

World Vision

# pawns of politics

children, conflict and peace  
in northern Uganda



# Acknowledgements

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It is our hope and prayer that the efforts of all those who work for peace and justice in northern Uganda will be rewarded soon with an opportunity to build a brighter future for all.

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**Photo credits:** All photos by Ross W. Muir, World Vision Canada, except photo on p. 39, by Charles Maingi, World Vision Kenya, and photo on p. 35, by Linda Dale, Director of Children as Peacebuilders.

**A Note about the Drawings:** Drawings featured throughout this report are done by child abductees as part of their reintegration into the community. All drawings appear in the publication “Where is my home? Children in war.”

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# List of Acronyms

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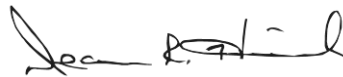
<b>ARLPI</b>	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
<b>CPU</b>	Child Protection Units
<b>CRC</b>	Convention of the Rights of Children
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GoS</b>	Government of Sudan
<b>GoU</b>	Government of Uganda
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>HSM</b>	Holy Spirit Movement
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross/Crescent
<b>IDP(s)</b>	Internally Displaced Person(s)
<b>IRIN</b>	(UN) Integrated Regional Information Network
<b>LDU(s)</b>	Local Defence Units
<b>LRA</b>	Lord's Resistance Army
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NIF</b>	National Islamic Front
<b>NRA/M</b>	National Resistance Army/Movement
<b>NUPI</b>	Northern Uganda Peace Initiative
<b>NUSAF</b>	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
<b>OCHA</b>	(UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SPLA/M</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
<b>STDs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAIDS</b>	United Nations AIDS Agency
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNLA</b>	Ugandan National Liberation Army
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UPDA</b>	Uganda People's Democratic Army
<b>UPDF</b>	Ugandan People's Defence Forces (Army of the Government of Uganda)
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

The faces and stories of children in northern Uganda are etched on our memories. The children and their suffering are unforgettable, but the armed conflict in which they are caught is almost forgotten by most of the world. Hopefully this report will help to change that.

For more than a decade World Vision has worked with the communities in northern Uganda to help them cope with the impacts of war. At our Centre for Children of War in Gulu, children who escape from captivity under the Lord's Resistance Army are helped to return home and rebuild their lives, through psychosocial counselling, healthcare, education and vocational training. In the camps for displaced persons, food, water, and shelter only begin to address the needs of millions of families forced from their homes. We can give blankets to night commuters, but we also need to end the fear that drives them to leave home. The insecurity and costs of this war for everyone over the years is a price that is too high to pay.

With each visit and each contribution, we ask ourselves what more we could do to help resolve this conflict and restore peace in northern Uganda. We are convinced lasting peace is winnable, but it needs a concerted effort from the local to the international level. This report is a result of our desire to contribute to finding the way forward.

It is our hope and prayer that this report will not only be read, but also acted upon by people of goodwill and people with the power and responsibility to end this conflict. It is a plea for a united effort to make a difference for the children and communities in northern Uganda and for global peace and security.



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Robby Muhumuza  
National Director, World Vision Uganda

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President, World Vision International

# Executive Summary

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The armed conflict in northern Uganda has been overlooked and misunderstood for the past 18 years. It is a tragic struggle for power involving children, who are used as pawns for military and political purposes. They are abused; they are manipulated; and by most, they are pitied, then ignored. In spite of good intentions and laws against child abuse, these children have no protection for their security and basic rights.

The misunderstanding has resulted in a tendency to simplify the conflict to merely “getting the bad guy,” while ignoring the complexities that continue to fuel the conflict. For the past 18 years, war between the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU) has continued because of historical grievances, a legacy of militarised politics, external interference, and national and international indifference.

Uganda’s post-colonial history has been one of violent coups, numerous armed rebellions, and regional and ethnic divisions. This has created a militarised political system with a legacy of accessing state power through violence. The LRA insurgency was initially a political response to the current government’s coup and ensuing cattle theft by various government soldiers. When the LRA resorted to the violent abduction of children to serve in its ranks, political grievance turned into humanitarian crisis.

The nature and duration of the conflict have created tremendous humanitarian, social, and economic costs for all of Uganda, particularly for children. The protection of children has not been a priority for governments, despite national and international laws guaranteeing their basic rights. As a result, a situation of mass hostage-taking has occurred, where over 20,000 children have been violently abducted. Children are the primary targets of the LRA, shrewdly forced to perpetuate their own misery — whether they are abducted, or live a life of “night commuting” to avoid abduction.

Another tactic sustaining the conflict is the use of

spiritual rituals by the LRA. Spiritual weapons are used to psychologically enslave both abducted children and the targeted population with fear. History provides an important context for understanding the spiritualised politics and the politicised spiritual rituals underlying the conflict. Because of this history, it is not strange to also spiritualise military activity. The result is a cultic manipulation of religion by the LRA in lieu of a political platform. The religious dimension has become an excuse for lack of action by authorities with mandates for child protection and conflict resolution. It would be more effective to recognise the religious element of this conflict as tactical, and respond by supporting and encouraging inter-faith peace efforts as part of a comprehensive counter-offensive.

