Programme in Kotido provides free legal and psychosocial support to survivors of GBV and also facilitates referral of survivors to other partners to access basic services that are outside the mandate of the RLP. Prior to implementation of GBV activities in Kotido, RLP needed to have a clear understanding of what the community perceives as violence, what their attitude towards this violence is, and social practices and values surrounding violence in the communities.

The preliminary findings from this baseline survey greatly informed the RLP’s GBV Program activity implementation in Kotido. Some of the activities that are currently being implemented in this project include training of police officers, health personnel, traditional leaders, religious leaders and other service providers, as well as development and dissemination of IEC materials, conducting radio talk shows and airing of spot messages among others.

To ensure community participation and ownership, the involvement of the community through the survey process enriched the communication messages developed, as well as potential involvement in and ownership of activities currently being implemented to end gender based violence in the communities of Kotido. Carrying out a baseline survey at the initial stage of the project is important so as to measure its success at the end of the implementation period.

It should be noted that GBV prevention and response activities have been implemented prior to RLP’s GBV project. As well as consolidating the efforts of earlier partners like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the project also seeks to fill in gaps in legal and psychosocial support provision for survivors of GBV. This has been lacking or limited in the district, despite the fact that service provision to survivors of GBV should be comprehensive and enhanced by a clear referral pathway understood by all partners.
2.0 Chapter Two: Survey design and methodology

This baseline survey was designed based on the understanding that definitions, values, interpretations and perceptions of GBV, as well as traditional and formal mechanisms for sanctioning deviations from what they perceive as normally accepted forms of behavior, vary from one community to another, change over time and have their roots in the socio-cultural, political and social organization of the communities. They are highly subjective and better understood from the contexts and perspective of the communities who experience and live SGBV. This survey therefore sought to assess the attitudes, definitions, values and practices surrounding GBV and understanding of the existing community mechanisms for dealing with GBV in Kotido.

In light of the above social realities, the survey was designed and conducted using qualitative methodology. Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides were used to investigate what the community perceives as violence, how they have dealt with it and what actions they would recommend as effective in ending violence within their communities.

Prior to the data collection, RLP developed a set of interview guides for key informant and focus group discussion. The open ended interview guide aims to elicit what the community says is violence and the mechanisms they use to deal with that kind of violence. The FGDs were carried out in the three target sub counties of Kacheri, Kotido and Kotido Town Council where RLP’s GBV activities are currently being implemented. The FGDs comprised of different groups of women, men, educated and uneducated youth of about 20 to 25 people each. They were selected from different villages within the target sub counties. The villages in the sub-counties were randomly selected for group discussions, target participants were mobilized and the discussions lasted for 2 to 3 hours because the questions asked were so engaging and generated more questions. Key informant interviews were carried out in all of the six sub counties that make up Kotido District, in Kacheri, Kotido, Rengen, Nakapelimoru, Panyangara and Kotido Town Council. The key informants were purposively selected because they are expected to be aware about the gender and GBV dynamics and community intervention mechanisms. These included the Community Development Officers (CDOs), Religious leaders, Health Centre staff, Police, and Kraal/Opinion leaders.

At the start of the discussions, informed consent was sought from the respondents and during the introduction, they were assured of confidentiality of their responses and that the information would only be used for purposes of the study and programme implementation strategy planning. The interviews took place in locations of community social gatherings under big trees.
A deliberate decision was taken to ensure that the survey research team was made up of RLP staff and community members who speak Ngakarimojong, have a good understanding of the cultural practices and norms of the Jie people and are well positioned to appreciate their traditional way of life. The team was able to interact very easily with the respondents in the local language, the interview guides had open ended questions which allowed the respondents a lot of room to discuss and give as much quality information as possible. The qualitative data collected in the baseline survey was analyzed and interpreted using the socio-cultural and economic environments of Kotido district. The data was backed up on a laptop, and backed up on an external hard drive. Once the report was finished, data was deleted from the laptop and the external back up was archived in a safe location.

2.1 Challenges
There were some challenges experienced by the research team during the survey process. First of all, it was the harvest season where both men and women would be in the gardens harvesting, so in many cases it was a bit hard to locate respondents who had to be followed right into their gardens for discussions but thankfully most of the people who formed the focused group discussions would be in the community gardens where there would be a group of men or women working together.

The other challenge was that, most key informants at sub county level were not easily accessed because either they had not reported at the sub county office or they had other engagements, so the team had to always look around for other potential key informants thought to be in position to provide information.
3.0 Chapter Three: Presentation and discussion of findings
This chapter analyses and presents the study findings as discussed by the target groups and individual informants in the community. The findings are presented based on the survey guide themes.

3.1 Introduction to the area of study
The baseline survey was conducted in Kotido district which is one of the 7 districts that make up Karamoja sub region. The district is located in the Northern part of Karamoja and is predominantly occupied by Ngajie speaking communities known as the Jie alongside a few groups speaking Ethur language. It is comprised of six sub counties (Panyangara, Kacheri, Rengen, Kotido, Nakapelimoru and Kotido Town Council). The District has a population of 204,600 people, living within 165 villages. The population growth in Kotido is 5.5 % per annum higher than the national rate of 3.2%. It also has one of the Highest Poverty Indices (HPI) standing at 53.8% compared to the national average of 37.5%. According to the Karimojong, the main factors responsible for poverty include insufficient harvest as a result of drought, cattle rustling and insecurity, animal death, limited water sources, high bride price for marriage, lack of skills, unemployment, limited sources of income, poor governance and landlessness.

In Kotido, just like other Karimojong communities, order is maintained based on cultural norms and social expectations and these expectations are determined by the traditional structures that govern and regulate interactions, relationships, habits and roles. These are mostly implemented by the hierarchy of elders and opinion leaders who are believed to have authority to customs to guide their action.

This assessment therefore looks at the existing relationships in the communities between men and women, particularly in terms of marriages and initiation. It further analyses how these relationships might have a contribution to what the community perceive as violence, noting that communities tends to favour existing relationships and the hierarchy of elders who hold the authority to carry out punishments for the perpetrators of violence.

3.2 Relationships within the communities in terms of marriage and initiation

3.2.1 Courtship and marriage
Women and men in Kotido engage and relate freely, but at different levels of interactions clearly defined by the traditional norms according to age hierarchy. Traditionally, it is considered that children do not belong to the parents but to the whole clan and it is common to find a woman or man disciplining a child who is not his/hers but belonging to the same village and or clan.

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1 Encyclopedia Ì Karamoja Wikipedia, accessed at www.uga
During childhood, both young boys and girls tend to carry out similar household chores like taking care of young siblings, fetching water, grinding among other things, but at a youthful stage there is a distinction in their interaction and relations where girls and boys relate with their friends of the same sex and share experiences while during chores; for girls this can be while collecting firewood and fetching water, and for boys while grazing cattle in the bushes.

