

# Biocultural conflicts: understanding complex interconnections between a traditional ceremony and threatened carnivores in north Kenya

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 1. Sample of the questionnaire used.

DIMI CARD	
Household Number:	
Year and place of DIMI celebration:	
Number of skins:	
Identification (by the interviewee):	
Age (Old: >1 year/Fresh: <1 year) based in rigidity, discoloration, rips and patches:	
Origin (Hunted myself / Bought / Rented / Borrowed):	
Where:	
Price:	

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 2 A detailed ethnographic account of the importance of Dimi and some of the changes to the ceremony.

## Importance of Dimi

The entire Daasanach community agreed that Dimi is central to their identity and that every man and first-born daughter in the community must undergo this crucial rite of passage. As a young Daasanach expressed, “*I am married and I have a first daughter that is almost 8, I need to do Dimi as my father and grandfather.*” Songs are an important part of Dimi and many in the community remember different songs associated to Dimi ceremony during their lives. The *Gaarró*, songs sung during Dimi, are specifically created for this event and they contain the history of the family and references to the heroic acts of the Dimi participants, with every song being specifically crafted for each man. Through all *Gaarró* collectively, the history of the Daasanach is perpetuated reinforcing their sense of place and cultural identity. Thus, Dimi and *Gaarró* can be considered as harbingers of the Daasanach historical and cultural heritage, and a powerful means to strengthen social bonds. *Gaarró* also connect Daasanach community with their biocultural landscapes. This is reflected in the following *Gaarró* verse: *Mar he ká dieka alb giri guomoká iish haikí ‘gite giri aany hi ki koogosotká* (in times of long droughts, a herder and his livestock migrate to mountains and hills where some pastures remain). Moreover, several local Daasanach highlighted the important role of Dimi in terms of community cohesion. Many elders explained to young men how they felt when they participated in their Dimi and how sharing livestock with the community was an important sign of solidarity. An elder man

stated, “*when I did Dimi, I shared all my livestock with the community, especially the elders.*” Along these lines, many Daasanach participating in the 2021 Dimi also emphasized the unity of the community. For instance, a Daasanach man stated: “*what I like the most of Dimi is gathering with my people, sharing our stories and our songs*”.

### **Other changes in Dimi**

In our focus group discussions, most assistants brought up that the overall expenses for conducting Dimi have increased (Table 3). Many elders agreed that the number of goats and sheep being used in Dimi has grown as a sign of hospitality and generosity for a growing number of family and friends joining the ceremony. For instance, elders that carried out Dimi in the 90s used less than 20 goats and sheep, whereas in 2021, each Dimi participant used a minimum of 32 goats and sheep. Moreover, nowadays, some participants use Dimi to show off their wealthiness and proudness, and thus, they slaughter even more goats and sheep than they really need to. On the other hand, whereas elders recalled using 6 or 7 big bulls in the 90s, nowadays, the size of the bulls used in Dimi are smaller, because there are fewer pastures due to the increase of droughts, and the increasing frequency of Dimi does not allow bulls to grow in size (Table 3). Historically, the overall economic cost of Dimi was very low because most wildlife-based products were hunted, inherited or traded for a symbolic price, local drinks were fermented from sorghum cultivated by the community, and little livestock slaughtered was enough to feed the community. In contrast, as expressed by the Daasanach community, in 2021 there are many costs involved with Dimi: Renting all the wildlife-based products (i.e., leopard or cheetah skin, colobus skin, ostrich feather headdress, giraffe or oryx tail) can ascend up to 7,500-12,000 KES, buying 2 sacks of sorghum to produce the local breweries costs around 7,000 KES, and using minimum 32 small goats or sheep (Daasanach estimated 3,000 KES per small goat and sheep and 7,000 KES for a big) and 6 or 7 small bulls (Daasanach estimated 7,000–10,000 KES for a small bull and 15,000–20,000 KES for a big bull).