The protracted nature of this conflict has created a humanitarian crisis that is among the world’s worst. Over 1.6 million people are homeless. Eighty per cent of the northern region’s population lives in displacement camps that are squalid and cramped. For the displaced, the inadequate response to this crisis has meant a drastic decline in quality of life indicators. Malnutrition rates among displaced children range from 7–21 per cent, and anywhere from 1,052–15,000 people share a single water source. A further indication of the severity of this crisis is the upswing in HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. National prevalence rates for Uganda are estimated at 6.2<sup>1</sup> per cent and declining, but rates in war-affected areas are almost double that of the national average, at 11.9 per cent.

The economic costs of the war have been enormous for the entire country. It is morally and academically challenging to quantify the value of a human life and the social costs of war, but attempting to do so paints a picture of the costly damages of this prolonged conflict. For the analyzed period, the costs of the conflict in northern Uganda can conservatively be quantified at over US\$1.3 billion, and costing more than US\$100 million per year. This is more than Uganda’s total national budget for health care. Paying for the conflict comes at the expense of other important

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<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the most recent officially published GoU statistics. Unofficial reports put the national rate in 2004 at 5%.

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national programs; therefore, the LRA conflict directly impacts the immediate well-being of all Ugandans.

Initially a Ugandan civil war, the LRA conflict spilled over the border and became linked to the civil war in southern Sudan. As part of the fight against terrorism, the Government of Sudan (GoS) opened select parts of southern Sudan for Uganda to fight a military offensive against the LRA. Intended as a resolution to the conflict, striking at the LRA as terrorists has, in fact, worsened the humanitarian crisis. Because the LRA ranks are estimated to be 80 per cent abducted child soldiers, the terrorists are themselves hostages. Under attack in Sudan, the LRA resorted to new abductions in northern Uganda, which exponentially increased displacement and created a new phenomenon called “night commuters,” children who flee home every night and sleep in public places to avoid abduction. Relying on a military offensive created more of a humanitarian crisis. To date, global indifference allows the abuses to continue; the international dimensions and human suffering, however, make ending the conflict a responsibility for all of humanity.

Ending the war goes beyond capturing Joseph Kony. Full resolution of the LRA conflict will happen only when all of the following occur: (1) When Joseph Kony surrenders, is captured, or agrees to some sort of political settlement; (2) hidden LRA weapons caches are found; (3) LRA commanders are resettled and reintegrated; and (4) IDPs are able to safely leave camps and resettle. Although neutralising Kony is a large part of ending the conflict and the humanitarian crisis, any senior LRA commander with access to these weapons could inherit the cause and take his place.

This is a winnable peace. Given all of the challenges, resolution is possible if a sustained, high-level, multi-pronged approach is used by a variety of actors. Among these, the Government of Uganda should give priority to the protection of children and civilians and undertake the necessary reforms to combat corruption within the military. The international community, including key western governments like the U.S., the E.U. and others, will need to pressure Sudan to put an end to LRA activities within its borders and galvanize international institutions to better respond to this crisis. If national and international actions are coordinated, Kony’s veil of dark spiritism is likely to evaporate, as will the reign of terror by the LRA.



# Summary of Recommendations

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## General Recommendations

- Peace in northern Uganda is attainable. A multi-dimensional approach from the local to the international level is recommended. Considering the human, social and economic costs of this conflict, investment in a concerted peace initiative would benefit all of Uganda, Africa and international security.
- The spiritual aspects of this conflict need to be addressed as part of a comprehensive response; they can neither be ignored nor used as an excuse for inaction by authorities with responsibility for protecting civilians. Non-military conflict resolution strategies should include someone with sensitivity to the spiritual dimensions of Kony's hold on people and an ability to appeal to spiritual alternatives to overcome fear and manipulation of religious beliefs.
- Protection of civilians, with a special focus on children, should be a top priority for national and international action.
- Appropriate HIV/AIDS control activities should be added to all interventions undertaken by government, NGOs and UN agencies, tailored for the different aspects of the conflict: e.g., emergency response, IDPs, abducted children, "night commuters," and post-conflict reconstruction.

## Government of Uganda

- The Government of Uganda and its leader President Yoweri Museveni should actively support and participate in international conflict resolution and local peace initiatives, in order to put an end to the cost of this conflict and channel diverted resources into productive uses for the people and economy of Uganda.
- The Amnesty Act should be extended for a period longer than three months at a time, for all except Kony, and accompanied with consistent public

information to increase awareness and allow for effective implementation.