**One male Karachuna in Panyangara sub-county said**, “Courtship starts with a boy asking for snuff – ‘etaba’ from a girl he is interested in. He even goes ahead to find out about her friends and family, so as to build a relationship that may eventually win him this girl”

**A group of non learnt youth further explained**, “At a time when a boy or man is ready for marriage, he and his friends monitor the movement of the target girl then one day grab her and carry her into the bush or sorghum garden where they will have pre-marital sex. If she puts up resistance, the man and his friends can even beat her up so that she can consent”

It is at this point that courtship between young girls and boys referred to as ‘etinganu’ starts which may eventually lead to marriage. If a girl responds by giving etaba to the boy, it is a sign of a positive feedback.

In Kotido, a girl can be in courtship with more than one man, all of whom must be known to both families. It allows for a girl and her family to have a better choice of husband. When the courtship process is progressing into marriage, the boy and his friends organise a traditional dance called ‘edonga’ which they take to the girls’ village where they are welcomed by peers and local brew ngagwe is taken. During the traditional dance, both men and women mix and relate freely because it is from these social gatherings that others identify their potential partners. These dances are also used as an avenue for potential suitors to make known their intention to marry the girl by carrying her away. It is this “carrying away which has been (mis) interpreted as “courtship rape”.

The girl is caught, carried away by potential suitor and wrestled into premarital sex. The courtship sex happens in all possible locations where the target girl is found alone or with her friends while collecting firewood, fetching water, on the way home. Most times the girl is aware that this “carrying away might happen. In fact in some instances, it’s the girl who alerts the boy of the fact that she is going to fetch fire wood.

To the people of Kotido, this courtship sex is a pre-requisite to marriage and usually happens if a marriage is to take place. It is seen as opening the door a sign that of consent to marry the boy. This practice is generally accepted in the community because girls are not expected to give in to a marriage proposal easily without resistance, even when they love the man and have been in courtship. However, some men take advantage of this cultural practice and force the girl into sex even without her consent.
The youth further explained that as much as courtship is seen as a normal practice, sometimes if the parents of the girl don’t want the boy their daughter has had sex with, they will arrange for him to be beaten by a gang of his peers as punishment. He will be fined 8 cows and they advise their daughter to marry the man they have identified for her.

Marriage is only recognised where dowry in the form of cattle has been given to the woman’s family. In cases where no dowry has been paid, the children born will belong to the woman’s clan. Though it is not a common practice these days, the woman’s family can even marry her and her children off to another man who is in a position to pay the dowry.

Co-habiting before official traditional marriage is a common practice, but when children are born in the process, the man will be obliged to pay 2 to 3 bulls for every child. Some men are left traumatised and in a situation where they have to do anything to own his wife and the children. Cattle raiding was the most immediate solution for most men, but many were killed or maimed in the process leaving many widows and children behind. Due to the disarmament exercise that has been going on for a long time in Karamoja region, cattle raiding has drastically reduced but turned into cattle theft. People have equated disarmament not only to loss of guns, but also loss of cattle. Many discussants share a general belief that without cows they cannot identify and be acknowledged as men marry and achieve status. They kept repeating that “we are now like women”. This impact on masculine identity in Kotido actually has a critical impact on the feminine identity as well, not least as men try to re-assert themselves through violence against women.

In Kotido, it is considered taboo for a younger daughter to get married before the elder daughter. In such a situation, the husband of the older daughter has to get the biggest bull in his kraal to slaughter in a ceremony where rituals to cleanse the elder daughter of any misfortunes will be performed. Before the ceremony, she cannot go into the sister’s home or even carry her children. In marriage, a woman is the ear and the man is the head.

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2 The figure is quoted from the discussion with the women FGD in Namukur village, Kacheri sub county
explained by one of the women’s FGD. As a woman, you are expected to listen and do all what the man wants without questioning or you risk being beaten or brought to the council of elders for disciplinary action for being disrespectful. The notion of a woman being the ear is deeply problematic in attaining gender equality. In effect it means that, except for older women, the majority of women and young girls are expected to obey without questioning men’s authority. The result has been male dominance and some females are forced into arranged marriages against their will. Respondents highlighted that, in most cases the father of the girl holds secret discussions with the man who is in position to give him dowry appropriate to the size of his clan; this translates to high bride price from between 40 to 120 head of cattle. Upon their agreement, he informs the mother of the girl who as the ear is not expected to object but instead to get her daughter ready for the marriage. If the girl objects to the marriage arrangement, the father will alert the suitor to carry her off and have sex with her so that she can accept to marry him. This is one prevalent form of GBV.

Marriage relationships in Kotido are also seen as a source of protection for women. A woman is not expected to stay without a husband. Even in the event of the death of her husband, a widow is inherited by one of the brothers or closest relative of the husband, sometimes against her will. She may be given the option to choose from the men within the family. If she refuses to be inherited, she will be threatened with promises of cursing all her children to death. According to the respondents, widow inheritance is a common practice intended to ensure that children are brought up within their family context and not married off by another man. Interestingly, women themselves tend to demand for inheritance especially if they have liked one of the brothers of the late husband.

Widow inheritance was initially practiced to protect and provide for the woman and her children, but in recent years the whole notion of inheritance has been used for enjoyment of conjugal rights only. In reality most widows are abandoned and the in-laws even distribute cattle left behind by the deceased among themselves. A group of men further explained that in situations where the woman refuses to be inherited and wants to marry someone else that man will have to pay dowry to the family of her late husband not to her parents to emphasise the fact of where she belongs. Widow inheritance is meant to emphasize family authority and continuity.

3.2.2 Initiation

Initiation is a cultural value that has long been practiced in Kotido and varies from one clan to another. It is a traditional ceremony known in nga’karimojong as ‘athapan’ men receive a new status quo in society and gain recognition as ómen. They transition from young unknown men to men who command respect and leadership in the community referred to as ‘ngikatukok’. Initiation is usually done in a year when there is a good harvest of foods that

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3 The figure is quoted from the discussion with a key informant in Lodera Village (LC 1 Chairman)
are central for ceremonies like pumpkins, cucumbers and sorghum. Without these the ceremonies will not take place in that particular year.

The initiation is a process of introducing young men to a category of men and elders who are in a position to make decisions in and on behalf of the community, who are respected and are given blessings to perform community rituals in the shrines known as Akiriket. The rituals performed in the shrines vary from making important community decisions to offering traditional prayers to God for mercy, blessings, rain, good harvest to cursing evil and evil people in the community. Performing and participation in these rituals are the preserve of men who have undergone initiation.

One parish chief said, “When a man has undergone initiation, he will even stop associating with his friends and colleagues, those said to be younger than him in terms of authority because he has acquired a different status than them, no more unnecessary jokes and he can even send them on for his errands and they must obey”.

