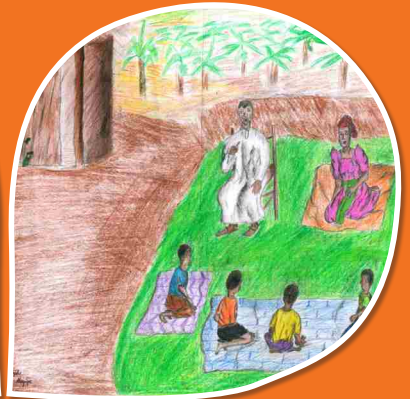


# Cultural resources that address violence against women and girls in

Acholi, Karamoja,  
Buganda and Tooro



*Through the lens of  
young people*



# Introduction

Over the years, different stakeholders have undertaken various measures to end violence against women and girls, however, this still remains a challenge.

The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, with support from the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls and the Embassy of Sweden, is implementing a project aimed at utilising positive cultural resources to address violence against women and girls, promote sexual reproductive health rights and access to justice. The project is implemented in the 6 cultural communities of Acholi, Alur, Buganda, Busoga, Karamoja and Tooro.

As part of the project, young people in Acholi, Karamoja, Buganda and Tooro participated in a drawing competition to illustrate cultural

resources in their communities that are utilised to end violence against women and girls.

Over 200 entries were collected and a jury of cultural leaders (including women) in the communities selected the best entries which have been used to develop this publication. We appreciate the cultural institutions of Buganda, Acholi, Karamoja and Tooro for supporting this competition. In Alur, a similar competition was conducted, and a publication produced.

We also thank our coordinators Balmoi Caide, Bwanika Fred, Anyakun Paul and Koogere Alice Basemera for supporting young people to participate in the competition.

This publication highlights the role of cultural resources in addressing violence against women and girls and demonstrates the role young people play in promoting a better society.

# 1

**Karamoja**

# 1. Ekokwa



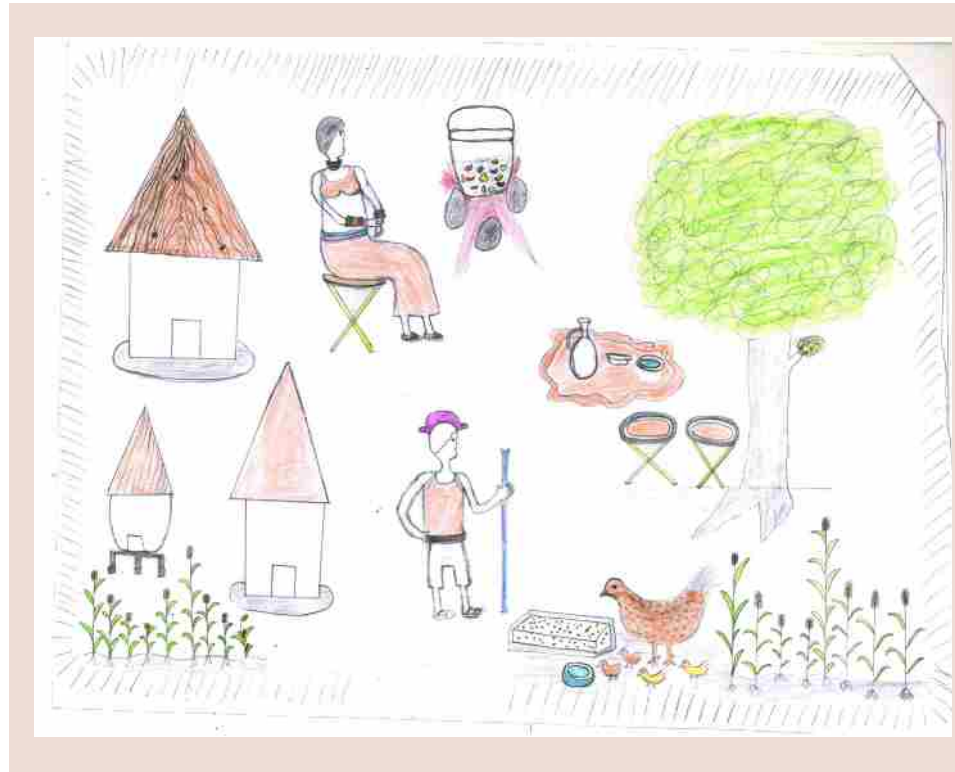
Ekokwa is a community meeting of the Karamojong where elders gather to discuss different issues affecting the community. They use this meeting as an opportunity to adjudicate cases of violence against women and girls such as sexual and physical abuse, and to administer justice. During Ekokwa, reconciliation between married couples who are conflicting is also carried out, where possible.