- Consistent messages from political leaders about conflict resolution and the Amnesty Act would help to build community confidence and convey important signals to persons still in LRA captivity that they will be accepted if they escape and return home.
- Public information campaigns about peace and amnesty in northern Uganda need to be targeted towards young people, to ensure that anyone who might be abducted by the LRA is well aware of his or her options and less liable to be swayed by false indoctrination during captivity. Information should be age-appropriate and in local languages covering all of the affected areas.
- The Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs, who is responsible for the Children's Statute, should give urgent attention to the need for child protection in northern Uganda, working with UNICEF, the Army, and local community structures to take the necessary steps to ensure that children at risk are protected under the existing laws of Uganda.
- The Ugandan government should speedily implement the recently passed IDP Policy and its provisions with high priority given to the protection of civilians, including children.
- The Ugandan Army should clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability of the various local defence units in military strategies for civilian protection.
- The Government of Uganda needs to conduct a full-scale audit of the military, and implement measures to combat the serious problems of corruption, which is debilitating the military.
- Without waiting for the conflict to end, the Government of Uganda and local community leaders in the North should begin a process of national reconciliation through constructive

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dialogue, including participation by youth and women.

### **Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)**

- Leaders of the LRA should demonstrate a serious commitment to peace by:
  - clearly outlining achievable political objectives and cooperating with mediators attempting conflict resolution;
  - negotiating and implementing a ceasefire with independent, international monitoring of all parties;
  - ending the practice of abduction, with the release of all children and adults still in captivity; and
  - agreeing to human rights monitoring of all parties to ensure everyone complies with international humanitarian laws.
- For the medium term, the LRA and its supporters should direct their energy into non-violent political dialogue and organisations to address root causes of the conflict and work toward the development of political structures in Uganda that respect diversity, treat all peoples equitably, and foster development in the north.
- The LRA should use its spiritual influence to spread a message of peace rather than revenge and punishment, in keeping with the core teachings of the various religions to which the LRA has appealed for legitimacy in the past.

### **Government of Sudan**

- Consistent actions in support of peace are imperative from the Government of Sudan, including active measures to end all LRA activities within its borders.

### **UNICEF**

- UNICEF should increase its presence and engagement in northern Uganda, with a focus on child protection issues.

### **ICRC**

- The ICRC should focus more attention on its unique mandate for child protection under the provisions of the Geneva Convention, including protection of the rights of children taken hostage by the LRA across international borders.

### **United Nations**

- The UN Security Council should take specific, progressive measures to ensure implementation of Resolution 1539 in northern Uganda and Sudan, including increased monitoring with consequences for failure to comply with its provisions for the security of children.
- The UN Secretary General should appoint a Special Envoy to co-ordinate all UN efforts in the direction of peace, with a particular focus on protection of civilians and accountability for compliance with international law. This would include independent human rights monitors to deter abuses by all parties and engagement with all parties on compliance with international laws.

### **The International Community**

- Consistent, coordinated, high-level diplomacy is needed by all international actors, including the withdrawal of military support that enables the conflict to continue. Doing this will force combatants to engage in serious efforts to resolve the conflict.
- The new African Union Peace and Security Council should give high priority to the situation in northern Uganda and provide African leadership within international efforts for non-violent conflict resolution.
- Local efforts like the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and others should be supported, as part of a larger peace initiative involving the Government of Uganda, the LRA, and the Government of Sudan.