The initiation ceremonies and rituals are celebrated in the shrines. The men/man to be initiated will get a bull to slaughter for the elders. He/they will then be undressed and the bull’s waste will be smeared on them/him while chanting blessings. A string will be cut from the bull’s skin with some meat and tied on their/his neck. There is drinking of local brew, and eating of boiled salts less meat. Only the elders and old women eat the head of the bull, sing traditional songs and participate in the dances.

At a later date, he/they kill for the elders a white ram as a ritual is being performed to cleanse his/their misfortunes. Whereas women participate in making local brew, cooking meat and other tasks, they are not allowed into the shrine. The un-initiated men may go into the shrine but sit far from the elders and the initiated ones.

After initiation, a man is recognized in the community and he can even send another man older than him in age on his errands, and he has the authority and power to even decide the fate of those perceived to have broken the cultural/community traditions and norms.

The initiation of women is a process that starts from the time a woman gets married. She is instructed by the elderly women at home on how to carry out family rituals and has to keenly follow the process until a time when the elderly women declare her ready to go through the process of initiation attended by only women. The initiation rituals and

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4 Akiriket is an open space surrounded by big trees which no one ever cuts down. It is considered a holy ground where elders perform traditional prayers, rituals, and important decision making meetings. Only initiated men are allowed there.
ceremonies of women happen within the homestead in the middle of the kraal. The woman is dressed in a traditional skin skirt known as ‘abuwo’ with grass tied around her neck. The senior woman takes her by the hand and leads her round the homestead followed by a procession of women singing. They then enter through the main cattle entrance where she will cut open a ram and remove intestines and internal organs. Men are not involved in the initiation of women except they can come and eat the boiled meat.

**Figure 1: Men attending a community meeting known as ‘akiriket’ (Source: Taken in the field)**

In general, initiation gives men and women different levels of authority over other community members. The initiated men receive the power to make decisions for and on behalf of the community. They form the council of elders known as ‘ekokwa’ who among others things carry out traditional justice and protection in the community. The initiated women on the other hand receive power to make decisions and perform rituals at family level which include; child naming, treating milk teeth on children, performing traditional dressing rituals for pregnant women, cooking for the elders during shrine ceremonies. This was emphasized by an opinion leader who insisted that women have their roles in the family/home, not in the community.

He said,

> “When you talk of initiation, what I can tell you is that we do initiation every ten years and according to the specific category of age groups. Young men can’t say anything when elders are discussing important community issues unless they are initiated. They can’t even sit with elders in ‘akiriket’; they sit far. As for women, they are not even supposed to appear there.”
Whereas initiation gives men at different levels the power to make decisions in the community, the reality is that even without initiation, there are still un-equal power relationships between men and women even at community meetings. This was clearly highlighted by an opinion leader in Kacheri during a community dialogue in which he gave the analogy of the men being the sun and the women being the moon. The sun shines brightly and at daytime, so one can see clearly far and wide, while the moon shines at night creating blurry images that a person can only see in the immediate vicinity. In short, women and men can never be at the same level of decision making.

3.3 Gender roles and responsibilities in the community

Traditionally community roles and responsibilities in Kotido are allocated by gender, though respondents reported that, in recent years as a result of increasing poverty rates and reduction of cattle in the community, men and women are starting to do work together or to play similar roles. There are emerging overlaps in gender roles. The initiation rituals while important in upgrading and transfer of power, are no longer as indispensible as they used to be.

Some of the roles identified are listed here.

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<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. Harvesting food in the gardens</td>
<td>i. Collecting firewood &amp; wood for building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Thatching the huts</td>
<td>ii. Harvesting grass and other building materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Constructing the outer thorn fence of the manyatta</td>
<td>iii. Constructing the family wood fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Grazing cattle</td>
<td>iv. Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Casual labour (food for work on roads)</td>
<td>v. Grinding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Burning charcoal</td>
<td>vi. Brewing the local beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Providing food for the entire household</td>
<td>viii. Digging and weeding gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix. Grazing cattle (when there is no male)</td>
<td>x. Watering animals at a water pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi. Winnowing and ferrying harvested food from gardens</td>
<td>xi. Winnowing and ferrying harvested food from gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xii. Fetching water</td>
<td>xii. Fetching water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiii. Carry charcoal for sale in town</td>
<td>xiii. Carry charcoal for sale in town</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Showing some of the roles and responsibilities played by men and women (Source: FGDs)

The roles women traditionally play in Kotido within their families and communities are labour intensive in nature as opposed to men whose roles are seasonal in nature. Women are expected to do all the household work, which also includes raising the children. Men play more seasonal roles that give them a lot of free time to socialise.

In urban settings, women share some family roles to compliment what the other is doing. For example, the man may ensure feeding, clothing, school fees and medical care for the family, while the woman on the other hand does the household work. The participants agreed that this shared responsibility is good for societal harmony and family cohesion but that problem comes in acknowledgment and ownership in cases of separation.

The respondents noted that women have a lot of roles to play within the family that makes their communities stronger but their contribution is never recognised. Once married, with or without bride price, she has to do all the household work including looking for food for the family, and men support once in a while when they can. To be able to provide for their families, women have to do all sorts of work. This includes collecting wood and carrying charcoal long distances for sale in town and or, depending on the season they spend time digging in their gardens. This is clearly defined as a feminine role. One woman respondent in an FGD further explained that as women, it's our responsibility to ensure the family has food to eat. During the digging season, it's the woman and her children who till the land. The man will disappear and only appear in time for harvesting. Then they also take control of the produce and decide on it. If a woman makes a decision on this food, she will be beaten and accused of disrespecting her husband.

A female respondent had this to say, “Most men always spend much of their time lying under trees and only wait for a time when they feel hungry, then they come to demand for food and if there is no food, he can even beat the woman up or he goes on to his other wife.”
Figure 2: Showing the typical day for some men and women in Kotido (Source: Taken in the field during the survey)

In the communities of Kotido, it is not common to find a man doing roles and responsibilities thought to be for women like house hold chores. The woman does that work with support of her female children. Some explained that even when the woman is sick, the man will go to the home of his other wife/wives. But if a woman is doing typical male roles, it will be assumed that there is no male in their home.

A female in one FGD said, “These days, men and women do family responsibilities and roles together in order to earn a living. When a woman is tired, a good committed man will help his wife and other people in the village will say they seem to be a happy family”

The respondents positively noted that, in the recent years, men and women’s roles are so similar and complimentary They both work together to support the family for example the women and girls cut the grass and wood for building while the men construct huts, women dig and the men harvest and once in a while the man sells a cow to supplement the woman’s efforts to provide food for the family.