*Lokoei John,  
Moroto High School*

## 2. Enyoyo

Engodish is a traditional meal prepared by Karamojong women to please their husbands. When a man is grazing, the woman prepares this meal and serves him on his return. This maintains peace and happiness between them and prevents physical violence against women and other members of the household.

*Lokeris Betty, Katongole Girls  
Secondary School, Moroto  
District*



### 3. Ameto



Ameto is traditional mob justice administered to people who violate the rights of women and girls, for example through defilement and rape. Offenders are caned and asked to buy traditional brew for youth and sacrifice a ram for the elders. This prevents would-be perpetrators of violence from committing such acts for fear of the punishment

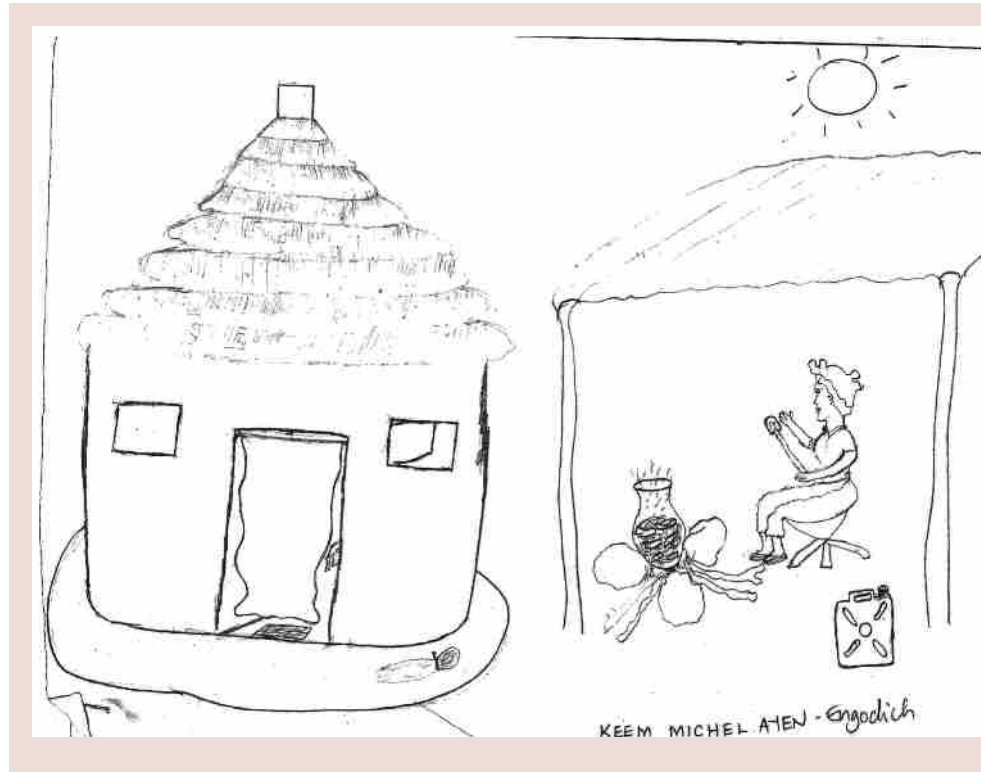
*Sorgho Valerian Wendy,  
Moroto District*

## 4. Engodich

Engodich is a special meal prepared by women in Karamoja to welcome their husbands from kraals and long journeys.

This food is loved by Karamojong men and when they return home to eat, they are very happy with their wives. It is known for building strong bonds between men and women, hence reducing the chances of abuse for women and children.

*Keem Michel Ayen, Kangole  
Girls Secondary School,  
Moroto District*





## 5. Ekicolong ka ebela (Alotoma Nikarimojong)



Ekicolong ka ebela is a traditional stool in Karamoja that male elders seat on while addressing various issues.