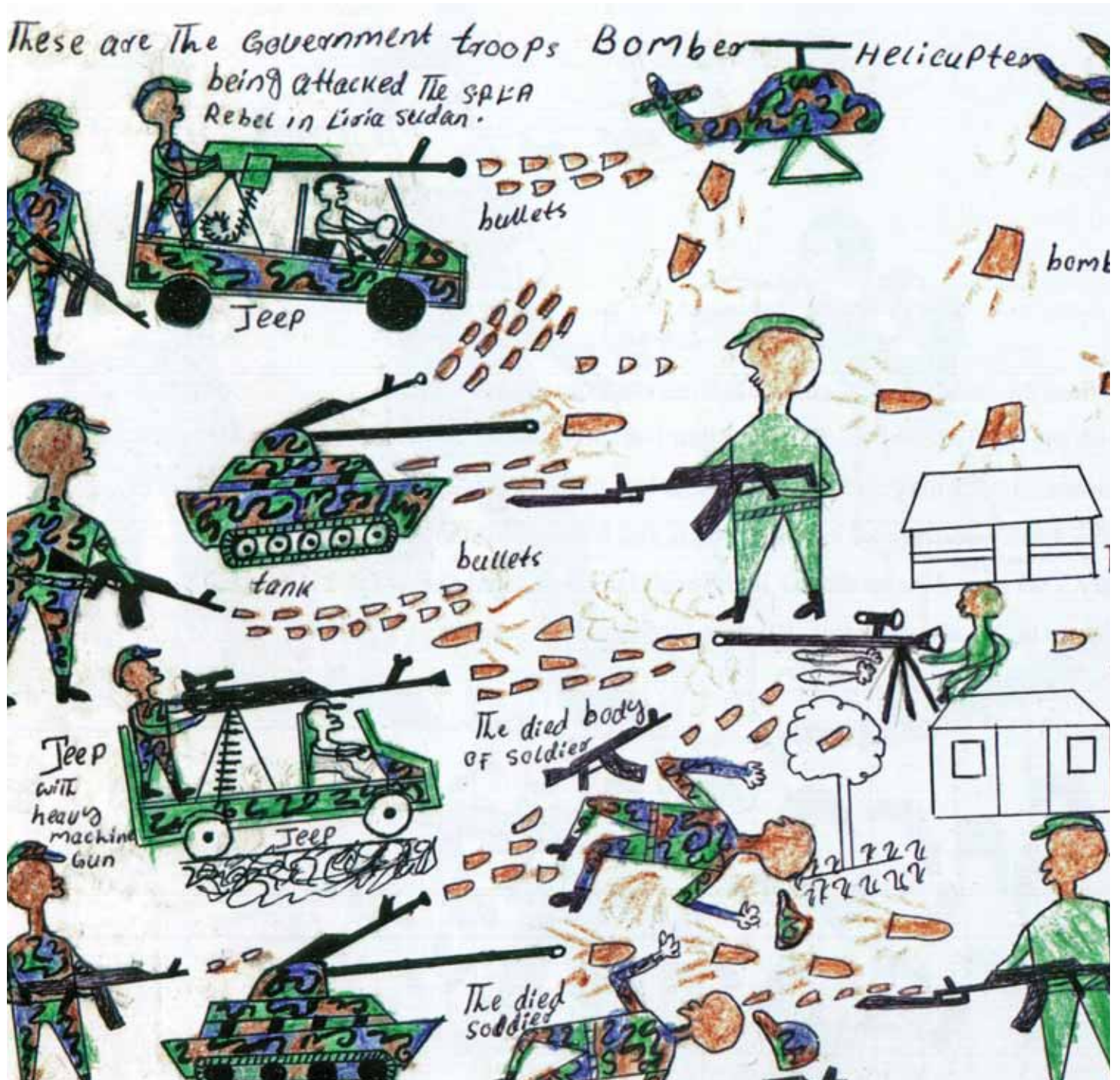
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- Increased humanitarian assistance should be provided by international donor agencies to meet the requirements outlined in the 2004 UN Consolidated Appeal for northern Uganda, with particular attention to prevent predicted food shortages, to reduce malnutrition, to support education for IDP children, and to include protection and peace-building components in a more co-ordinated strategy for northern Uganda.
  - International security agencies should recognise that this is international hostage taking, and therefore apply all tools available for freeing hostages.

### **Religious Community**

- Interfaith efforts like the ARLPI, which has bridged the divide among religious groups for the sake of peace, should be welcomed as legitimate peacebuilding interventions. Specific faith-based initiatives, including prayer, discussion and dialogue about the religious elements of the conflict, are effective tools to break the hold of fear and spiritual oppression on people.
- Because of the social and religious make-up of Uganda, Christian churches have a special role in peacebuilding through prayers for peace, positive leadership, and advocacy, in order to offset those who use violence in the name of religion.

# Historical Legacies

that Sustain the Conflict





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national reconciliation were not fostered by leaders who relied on their own military forces to retain power. Instead, using political power for narrow interests and retaining power by excluding and repressing alternative ideas and groups reinforced ethnic and geographic divisions. The result of these policies is a divided Uganda with a fragile sense of nationhood.<sup>4</sup>

### **An Overview of Conflict in the North**

There have been 14 insurgencies since Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) took power in January 1986.<sup>5</sup> The most protracted of these conflicts has been the ongoing war in northern Uganda, which has lasted nearly 18 years. It has almost completely destroyed northern Uganda's agriculture-based economy and has severely weakened the region's social structures.

Beginning in 1986, when Museveni captured power from General Tito Okello Lutwa,<sup>6</sup> a popular revolt was fomented by Okello's ousted army troops and their many civilian supporters, who formed the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Remnants of the UPDA and other dissidents came together to form the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), led by Alice Auma "Lakwena." They were motivated by fear of retribution and national marginalisation by a government they perceived to be dominated by western and southern Ugandans, as well as resentment against what some believed were NRM-sponsored atrocities and devastating cattle raids. For almost a year, Alice Lakwena maintained the HSM insurgency, coming within 80 kilometres of the capital, Kampala, before being defeated and fleeing into exile.<sup>7</sup>

In 1987, Joseph Kony, first cousin to Alice Lakwena, reorganised remnants of the UPDA in an attempt to complete the push for state power. Kony's forces later became known as the Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA). Although Kony's initial purposes were assumed to be similar to those of Lakwena, over the course of 18 years the LRA has never articulated a clear political agenda.

In 1994, the National Islamic Front (NIF), the military junta ruling Sudan, began supporting Kony in retaliation for the Government of Uganda (GoU) allegedly supporting the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a southern Sudanese rebel movement fighting for the independence of southern Sudan. Inside Sudan, the LRA received a safe haven, training, and weaponry. However, war-weariness, coupled with a loss of faith in the LRA as a "liberating" force for the Acholi, led to a decline in volunteer recruits. The LRA insurgency then resorted to child abductions and the massacre of suspected government allies in order to terrorise the civilian population. It is estimated that over 80 per cent of the current LRA forces are abducted children.