Respondents attributed this to the fact that what was the central role of the men – grazing cattle and even taking them far away to the kraals for the whole year has been altered due to the reduction of cattle and the change in borders which have restricted the movement of men with cattle, thereby creating a total shift in livelihoods. Changing livelihood strategies, however, are impacting on gender roles and identity as men are more into traditionally female areas of crop production and marketing produce. It should as well be noted that, there is generally little discussion about the impact of a move to agro-
pastoralism and privatization of land on gender roles and relations i.e. men’s loss of identity, men moving into women’s domain, the impact on women’s land tenure and family food security.

3.3.1 Constructions of gender roles in Kotido

While gender roles in Kotido just like other communities in Karamoja and Uganda as a whole have been constructed and passed on from generation to generation, it’s not quite clear how and by whom the gender roles were determined. Most or even all of the roles have been determined and implemented based on some one’s sex as male or female according to the society’s values, norms, perceptions and traditions. Gender roles, being socially constructed are not static in nature; they change over time and vary from one community to another, perhaps explaining why in the current context in Kotido roles played by men and women have become more complimentary and supportive roles rather than distinct as the case was some years ago due to the changing gender dynamics.

Discussions with the community revealed it wasn’t clear who was it is responsible for determining or constructing the roles said to be for men and women in the community, but that it is rather circumstantial. The responses were highly varied and highlighted different situations that might have directly or indirectly influenced the distribution of roles and responsibilities that have come to define the way of life of people of Kotido. The youth FGD specifically placed the construction of gender roles and responsibilities to the parents because they teach and mentor the children to grow up to do certain roles and not others. Boys and girls help their mothers to do all the household chores when they are still young like cooking, grinding, fetching water, gathering firewood, taking care of siblings, but as they enter their teenage years it changes and they never do that kind of work the same way anymore. Boys are taught by their fathers at home in the resting place known as Aperit, while girls are taught by their mother at the cooking area known as ekeno.

One male youth respondent in an FGD of uneducated youth said,

“As a boy grows to about 10-12 years, he cannot do household chores anymore. He spends more time with the older boys out in the bushes hunting, grazing cattle or chatting away under trees far from home because those near home are for older men. In fact even his mother cannot allow him around the homestead, and more so near the cooking area, she will tell the father to teach him what men are supposed to be doing. So we grow to understand what women and men should be doing”
Table 2: Showing the community response on who constructs gender roles and responsibilities in the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant of roles and responsibilities</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The man determines being the family head</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God determined</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Forefathers) We grew up and found things that way</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents teach who does what</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and woman within their household</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunger and poverty</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have no idea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Community perceptions of violence in Kotido

The community in Kotido is aware of the existence of violence within the community and acknowledges that there are diverse forms of violence that really affect and threaten the co-existence of women, girls, men and boys in the community.

Whereas violence is a reality within the communities of Kotido, some of these forms of violence are accepted as an integral part of gender relations. The discussions revealed that the most easily noticeable types of violence include rape, defilement, wife battering and forced/early marriages. However, other types that were highlighted by the discussants seemed to be swallowed up within the power relationships between men and women in the communities.

Table 3 summarises the findings of what the community perceive as gender based violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Type of violence</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wife battering</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rape and defilement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Forced marriage</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Courtship pre-marital sex</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Women doing a lot of family roles</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family quarrels and insults</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Forceful widow inheritance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Men denying responsibility over pregnancy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Killing innocent people during cattle raid/theft</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.4.1 Domestic violence

From the discussions, the majority of the respondents reported wife battering as the most common physical violence happening between women and men in the community. This was attributed to a number of factors including the high number of dowry given to the woman’s family during marriage although this was disputable as both men and women highlighted with or without dowry payment, violence affects more women in general who are traditionally loaded with all the home chores. Intoxication is the reason most perpetrators front for being violent.

Polygamy, although it is by and large regarded a normal marriage practice that has always existed in Kotido and other Karimojong communities, is believed to be one of the factors fueling rampant and widespread domestic violence between the man and his wives among children mostly stemming from spousal rivalry. This has further created vulnerable situations in the community directly affecting innocent children who deserve to be protected and supported by both parents; most children have been neglected in such marriages where the woman is the sole actor in providing for the children while the man is busy in his other homes. It has also contributed to increased child labour because women have to subject their children to hard work so as to be able to provide for the family.

An FGD group of women said, “When there is a fight and a woman beats up and injures the man, she will be brought to the council of elders where she will be stripped and tied on a tree with black ants. All the women in the manyatta/Ere will be called to beat her. Then all of them will have to make local brew for the elders as a punishment for not teaching the other woman to respect her husband.”

Domestic violence is further compounded during the marriage ceremony where a man, his friends and relatives ask for a donkey from his in-laws to do work for him. This explains the fate of most women in Kotido who have to work hard to provide for the family. Women have to walk long distances into the bushes to collect wood and charcoal for sale able to be to buy some food. When she is unable to keep up she will experience violence, beatings and insults from the husband because she is considered property. However, men were reported to be experiencing mostly psychological violence in their marriages. Men noted that,
because of the recent shift in livelihoods that resulted from the loss or reduction of their main livelihood source (livestock keeping), most of them are no longer able to provide support to their family which is so traumatizing especially where they receive insults from their women. According to them, physical violence is only a reaction to the psychological abuse they experience.

Beating of women and girls in Kotido communities is a common disciplining practice. This has been practiced for long such that it is tolerated by women who experience it and they only try to report it when it becomes extreme for instance if the woman sustains serious body injuries. The council of elders will then caution the man and fine him a goat and local brew but of course it will still be made by the same woman. The respondents noted that domestic violence like wife beating is a daily occurrence and happens anywhere, but it is taboo for a woman to beat a man. In such cases, all the women in the village will be punished for a collective failure to teach their fellow woman how to respect her husband, they will all be required to make local brew for the council of elders. This victimizes women in general who will always put blame on other women for the violence they are experiencing at home. Even when a woman tries to go back her parents, she is told to revert to her husband because they cannot pay back the dowry. Some women have ended up committing suicide or disappearing.

During one FGD, one woman who was silent at the start of the discussion began to cry as the discussion progressed. She requested to speak and gave her own testimony;

“My name is Meri (not real name). What you are discussing here about violence in our community is very true. I am a victim of such violence, I am tired and I wanted to end my life just this morning. From the time I was forcefully married off to my husband about 10 years ago, I have experienced no happiness but sorrow and pain. I have three children all of whom are a result of rape whenever he comes back home very drunk. He beats me up at any slightest opportunity he gets without caring whether the children are crying. Sometimes he throws insults at me even in the presence of my relatives saying he wasted his cows on such a lazy woman. I have gone home to my parents to allow me back on several occasions, but they wouldn’t listen and only ask me to go back to my husband. I have thought about this for a long time and today I wanted to die, I had grounded pieces of broken glass which I mixed with water and I was about to take when I heard my sister calling me from the wood fence. When I came out to meet her, she asked me to go along with her to the meeting tree where the women have gathered. I almost hesitated but because she insisted, I am now here and talking about my problem.” At the end of the discussion, the RLP social worker took time to counsel her.