The stool which is adorned by animal skin and accompanied by a stick represents defense and protection and therefore commands respect for decisions made by the elders to protect women and girls.

*Keem Magdline,  
Kangole Girls Secondary  
School, Moroto*

## 6. Emuna

In Karamoja, traditional food called "Emuna" is prepared by a wife for her husband when he comes from the kraal. It is usually prepared with dry pounded beef, pounded cucumber seeds, pounded ground nuts mixed with butter and sugar.

Therefore, this promotes love and respect for both a wife and a husband because the man is always eager to get back to his wife.

*Kakunda Molly Agnes, Kangole Girls Secondary School, Moroto District*



## 7. Etinget

In Karamoja, a man who visits the home of a girl for a courtship meeting with a girl and comes with a stool and stick made out of a tree known as ewooi is respected.

The stick is also used by the man to fight men and other people (including family members) who might want to harm the girl.

*Adeke Lydia Hope,  
Kangole Girls Secondary  
School, Moroto District*



## 8. Labwor (Dressing in Thur cultural dress)

Women and girls dress in the Labwor cultural attire. This involves long skirts, made out of Masai sheets and skins. The long skirts are beautifully designed to cover all body parts which attract the attention of men, hence protecting women and girls from sexual abuse such as rape.

*Awidi Sandra Keith,  
Kangole Girls Secondary  
School, Moroto District*



## 9. Etimat/Edukduk



This is a cultural practice of the Karamojong where a man who is preparing for a traditional marriage called Ekichul and preparing for a traditional ritual called Athapanu wears a hat called Etimat made of a skin of a cow and feathers of an ostrich. The one who wears it is respected.

The hat represents peace, unity and respect for culture. Whoever owns it is meant to promote peace, and protect woman and girls. Whoever does not follow the rules and regulations of the hat, is punished by elders. Therefore, men are always ashamed of violating the rights of women and girls or quarrelling in public

*Aleper Moses,  
Moroto Parents Secondary School*

# 10. Ekeyaat

Ekeyaat is a Karamojong traditional symbol, inform of a stick. The stick is not used for fighting, beating or pointing at each other. Once one is got fighting and he/she is beaten with this stick, he/she will run mad or even die.

Therefore, among the Karamojong, the Ekeyaat is regarded as an important stick that changes the behaviours of all clans and is used to protect girls and women against violence.

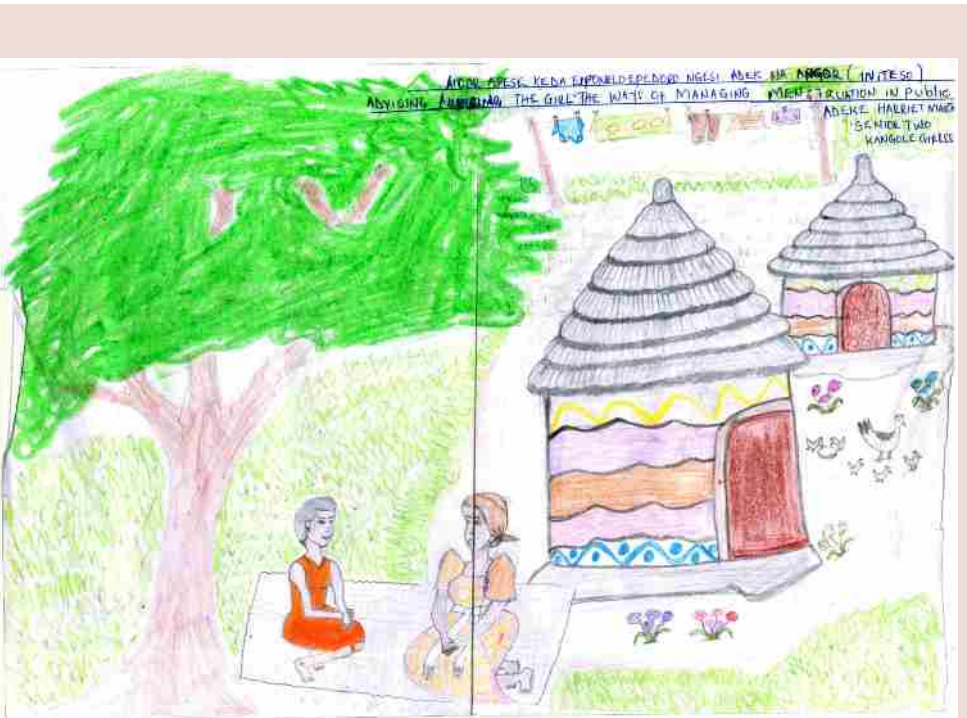
*Locyoro Joseph,  
Moroto Parents Secondary  
School*