Behind the abductions is a carefully crafted element of the war. Children, including young girls, provide labour and serve as sex slaves. They are brutalised and manipulated by the LRA leadership into becoming weapons of terror against their own parents and community. Fear, indoctrination, and terror are intended to prevent the escape of abductees, and to agitate regional despair and resentment against the Museveni government.<sup>8</sup>

This prolonged phase of LRA abductions and terrorising communities does nothing to address the grievances of the original war. Kony's use of fear and violence to maintain control and sustain the conflict is rooted in his worldview, which is steeped in apocalyptic spiritualism.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, & 12.

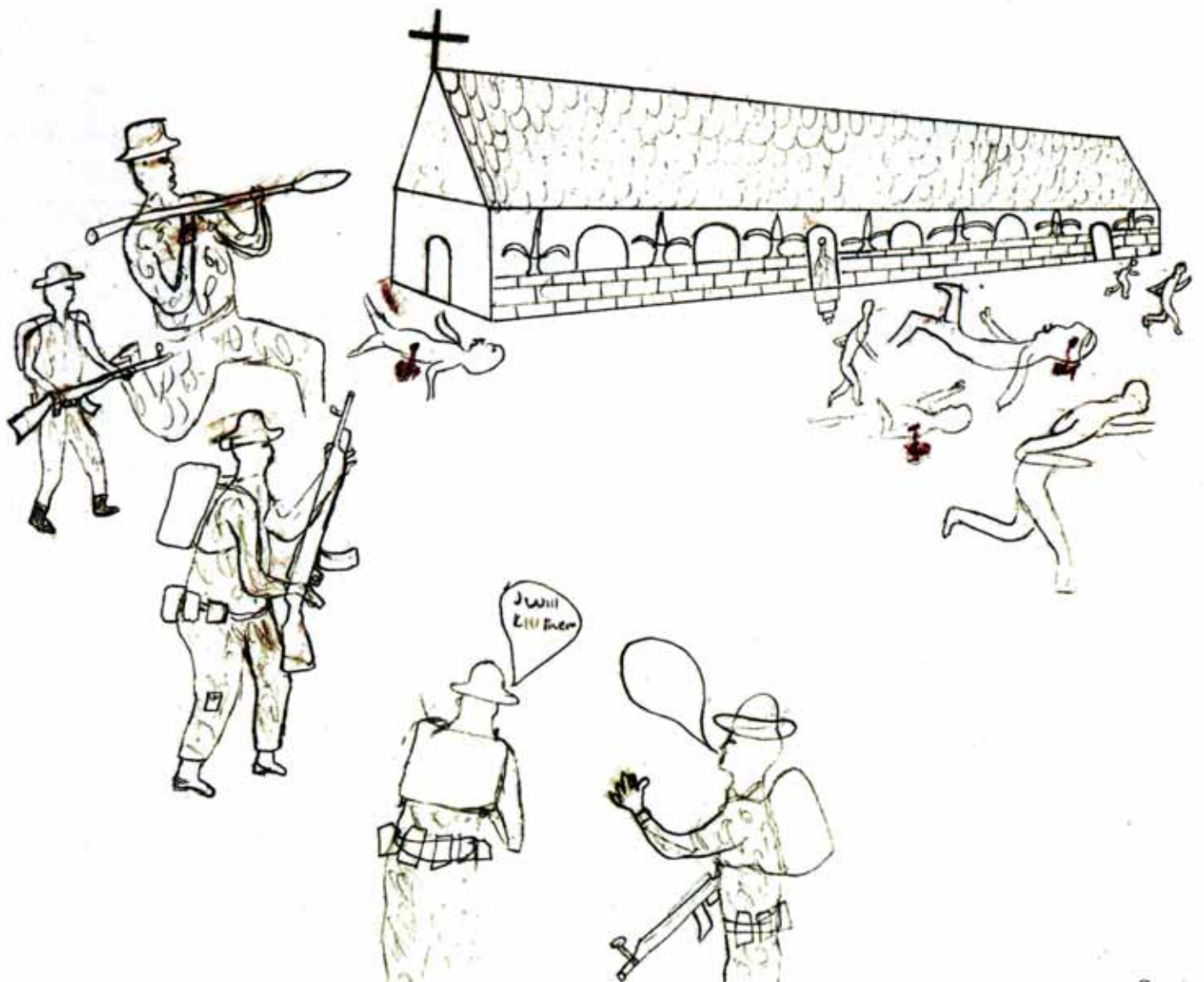
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, see footnote on p. 4, of *Refugee Law Project. These are the Uganda People's Democratic Army; Uganda People's Army; Holy Spirit Movement; Uganda National Rescue Fronts I and II; Allied Democratic Forces; Lord's Resistance Army; People's Redemption Army; Ugandan National Democratic Alliance; Uganda National Liberation Army; Severino Lukoya's Lord's Army; Uganda Christian Democratic Army; West Nile Bank Front, and the rebellion of Dan Opiro in Apac.*

<sup>6</sup> Museveni is an ethnic Munyankole (from the Banyankole group) from Western Uganda, and Okello was an ethnic Acholi from the North. *Ibid.*, p. 4. See footnote number 4.