3.4.2 Forced marriage

Forced marriages practiced in the communities of Kotido expose women and girls to violence. The acceptable practice of “carrying away” girls during courtship has been used as a tool to forcefully have sexual intercourse with a girl to coerce her into marriage. Some men plan the carrying away of a girl even when the girl has not responded positively or where there are other rival suitors the girl is more interested in. This has led to several instances of what is normally referred to as “courtship rape” because the carry away or pre-
marital sex is done against the will of the girl or even without courtship between the two. This is a practice that has been used for long as a basis for sanctioning marriage. Although it is seen as normal yet it psychologically affects the girls who experience it and the young boys who happen to lose their girls in the process may bribe her parents with cows.

Men monitor the movement of the target girls as they go to collect water, firewood, market places and during social dances on Sundays after prayers. Culturally the man is supposed to wrestle down a girl and have carnal knowledge of her (sex) before going to negotiate for marriage with her parents. A man who has the number of animals the parents want takes priority; he finds it easy because parents of the girl cannot refuse the offer of cattle; in most cases these are older men with more than one wife. The poor young boys who have now been made vulnerable because they cannot get girls of their choice have to find ways to get around this. The karachuna (youth) resort to raping girls of their choice in order to be the first, but even then in some cases, being the first to have sex with girl does not guarantee their marriage. The parents of the girl may still insist on her getting married to the older man who can afford to give them cows.

**One opinion leader in one village said**, “Carrying away girls is normal and has been practiced from time immemorial even by our fore fathers to seal marriage which is okay, except that these days some men just rape the girls and abandon, the good one is that one who rapes and then marries her.”

**Figure 3: The youth caught up in the process of courtship during traditional dances.**
(Source: Taken from the field)
The non-educated youth in a FGD further explained that in most cases, the father of the Karachuna asks his son to go on and "carry away" the girl of his choice while he goes on to negotiate for marriage with her family. This is in situations where the father is in position to pay dowry for his son’s marriage. However, forced marriage has had negative consequences on young girls and boys; in such cases, they go to the extent of committing or attempting suicide while others disappear from home so as to escape from forced marriages, or decide to elope with the suitor they have identified rather than the choice of parents and relatives.

Participants further highlighted that it is very common for parents to pull their girl children out of schools and force them into marriage, especially those in primary schools are particularly vulnerable to falling victims of this violence. This is because of a general belief that girls who go to school or are exposed to town life end up as prostitutes who will fetch little or no dowry during marriage.

**3.4.3 Sexual violence**
The most common forms of sexual violence reported during discussions were rape and defilement. Most common cases of rape usually occur while women and girls are in the bush fetching wood or water, on their way from or to home in execution of their gender roles. In Kotido, a rape which does not involve courtship is condemned and once the perpetrator is known, the community makes sure he pays for it. A case in point happened just the same day the researchers were holding a discussion with a group of women in Namukur village in Kacheri: a man who had raped a girl on her way home from fetching water was badly beaten up before being brought before the council of elders, and tied to a tree. This is a form of traditional justice that perpetrators are subjected to in addition to paying fine.

However, apart from the incidences related to cultural practices, sexual violence was also noted by discussants as being perpetrated by government and state actors. The discussants pointed out a lot of sexual assault and other forms of violence happened during the forceful disarmament period. Most of these crimes by state actors were and are still being committed with impunity. Sexual exploitation in schools was reported to be increasing happening perhaps explaining the fear most parents in villages have about sending and retaining their daughters in schools.

Continuous discussion and probing of some of the respondents revealed that sexual exploitation of young boy herders by other older men used to take place in the bigger community kraals where the Jie could take their cattle to graze during long drought seasons (usually extending to over one year). Most of them had not exactly witnessed it, but knew of it through hearî say. The reason that the respondents highlighted for this was the absence of women in the kraals for the whole season until the men returned home, they
would then turn to molesting young boys to satisfy their sexual urge. Once caught, such perpetrators were killed by pushing a stick into the anus and rolling it. This is something which is little known in Kotido, because the whole issue of a man sexually abusing a fellow man is totally unacceptable. Sexual abuse of young boys requires further detailed survey and information on more evidence from the herders so that they can be protected, because the kraals still exist, though they are fewer and tend to be located not very far from the manyattas or Ere.

3.4.4 Areas of occurrence of violence and its consequences
According to both the male and female respondents, the violence identified within the community happens daily depending on what type and where. Domestic violence, forced marriage, and rape were those most reported (refer to table 3). 96% of the respondents highlighted that women and girls are the most vulnerable to and most affected by the different types of violence existing within their communities, this was further explained by a police officer in Kotido Town Council who gave a ratio of about 9 women to 2 men. The various reasons given to this fact included; women in Kotido being the sole providers for the families, women taken to be inferior and weaker sex, social cultural norms giving men more power and authority over women, and little involvement of women in community decision making. Domestic violence in communities of Kotido usually heightens during the period of harvest, though respondents emphasized that, "there is no specific place meant for violence, it happens anywhere depending on the type of violence."

Violence according to the community happens in locations summarised in the bar graph below;

**Figure 4: Showing areas of occurrence of violence**
A detective police officer said, “Just in September last month, I found a girl of 13 years old pregnant after being raped by some men who were thought unknown. The parents were not bothered to help the young girl and later we learnt that they had been paid by the perpetrator, so they chose to neglect their daughter because of that.”

From the survey, 45% of the respondents highlighted that most of the violence happens within the homes especially domestic violence and sexual exploitation, marital rape. Other forms of violence like courtship rape, defilement and battering happens along the roads, bushes and gardens and mostly affects women and girls.

Violence has had negative consequences not only for the persons who experience it, but for the family and community as a whole. The community is aware of the physical, emotional, and health consequences of violence especially to an individual at personal and family level. All the respondents could identify at least one negative consequence of violence to a victim. However, there seemed to be a lack of basic information on its consequences on the community as a whole. This has a negative effect on even reporting the violence and seeking support. It becomes hard for a survivor who might have mixed feelings of how people will react when they hear about the violence they have experienced. The respondents explained that, much as it is not easy for people to talk to others about the violence they have experienced, some survivors try to report incidents of rape and domestic violence when they really feel hurt and are seeking services especially health.