# 11. Grandmothers

Grandmothers play a vital role in preparing young girls for adulthood, in Teso, a neighbouring community of Karamoja. Grandmothers groom girls with values that exhibit respect, love and living in harmony, and also teach about issues such as sexual reproductive health and rights. This way, girls are able to take care of their reproductive health in terms of hygiene, which is sometimes a cause of violence against women

*Adeke Harriet Martha, Kangole Girls Secondary School, Moroto District*

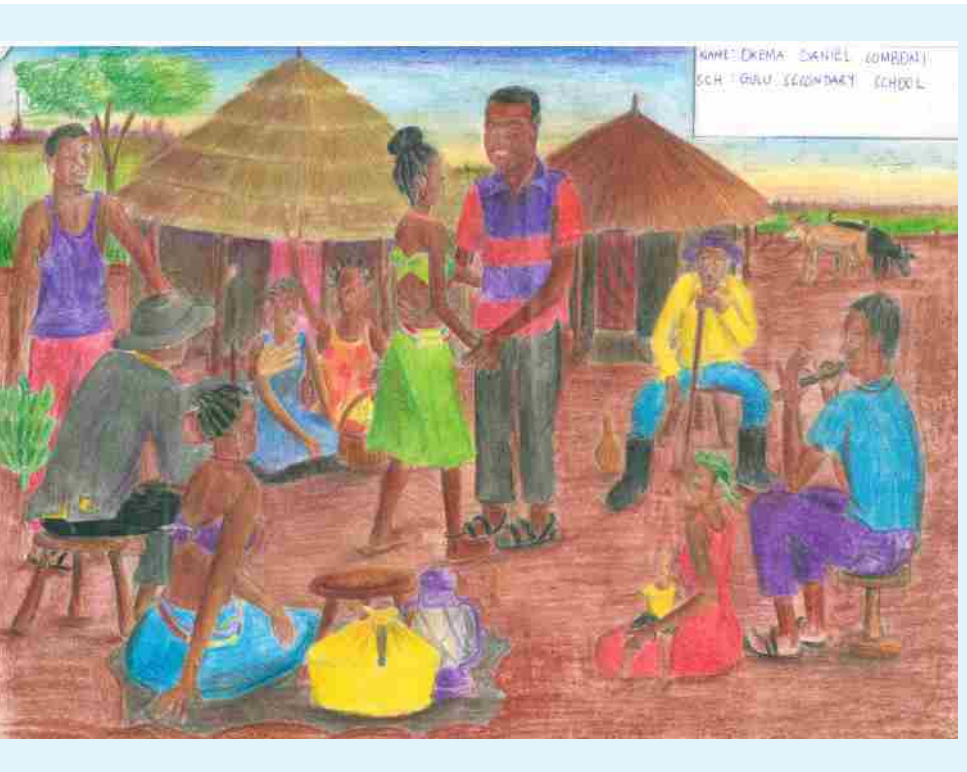


# 2

## Acholi



# 1. Dowry



Dowry is important in securing traditional marriages in Acholi. Once given, it creates a strong bond between the partners and families and gives women access to land and decision-making powers in their marriage.

Giving dowry prevents violence since lack of access to productive resources is one of the major causes of violence against women in Acholi communities.