<sup>7</sup> At the time of printing, Alice Lakwena continues to reside in a refugee camp in Kenya, though there are reports of negotiations between the GoU and Lakwena for her resettlement to Uganda.

<sup>8</sup> *Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict*, International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 77, 14 April 2004, p. 6.

# II. **Spiritual** *Dimensions* that Sustain the Conflict



## II. Spiritual Dimensions that Sustain the Conflict

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Initially, both Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony were supported by some of the spiritual, traditional, and political leaders of their community. Both were commissioned spiritually to rectify and fulfill political aspirations. This reflects a cultural legacy of traditional spiritism, which was prominent before widespread acceptance of Christian beliefs in the mid 20th century, and still persists today. At the community level, the separation between religion and state can be far less strict, and at times they are blurred. Those who wield spiritual power are often duly anointed with political power. The Acholi response to the loss of national power was to politicise the spiritual and spiritualise the political.

When Alice Auma “Lakwena” formed the Holy Spirit Movement, she declared that she had been given spiritual powers by the spirit “Lakwena” (meaning “messenger” in Acholi) to cleanse the Acholi of their “sins,” including human rights abuses committed by Acholi government soldiers in the war against the rebel NRA. It was the same spirit that allegedly directed her to engage in combat to protect the Acholi from the NRA government in 1986, but she was later defeated that same year.

In April 1987, Joseph Kony claimed to inherit the spiritual powers of Lakwena from his first cousin Alice, and started his own movement. His military force, first called the Lord’s Salvation Army, and later the United Salvation Christian Army, became the Lord’s Resistance Army in 1994.<sup>9</sup>

With a history of militarised politics, it was not strange to spiritualise military activity. Kony, like his sister-cousin Alice, was at first welcomed; seen as one who could complete the press for state power that others had started, he was spiritually commissioned and sent to war.<sup>10</sup> “Kony found an opportunity to come up in a society where, if you pick up a gun and protect your people, they begin to believe in you...”<sup>11</sup>

The eventual rejection of the LRA by the Acholi changed the group’s focus from fighting against the NRM to fighting against the Acholi. One prominent community leader explained, “The LRA is a rejected group, so they attack everyone and want all to die. Their attacks are indiscriminate because they feel rejected by the people.”<sup>12</sup>

For Kony, rejection also had spiritual consequences. Believing himself to be a divine instrument, Kony turned his cause into punishment and correction of the Acholi people. Spiritualising violence vindicates atrocities. “[The LRA] do not believe that they kill people, but that the gods (spirits) are the ones who use them, believers in the spirits, to punish those who disobey the commands of the gods. Hence, Kony’s command to kill all the Acholis.”<sup>13</sup>

The LRA’s targeted abduction of children also has spiritual motives. According to Kony, the sons and daughters of the captive mothers who are forced to be sex slaves or “wives,” will rise up to create a new generation of Acholi. Kony believes these will follow his spiritual way and not betray him by supporting the current government.<sup>14</sup> Children are also captured because they are more easily manipulated and are seen as expendable.<sup>15</sup>

Turning his cause into a spiritual crusade provides both justification and sustenance for conflict. Kony invented a tailored religious cocktail that superficially resembles traditional Acholi beliefs, Christianity and Islam, so as to root the cause of the LRA in a spiritual worldview. Spuriously manipulating Old Testament biblical references that refer to God’s use of fire, burning enemy cities, and the cutting of body parts as a means of discipline, Kony sees himself as fulfilling scripture as the LRA burns villages and camps, and carries out its signature cutting off of lips, ears and other body parts.<sup>16</sup> Despite clear Biblical injunctions against murder, mutilation and torture, Kony believes himself to be fulfilling a spiritual calling.

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<sup>9</sup> *Abducted and Abused: Renewed Conflict in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, Vol. 15, No. 12 (A), July 2003, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews with local religious leaders in Gulu, March 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Quote by local official in “The Genesis of Gun Power in Acholi,” by R.M. Kavuma, *The Monitor*, April 8, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with religious leader, Gulu, November 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with religious leader, Gulu, March 2004.

<sup>14</sup> “Tears of a Child Mother,” by Richard M. Kavuma, *The Monitor*, April 15, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> From interviews with World Vision staff in Kampala and Gulu, Jan. and May 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with local religious leader, March 2004. See Exodus 21:23; Deuteronomy 20:16–18; Genesis 19:12–13, 24–25 as examples of passages manipulated and misquoted.

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The LRA's spiritualisation of violence becomes a powerful psychological tool over both child abductees and the community. According to many returnees from the LRA, the use of spiritual rituals is central to battle tactics: "They are told that they can overcome bullets and that the spirits will confuse them if they [the children] try to escape."<sup>17</sup> These rituals are an effective tactic that creates both fear and servitude in abducted children.