3.5 Community support for survivors of GBV
Discussions with the community revealed that survivors talk about the violence they have experienced depending on the type and situation at hand. They highlighted that most survivors find it comfortable to speak or talk about the violence they have experienced when they are sure of getting support. There are also situations when survivors do not talk about the violence they have experienced. They would rather keep it within themselves and find their own coping mechanisms; this was attributed to various reasons including;

- Fear of stigmatisation,
- Fear of being beaten and blamed for causing the violence especially in cases of domestic violence and sometimes rape
- Humiliation where some people within the community begin to compose insulting songs about the survivor,
- Lack of confidentiality this was further explained by one woman in the FGD who said, “After my husband forced me into having sex when I had just finished my periods, it was so painful that the next day I shared it with my friend on our way to the borehole. I thought it was a womanly talk that was confidential. Two days later, I
was surprised when my co-wife abused me using the same words I had told my friend”

- Fear of being rejected by family. This is very common in marriage, where a woman can be rejected and chased away by her husband for having been raped
- Lack of information on availability of basic services within the community
- Being threatened with further harm or murder if they reported the matter

### 3.5.1 Access to justice for GBV survivors in Kotido

Within communities in Kotido, there are options and services available to people who have experienced violence at the hands of both government structures and traditional justice systems within the sub-counties and villages that can provide support to survivors.

After experiencing violence, both male and female survivors share it with a friend or someone in the family, then they report their cases to the LC 1 chairpersons or the kraal/Ere leaders; this is in a bid to seek compensation from the perpetrator. Compensation can be in terms of fine or medical costs associated with the violence. A council meeting of elders referred to as *ekokwa* in the village is called for to discuss the case and decide the fate of both the survivor and the perpetrator.

**An in-charge in one HCIII said,**

“Every week we treat a minimum of 5 cases of domestic violence with serious injuries, sometimes deep cuts on the head or even broken arms and legs. The majority of whom are women but they will not mention about violence, they will give other reasons like I fell, the axe while collecting firewood etc but we treat them”.

People report domestic violence mostly when they have suffered repeated violence that has caused a lot of injuries to a person.

Domestic violence including wife battering is considered a family dispute that should be handled with the family by relatives of both the man and woman. A grievous harm will require a council of elders who will summon the perpetrator and decide on his fate.

In most cases, he will be beaten and fined to kill a bull for the elders as a way of atoning his sins, he will then be cautioned.

Where the ruling of the council of elders failed, the case is taken to police, especially rape and defilement cases. This was further explained by a police officer who said, the council of elders tries rape and defilement cases which is not legally their mandate according to laws of Uganda. But they receive and hear such cases, when they fail then the matter is reported to the police for documentation or at least some evidence they will need to use to seek compensation from the perpetrator and his family. In cases where the council of elders succeeds and the family of the survivor receives cows or the fine, they stop following up the case without thinking about the consequence of the act to the survivor.
3.5. 2 Services available to survivors of GBV in Kotido

The services available to survivors of GBV in Kotido are mostly in government formal systems of support. These services as observed and discussed during key informant interviews are the most basic services that survivors need to begin their healing process. These include:

Health

It was noted that each sub county in Kotido has a Health Centre III which has the mandate to receive and manage survivors of GBV headed by a clinical officer or a nursing officer. They provide medical treatment and attention to cases of mainly rape, defilement and domestic violence. They receive supplies for the management of sexual assault cases from the district include; Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for prevention of HIV, STI treatment, Emergency Contraception Pill (ECP) to prevent un-intended pregnancies and other medical supplies. They take survivors’ medical history, examine the survivors and document the information on Police Forms 3 and also provide basic counseling. The main challenge is that sometimes these supplies run out of stock from the health units and even the district. There is limited knowledge of some health centre staff on the management of survivors. It was noted that at least each health centre has one staff previously trained in Clinical Care for Sexual Assault Survivors (CCSAS) but with the high staff turnover or staff going for further studies, there are always gaps left in service provision.

Police

Kotido district has a Central Police Station (CPS) situated at the town council providing investigation, arrests of perpetrators, community policing, safety and security for survivors, Police Form 3 (PF3) etc. All the sub counties in Kotido have police posts. These are usually the first reference points for those seeking police support. Survivors report to the police to seek justice, protection and documentation of their cases. The main challenge the police in sub-counties face is the lack of resources to carry out arrests of perpetrators. The police reported that, in most cases, they walk long distances to far villages to implement an arrest which may turn out unsuccessful and delays the process of investigation. At sub counties, they have a limited mandate, so GBV cases like rape, defilement and child protection are referred to CPS at town council, yet at the same time they have no capacity to facilitate such referrals. It was also further explained by one teacher in Kacheri that the link between the community and police is not strong, and people do not trust them to be able to help survivors.

Psychosocial support

According to the respondents most survivors are traumatised by the GBV they have gone through and this explains why there are cases of attempted suicide or disappearance from home to unknown location. Most are scared of reporting or seeking services for fear of further harm especially from the perpetrator and his family, and thus survivors find it easy to
blame themselves instead. Community groups (women, men and youth) that are a good source of support to survivors at community level lack information and skills on how to provide basic support to survivors. The presence of a Refugee Law Project social worker based in Kotido town council offering psychosocial support to survivors of GBV and where necessary making referrals for them to access other basic services, has filled a critical gap. Evidently, there is still need for training of community activist groups and community case managers in basic psychosocial support, and the referral pathway should be articulated and strengthened in each sub-county.

**Legal aid/Justice**

There is a strong presence of a grade 1 magistrate’s court in Kotido town council to provide legal justice to survivors of GBV. This used to be a challenge when a magistrate would visit once in a while, but the recent establishment of the court and its structures will bridge the gap for those who are seeking justice. This requires complimentary effort of community based legal aid and counseling support, existence of paralegals within the community. This is a service that most survivors in Kotido cannot access in terms of distance, costs, or even basic information on what is offered. The presence of Refugee Law Project Legal Officer based in Kotido town will cover the gap that for long deterred survivors from seeking justice. It will require training of paralegals amongst community leaders/elders within the community who will receive and provide information and refer the survivors to RLP.

**Traditional Justice**

This is very popular and accessible to survivors of GBV within the communities of Kotido. The discussions with the community revealed that, they place high importance and trust in the traditional justice process. The ekokwa is a strong traditional court with only male judges. It involves a council of elders hearing the case and instantly giving punishment to the perpetrator. In most cases this includes a thorough beating traditionally called ameto, a fine of cows depending on what the violence was, and a caution.

In reality, some practices of this traditional court like communal beating violate the rights of individuals more or less like mob justice. The traditional court in itself is not mandated to handle such matters by the laws of Uganda. According to the respondents, communal beating is a behavior change strategy aimed at not only ensuring justice to the survivor but also preventing GBV because other potential perpetrators would not like to experience the same punishment. Even though it’s a culturally supported system, the functionality of the traditional justice delivery systems is partly based on the inability of the formal justice to increase their operational presence in the communities in Kotido. Their existence has had little impact in the community, because of the lengthy and tedious process and the general fear of intimidation from the lawyers during the process of testifying.
3.5.3 Challenges survivors face while seeking services and support

Despite the availability of some basic services within Kotido, survivors face challenges while trying to access these services.