*Okema Daniel Comboni, Gulu Secondary School*

## 2. Marriage introduction ceremony

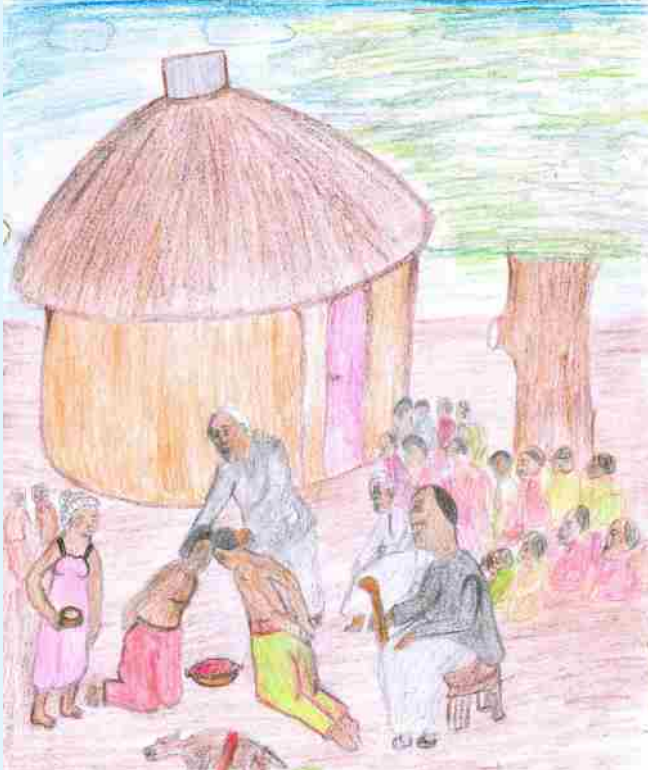
An introduction precedes traditional marriage in Acholi. The aim is for the couple's families to know of the marriage intentions of the bride and groom to be.

It lays a foundation for due diligence by the families of the bride and groom to begin. Due diligence is conducted to ensure that the groom is from a respectful, hard-working and morally upright family that respects women.

*Richard Okeny, Gulu Secondary School*



### 3. Rwot (Chief)



The traditional leadership of the Rwot (chief) and his council in Acholi is instrumental in the administration of justice. Among the cases handled by the Rwot include cases of violence against women and girls.

The Rwot is instrumental in resolving disputes that arise between individuals in communities and clans.

*Achen Martha Omon*

## 4. Mothers, Grandmothers and aunties

In Acholi, mothers, grandmothers and aunties play a vital role in grooming young girls to be loyal, respectful, hardworking, patient and honest. They play a mentorship role to young girls by transmitting important values which are crucial for peaceful and harmonious marriages. When conflicts arise in the marriage, mothers, aunties and grandmothers act as mediators to resolve conflicts.

*Acaye Reagan Kwo Tek, Kitgum Comprehensive College*



## 5. Traditional music

Through Traditional music (songs and dances), the Acholi people send out messages when they are going through tough times. Traditional music such as Bwola and Larakaraka are believed to speak louder.

Messages on equality, fair treatment, marriage, freedom, responsibilities, discipline, respect, and education are passed on through these dances and songs. Messages against violence are also passed on, while immorality is discouraged and moral standards highly encouraged amongst both girls and boys.

*Onen Kenny Rogers,  
Gulu Secondary School*



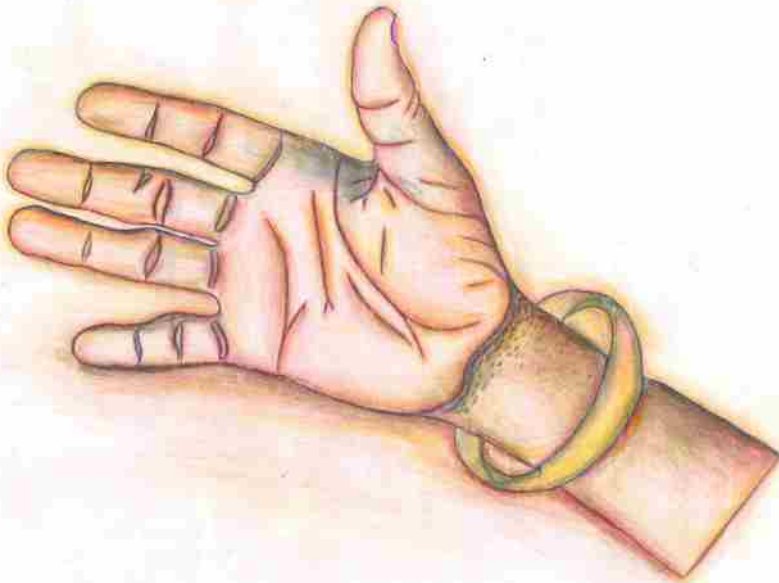
## 6. Wang'oo (Fireplace)