In the words of "Jane,"<sup>18</sup> a former female abductee who was held in LRA captivity for 11 years:

*When a recruit arrives, he or she is made to eat alone. He or she is taken to the river by the Controller.<sup>19</sup> For me, he prayed to God to purify me with power of water and camouflage. He poured water on my head, mixed with camouflage. For three days a recruit is initiated immediately by smearing shea nut oil on the forehead, heart and back. He or she can then eat with people immediately. I had to stay for four days without eating with others. After that I became a full member.*

*We had monthly purification rituals. Everybody goes to the river, but male and female go separately. This is ordered for by the spirit and is done using river water very early in the morning. Shea nut oil and camouflage is thrown in and everybody dips in three times and comes out.*

*When going for battle, all fighters are taken to the field. The Controller goes ahead, bare-chested with their guns. The Controller will sprinkle water and purify their path. They sing and water is sprinkled on them using Olwedo leaf — symbolic of good will and blessings. Controllers pray for them and bless*

*them. Orders are to be obeyed strictly. When people want to go for food to a tough place, the name of the place is written on paper and put in water and people pray for three days that the place should be a soft target like the paper in water. The mission succeeds.*

*When going for battle, everybody elected to be on standby is ordered to pray for a number of days as specified by the spirit. Afterwards, they are initiated and purified, and put aside in the bush. Their supplies are given and instructions are to be strictly obeyed. If anybody disobeys, then Joseph Kony knows, and the mission is called off.<sup>20</sup>*

The spiritual dimension of this conflict also impacts the affected population's response, creating spiritual and psychological fear among both abductees and the targeted civilian population. Although Kony does not have a significant legitimate following, he has created a religious mystique that gives him personal power. Kony maintains this power over people through spiritual rituals and psychological fear, as well as physical violence. According to a main local newspaper, fear of Kony's spirits has made intelligence gathering difficult. "This factor [spirits] cannot be ignored.... The people believe it and we cannot ignore it. It is very difficult to get information from them," stated Ruth Nankabirwa, Minister of State for Defense, in a press briefing in Kampala. "Some fear that if they say anything about Kony, he will know and then come for them at night."<sup>21</sup> Her subsequent comment — "He is a man of spirits. This is for real."<sup>22</sup> — was controversial and drew criticism from some religious leaders. But there is widespread acknowledgment of the psychological hold that Kony has and the impact that this has in sustaining the war.

The spiritual dimension of this conflict, such as Kony's references to establishing a government based upon the Ten Commandments, can easily

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<sup>17</sup> Comments by World Vision staff of the Children of War Centre, Gulu, January 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Pseudonym.

<sup>19</sup> The "Controller" is both the unit commander and spiritual leader.

<sup>20</sup> Testimony taken by staff of World Vision Children of War Centre, Gulu, Spring 2004.

<sup>21</sup> "Kony's Spirits Real — Minister," by Mwanguhya Charles Mpagi, *The Monitor*, July 18, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

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become an excuse for lack of action or dismissing options for dialogue with the LRA. Because Kony cloaks himself in spiritual enigma, rational negotiations become difficult; he does not have a “political agenda” that is easily understood.

However, Kony’s spiritual mystique is, to a certain extent, also rooted in the pragmatism of patronage. In response to the LRA receiving support from elements within the Government of Sudan (GoS), there are reports that Kony has converted to Islam, and is called “Mohammed” Kony<sup>23</sup>. Given Kony’s continued practice of his own spiritual cocktail, there are doubts about the sincerity of his conversion, which was likely done to ensure continued military support by the National Islamic Front.

## Recommendations

- While the spiritual aspects of this conflict need to be understood, they should not divert attention from dealing with the social and economic grievances that create tension between northern and southern peoples. Because of the cultic dimensions of the LRA, any attempts at dispute resolution through non-military means should include someone with sensitivity to the spiritual dimensions of Kony’s hold on people and an ability to appeal to spiritual alternatives as part of overcoming the fear instilled by Kony.
- Religious leaders of all faiths should play a role in breaking the spiritual hold that Kony has on those directly under his control and on the wider population. Religious organisations can address the false teachings in the context of their own faith communities. Prayer, discussion, and dialogue about the religious elements of the conflict can break the grip of fear.
- Because of the social and religious make-up of Uganda, Christian churches have a special role in peacebuilding through prayers for peace, positive leadership, and advocacy, in order to offset those who use violence in the name of religion.
- The work of the Acholi Religious Leaders should be supported. They have come together to bridge the divide between organised religious groups, and to work together for peace and understanding among the people in northern Uganda. Their work, which has received international acclaim, provides an example of faith-based organisations taking up a responsibility to build peace.
- The international community should find ways to support and protect the courageous efforts of community religious leaders working for peace, who often confront life-threatening, complicated choices for themselves and their children.
- The LRA should transform its cultic influence into a message for peace rather than revenge and punishment, in keeping with the core teachings of the various religions to which the LRA has appealed for legitimacy in the past.