Most survivors lack funds to access services at the health facilities. Although the health workers do not agree with this, the community reported that sometimes the health personnel demand for money to fill in the Police Form 3 (PF3) at the health centre which hinders them from even trying to go there. Even at police stations, they are expected to give money for opening files, fuel for arresting the perpetrators or following up the case. This was further explained with an emotional voice by one woman in a FGD who “I have been violated, I am seeking support and it is me who should suffer again. Because I must have money to access these services, so when I don’t have it what do I do? I just pretend like nothing happened and suffer the consequence in silence or I will rather go to the council of elders who will ensure that the perpetrator facilitates the medical process and even the cows he will be fined, I and my family can sell and at least have money to do something else”.

In-as-much as people try to access the services, the nearest health centers and police posts are far, especially for those villages not near to the sub-county head quarters where all the basic services are situated. Most survivors lack transport to reach these services. This explains why the support systems and mechanisms within the community are more popular and accessible. While trying to access services, they have huge security concerns that sometimes deter them from seeking support. They experience threats from the perpetrators and their family. This also helps explain why people who experience violence never report.

Settling matters out of court/justice institutions was reported as one very common hindrance to survivors getting justice. In most cases like rape and defilement, especially where the parents or family of the survivor take in interest in the case, they negotiate a settlement out of court, but the survivor is not involved in the process of negotiation, and even the cows brought as fine go to the parents not the survivor. This explains why forced marriage to the perpetrator is high. In addition, the long and expensive modern justice process deters survivors from seeking formal justice and resort to the traditional way.
3.5.6 Systems in place meant to deal with perpetrators

From the survey it was clear that GBV is not condoned in Kotido although the circumstances and degree matters. It was also evident that most perpetrators of violence are men and boys, and that; women and girls are the most directly affected. Within the community, the perpetrator is brought before the council of elders who listen to the case and make a judgment depending on the type of violence. In cases of rape and or defilement, the perpetrator will be given a traditional punishment by beating called ameto, made to apologise and promise never to repeat again. He is also fined 8 heads of cattle, given to the survivor and family who will sell one cow to cater for the survivor’s medical expenses. A police officer in Kacheri explained that he even witnessed one day when a man was being beaten by his peers for abandoning his family for some period of time and he had to swear never to do it again. In cases of domestic violence, the perpetrator will also be brought or summoned by the council of elders for case hearing. He is beaten, fined to slaughter a bull for the elders, provide local brew and cautioned on the behaviour. If the survivor is badly hurt, the perpetrator will have to cater for the medical costs.

Discussions further revealed that perpetrators are arrested and detained in police custody until they are transferred to prison if proven guilty by the courts. The police also make follow up on the cases brought to their notice. As much as there is increased recognition of the presence of police, the communities still think locking a perpetrator in police or prison does not help the survivor heal and feel happy. Instead they fear further harm should the perpetrator get released after serving his term, or should the family continue threatening the survivor if their son did not return. This was further explained by one police officer who said,

“People here prefer traditional punishment systems more than the modern legal punishment of imprisonment. One day I was made to witness a case of defilement as traditional justice was carried out. After taking the young girl for medical examination, the man was brought to the police station while tied with a rope and I was asked to sit and witness him being punished. When I told them I had the mandate to arrest and detain the perpetrator – they refused and insisted that I should witness as a police officer. So I had to just sit and record the case as I witnessed him beaten. They went back home with him to pay his fine.”

This highlights the need for the traditional and modern systems to work together to ensure effective support for survivors to cover up the gaps as the modern system’s coverage is still limited in the communities. In certain situations, the family of the survivor goes to raid cattle from the family or even the whole clan of the perpetrator. They grab as many cows as they can as a way of punishing the perpetrator. This according to respondents sends a warning message to other potential perpetrators to be careful.
3.6 Community GBV prevention mechanisms

GBV prevention seeks to address the root causes and contributing factors so as to end GBV occurrence within the community. Part of this baseline survey aimed at understanding how the community prevents violence and further harm from happening. The community discussions revealed that, both women and men try to do something to prevent violence from happening.

One of the most outstanding prevention strategies mentioned in all discussions was the use of ameto and payment of fines according to violence act committed. The perpetrator is beaten and fined between 3 to 60 head of cattle, depending on the issue. This form of punishment is usually carried out in the presence of the public. This is considered a form of warning to other potential perpetrators.

Discussions also revealed that, whenever there are many reported cases of violence happening in a village, the elders call for a village meeting to discuss and caution the community members on behavior change, this was highlighted by a police officer in Rengen Sub County who thought it is a good practice of preventing violence.

In Kotido, women and girls usually move in a group especially when carrying out their gender roles like fetching wood and water, going to market places etc, just to minimize risks of exposure to violence

Discussions further revealed that men and women spend time differently to discuss and share issues and experiences with their peers. When violence happens, men talk with other men and encourage them to be non-violent and women also talk with other women to support and caution. This is a form of peer counseling

3.7 Community suggestions on GBV prevention and response

The community highlighted a number of recommendations which they thought would work for them and if given support and mentoring, they can be in a better position to get to the fore front in ending violence within their communities.

- Continuous community sensitizing and mobilization on available services, relevant laws on GBV and legal implications of the violence act committed. It was emphasized by all respondents that the lack of knowledge on GBV stops people who experience violence from even seeking services.
- Police officers and health workers' capacity at district and sub county level should continuously be built so as to provide compassionate timely support to survivors. This is on argument that the police and health workers are in most cases affected by transfers.
- Providing basic counseling and guidance to survivors at all levels of service provision
• Direct compensation to survivors of GBV must be ensured even by formal government systems because it is more effective in ensuring justice for the survivor. It should be included in the laws, so that it is legal

• The community should be educated and supported to become more responsive and supportive to survivors by sensitizing them that GBV affects the whole community not only the individual

• Relevant implementation authorities need to tighten GBV related laws. The enforcement authorities must also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of GBV processes like arresting and ensuring that that suspects are produced before prosecution

• The community also suggested the ex-communication of perpetrators once identified. This was explained as a traditional way, where by the perpetrators are summoned before the elders; taken to the shrine where the elders will curse him/her away never to return. This curse could as well mean death.

In light of the above, the RLP and other GBV programming partners should do more research on traditional justice especially what fines are attached to each crime. Arguably it the traditional justice is more effective for peace and harmony in the community because there is the availability of witnesses, transparency it no bribes, collective decisions.

4.0 Conclusion
The community recognizes the existence of gender based violence especially against women and girls who are the most affected by the violence. For the RLP to achieve its objective there is need to strengthen referral networks right from the community level and carry out awareness raising activities that tackle the root causes and challenge norms in society which condones violence. It should also involve the community groups of men, women, youth and the council of elders who are willing to participate in the GBV activities. And most importantly it should engage communities in gender discussions that help identify issues for advocacy at district and national level.