At dusk, every family member gathers at the fireplace for not only warmth but also to learn. Here, the elderly teach men, women, boys and girls their role in society through riddles (koc), proverbs (carolok) and traditional songs. Uncles, for example, teach boys on how to ask a woman's consent for sex even when you are married. This protects the women from rape, unplanned pregnancies and builds peace and harmony in the family.

*Odokonyero Emmanuel, Kitgum High School*



## 7. Ogul (Traditional Bangle)



Ogul is a traditional bangle in Acholi given to a woman during courtship and it is also worn by married women as a symbol of marital identity and respect. This prevents married women from being undermined and hence fully exercise their sexual reproductive rights and also participate in the decision making of the clan. Ogul is also said to protect women from mysterious happenings such as witchcraft.

*Okello Joel, Kitgum  
Comprehensive college*

## 8. Rwot Okoro

In Acholi, the Council of Chiefs appoint women within their rank because of the value they add to the discussions. This special position of a woman is called 'Rwot Okoro'.

Women play a big role in improving gender and social relations, mentoring and moulding young generations, advising chiefs and mobilising Acholi communities.

Rwot Okoro has a responsibility to raise women's issues and concerns including those pertaining to domestic violence.

*Oketayot Brian Bob, Kitgum  
Comprehensive College*





## 9. Cultural Meeting

### CULTURAL meeting



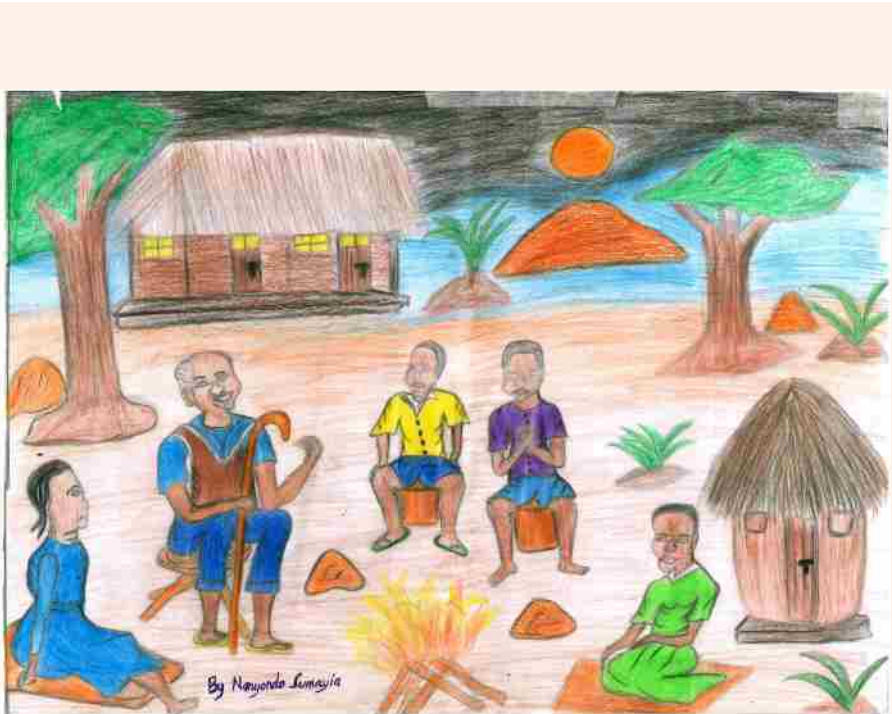
This is organised periodically and it helps the community to know what is going on. During this meeting, perpetrators of violence against women and girls are warned and punished. This serves to deter other members of the community from committing acts of violence for fear of being punished and the associated shame.

*Abiya Micah Bomboko, Kitgum Comprehensive College*

# 3

## Buganda

# 1. Ekyooto (The Fireplace)



In Buganda, elders who include parents, grandparents, uncles (kojjas), aunties (ssengas), transmit cultural values, norms and practices to young people around the fireplace locally known as ekyooto. The transmitted values include respect for self and others, hard work, honesty, loyalty, hygiene, kindness, responsibility, love, sense of shame, humility, transparency, and duty of care among others which should be possessed by a morally acceptable person in the society. Information at the ekyooto is passed on through storytelling, proverbs, songs and riddles some of which discourage violence against women and girls.

*Nanyondo Sumayia, St. Bruno  
Sserunkuma Secondary School,  
Masaka*

## 2. Family gatherings and meetings

Family gatherings and meetings are called by elders such as a father (Taata) and/or grandparents (Ba'Jjaaja). During these meetings, family-related issues including cases of violence against women and girls or family members are tabled and resolved. Young children are also nurtured into responsible adults during such spaces for instance by condemning vices such as wife beating (okukuba omukyala).

*Matovu Francis, St. Joseph Secondary School, Nkoni, Masaka District*



### 3. Ssengas and Kojjas (Aunties and uncles)



Traditionally, uncles and aunties are responsible for grooming young people into responsible adults. They teach boys and girls moral behaviors that are acceptable in the community. As they prepare young people for marriage, they teach them values of patience, respect for themselves and their spouses as well as a sense of responsibility in their homes. All this is aimed at ensuring that young people have stable homes free from violence.

*Ssali Denis, St Jude Secondary School, Masaka District*

## 4. Okwanjula (Traditional marriage ceremony)

In Buganda, a man has to be introduced to his bride's family first before he takes her home for a wife. This is done through a ceremony called "Okwanjula", literally translated as 'to introduce'. Elders present at the ceremony urge the two intending parties to the marriage (man and woman) to amicably resolve disputes inside the house, thus the saying Eby'omunju tebitotolwa (matters of the house are not uttered outside). If, however, they fail to settle them, they are demanded to go back to the elders for redress. This enhances peace, respect, and love between the man and woman thereby reducing the likelihood of violence in their home.

*Mawanda Abraham, St. Jude  
Secondary School, Masaka District*



## 5. Clan heads meetings



The social and governance structure of Buganda is based on clans, and these clans are headed by 'Abakulu b'ebika', translated as 'clan heads'. It is very crucial for clan leaders to engage Abazzukulu (grandchildren) in some meetings, such as gatherings which help to remind them about obugunjufu (civility), civic engagement (bulungi bwansi) or to help one another (okuyambagana). All the above aspects help to reduce violence against women and girls.

*Mugejjera Jude, St. Joseph  
Secondary School, Nkoni,  
Masaka District*

## 6. Community Parenting

Community parenting helps to address or mitigate violence in the society. Any misbehaving child is disciplined by anyone in the community, even though this is condemned by some children's rights, this collaboration promotes obuntubulamu (humanness) in the society.

*Mutaawe Douglas,  
St. Sserunkuma Secondary  
School, Masaka District*





**4**

**Tooro**

# 1. Ekyooto (Fireplace)

Traditionally, Ekyooto is a fireplace which is organised at night time where all family members gather to educate young people on different cultural values such as love, respect for elders and women, honesty, kindness, among others. Elders teach young people through sharing stories /legends (enganikyoo), brain teasers (ebikoikyoo), educative songs. The stories teach girls about their rights, duties and how to respect their husbands when they get married. Boys also learn how to treat their wives and responsibilities of a man in the family.

*Murungi Jonathan, Mpanga  
Secondary School, Fort Portal  
City*



## 2. Akasaka

Akasaka is a place where the Batooro gather to counsel a bride (omugole). Counselling is done by her aunties and the mother, as they prepare the girl for her roles and responsibilities in a home and life skills that create a peaceful home.

It is also two sided, both from the side of the bride and from the family where she is getting married to. In this case, the sisters in-law share the ways moral behaviours of the family, including what the husband to be likes and does not.

The same is done to the man by his uncle by training him on how men are supposed to handle their families.

*Kayiwa Edward, St. Mary's Seminary School, Fort Portal City*





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