5.0 Recommendations for RLP and other GBV programme implementation in Kotido

Refugee Law Project GBV programme needs to strengthen the GBV strategy to comprehensively address GBV in Kotido being the main actor. The strategy should focus on the following:

1. Capacity Building: there is need for RLP and other partners in Kotido to continuously provide technical capacity building to various GBV prevention and response actors on identified needs as new partners come on board. For example the health centre staff should continuously be trained, supported and mentored to be able to offer compassionate timely care to survivors of GBV. The police,
community/kraal leaders, community groups all should be trained on basic legal counseling, psychosocial support, referral and the traditional justice systems in the community so as to be able to strike a balance between the traditional and formal. The capacity building should include understanding the gender realities and dynamics in the communities of Kotido. This will strategically improve utilization and access to basic GBV services within the communities in Kotido

2. **Strengthen Partnerships and Coordination:** there is need to strengthen the existing GBV coordination mechanisms at district and sub county level. GBV prevention and response cannot be achieved by an individual organisation but required a multi-sectoral approach and networks. Protection coordination meetings are already taking place at district level targeting partners implementing GBV, Child protection, Human rights and rule of law. These meetings happen once in a month and discussion of general protection issues. However, the RLP needs to strengthen the coordination meetings at sub county levels so as to feed the information into the main district protection meetings.

3. **Develop and strengthen the GBV communication strategy for prevention and response to violence in Kotido.** From the findings, it is noted that sometimes access to and utilization of existing community services is hindered by existing communication gaps where even survivors are in most cases blamed for the violence they have experience. Development and or incorporation of an awareness raising module (recognising women’s roles, men and women working together, gender roles, gender and power, sexual violence, gender and culture and SASA! etc). In this the RLP staff will train the target community groups in each module, then they go and do the same within their communities in form of drama, songs, dialogue, debate etc on a monthly basis. This will help the community to recognize violence, prevent it, support rather than blame those who experience violence.

In addition, there is need for RLP to involve the religious institutions at district and sub county level in awareness raising on GBV issues. These play a key role in promoting and condemning the acts. This will also involve developing their capacity to deliver gender balanced messages for positive cultural transformation.

The GBV communication strategy should as well target schools and institutions in Kotido by engaging teachers, prefects and all students in awareness raising workshops and dialogues so as to ensure effective support to children and students while instilling a culture of non tolerance to gender violence right from childhood including youth out of school.

4. **Strengthening the GBV Referral pathway:** In view of the number of government and non-government actors involved in Kotido, the RLP has a mandate to review the existing referral system showing survivors and service providers where GBV services can be found. Given the illiteracy rates in the region, many people may not
be in position to read or interpret the referral document. This highlights the need to build the capacity of the service providers (police, health, courts, CDOs, CBOs, NGOs etc) and community stakeholders (kraal leaders, opinion leaders, LCs, community groups etc) in the GBV referral pathway, to be able to offer compassionate timely services to survivors, and to refer while maintaining confidentiality. A good referral system is not on paper but within the community where both the service providers and the community are aware of what services are available and who to refer to. There is need for RLP to prioritize this referral pathway and disseminate it widely, while also strengthening and improving close working relations with the child protection committees, community case managers, paralegals, and anti-violence clubs in the sub counties. (See pg 35 for sample referral pathway from informal to formal structures)

5. **Working closely with traditional structures:** from findings, it is recognized that the community has a very strong traditional structure through which cases are resolved, order maintained and continuity guaranteed. RLP GBV legal aid interventions should seek to transform the *ekokwa* structures into support structures for ensuring justice for survivors at community level. These same structures can be the main entry points to strengthen legal assistance referral.

- RLP and GBV implementing partners should lobby for establishment of courts within the sub counties or at least mobile courts to move to the people rather than the people coming to court so as to minimize the issue of the lack of transport. Also GBV programming partners should further lobby for incorporation of Local Councils 1 into the traditional system so that the decisions taken by the traditional courts can be binding.

Further still, human rights trainings should be increased and more supported for the councils of elders who are always involved in traditional justice. Training the elders in human rights will go along way into making the traditional systems more useful other than trashing them, yet it is more supportive to the community. Also translating some key legal articles, acts into the local language for dissemination

- The traditional community meeting points such as the shrines (*akiriket*) should be utilised as the entry point for information sharing. The speakers in *akiriket* are usually determined before the seating and thus not just anybody can talk in this arrangement. There is need to use this fora to disseminated SGBV information.

6. **Community Involvement in programme design and implementation:** there is very important need for the RLP to involve the community in especially GBV prevention and promotion of referral networks within their areas. For example, awareness raising programmes should be done by the community and the sub county CDOs
with the technical and financial support of the RLP. Apart from increasing GBV knowledge, this will also encourage community ownership and sustainability of the project.
Appendix I: Sample GBV survivor referral pathway from informal to formal structures

HEALTH CARE
- **PEP**: Treatment for prevention of HIV/AIDS/STDs – must be taken within 3 days (72 hours) since the incident
- **ECP** for prevention of pregnancy – Only effective within 5 days (120 hours) since the incident
- Treatment of wounds and fractures
- Basic counseling
- Referral for other support (psychosocial support, Police etc)

**KEEPING IN MIND THE GBV GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

CASE MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT
- Help survivors cope with trauma and social stigma
- Psychosocial support should be confidential & case by case basis
- Provide information about the types of available services and locations of providers, as well as information about any related fees
- Facilitate access to services including support for related fees
- Referrals should be according to guiding principles

COMMUNITY SUPPORT MEMBERS/STRUCTURES including council of elders and LCs
- Do no more harm to the survivor
- Support to survivors by CDO / VHTs / CPCs/Council of elders, LCs/ Community leaders MUST be guided by the following principles:
  - Respect & Non discrimination,
  - Safety & Security
  - Confidentiality
- Information should only be shared with the survivor’s consent & only with appropriate service providers in the referral pathway
- All interviews are held in private and if possible with same sex
- Be patient - Do not force survivors to make specific choices. Give survivors all the necessary information and options available. Let survivors decide on the services they need & the support them.

LEGAL ACTION/ASSISTANCE
- Help the survivor to understand the legal options & necessary steps to pursue access to Justice/ Legal Action.
- Help the survivor/guardian understand the risk or benefits of legal action
- Accompany the survivor to the police who can collect evidence where possible and properly preserve it for the legal process.
- Prosecute perpetrator and ensure justice to the survivor
- Create and support links with the traditional justice systems so as to ensure timely and compassionate legal support to survivors

SAFETY/SECURITY/PROTECTION
Must understand the Referral Pathway and GBV Guiding Principles (Respect & Non discrimination, Safety & Security, Confidentiality)
- Do no further harm
- Documentation of incident
- Provision of PF3 form and in some cases escort the survivor to the health facility for medical examination and treatment
- Investigation and presentation of evidence to court (where necessary)
- Ensuring survivor safety and security including safe shelter
- Provision of material assistance

**THIS SHOULD BE BASED ON SURVIVORS WISHES**
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