*Representatives of the Child Rights Committee at the Unyama Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp danced and drummed for a gathering of international World Vision representatives during their March 2004 visit to the camp in Gulu District, Northern Uganda.*

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<sup>23</sup> Interviews with World Vision — Gulu staff, based on reports from returning abductees, January 2004.

# III. Paying the Price

Social and Economic  
Costs of the  
Conflict



## A. Children at Risk

*“The children are our children, whether LRA or UPDF. Whose mother do you want to cry? The military solution is no solution for our young people. This war must be put to an end.”*

—conversation with parents in Gulu, March 2004



*The Lord’s Resistance Army abducted 13-year-old Richard (pseudonym) in September 2003. During his captivity, he was trained to assemble and disassemble weapons. During the battle that freed him, he saw two other children shot and killed. He is pictured at the World Vision Children of War Rehabilitation Centre in Gulu, where he received medical treatment and counseling during the spring of 2004. His earthly belongings are packed in the box by his head.*

### Voices of Youth

Excerpts from an interview with “Mary,” age 10:

*“When I was taken, I was given fresh cassava and beans to carry. I got very tired.”*

As punishment for moving too slowly, her leg was pierced with a bayonet by another abducted child who had been taught to be a soldier. She endured the pain and, without treatment, began walking again.

*“If I refused to walk, I would be killed.”*

*“We would see our friends come back and they would have guns,” she says. “They became tough and violent, and they didn’t have any fear. It was they who would kill the other children who tried to escape. I saw children being killed myself. They made us watch so we would know what would happen to us if we tried to run away.”*

She made one friend during her seven months in LRA captivity.

*“‘Susan’ and I talked about escaping, but she was too afraid. I just reached the level where I was ready to die.”*

After months of watching and waiting for the right moment, she decided to make a break for it one night in January of 2004. Tending the fire at first, she began to slowly back away through her sleeping captors.

*“I pray for ‘Susan’, that one day she comes back.”<sup>24</sup>*

Excerpts from interview with a child mother, “Grace”, age 23<sup>25</sup>:

*“I was 13 when I was abducted and taken to Sudan 10 years ago. I tried to escape several times, and was severely beaten by the man I was given to, when he suspected I helped*

<sup>24</sup> Interview conducted by World Vision Canada staff at the World Vision Children of War Centre, Gulu, Spring 2004. Pseudonyms used to protect the girls’ identities.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

*others escape. Helicopters attacked whenever we tried to run away and many died. When the man who kept me died, they shaved my head and told me my family was dead and it was not safe to go home. I kept trying; during a brief ceasefire I finally escaped with my three children.”*

(Young mother recently returned with three children, March 2004)

## Children in Search of Protection

Failure at all levels to protect the children of northern Uganda has resulted in three groups of vulnerable children: abducted children, internally displaced children, and “night commuters.”

### Abducted Children

For more than 15 years, children have been abducted by the LRA and forced into bondage as child soldiers, sex slaves, and porters of weaponry and heavy loot. Some are held for a short time and released; others are taken to southern Sudan and held captive for years. Approximately 80 per cent of the LRA ranks are child abductees. Estimates of the total number of abductees vary, ranging from 20,000 to 25,000. Although most are forced to commit atrocities as abductees, children are hostages taken against their own will.

Some children are able to escape captivity or are rescued by the UPDF and returned. Rehabilitation centres, such as World Vision’s Children of War Centre, have helped children make the transition back into the community. Health care and counselling are provided at the centre. Then the long-term work of reintegration begins. Communities and children work together, using tools from the local culture, to achieve forgiveness for deeds that the children have committed, which allows them to be accepted again. Many children are successfully reunited with their families and return to school. Community counsellors work with the families and communities to address issues that

arise for both families and formerly abducted children. Some have no home to take them back and some reunifications break down. Some cases of return to army or rebel troops have been documented. The difficulty of reintegrating children in the context of an on-going war and a devastated local economy is enormous.

It is important that neither the communities involved nor the global community condemn these children for abductions they did not choose. Abductees who receive adequate care and new opportunities can resume a normal life.



*It is five-year-old Brenda’s daily task to look after her baby sister at the Unyama Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in Gulu District, Northern Uganda. The IDP camp is home to 18,500 people. Not all families who live at Unyama camp, including Brenda’s, can afford to send their children to school.*

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## Children as IDPs

Exact numbers are uncertain, but it is estimated that approximately 53 per cent of the total population in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps are children. Global acute malnutrition rates are high, ranging from 7 to 21 per cent<sup>26</sup>. Threat of abduction is part of daily life. Very few have access to adequate education. Many have been in temporary camps all their lives, without the benefit of a normal upbringing.



*“Night commuters” stream into Gulu each night. The next morning, the children often head straight to school without going home.*

### “Night Commuters”

Fear of abduction by the LRA has caused many children from camps and rural areas to flee their homes at night and travel miles by foot to towns and city centres, to sleep in bus stations, churches, storefronts and on the street. Estimates of up to 50,000 “night commuters” make this journey every night and return home at dawn. At dusk, children emerge from their huts and start walking down the dusty roads to Gulu and Kitgum, seeking shelter for the night. Many come with not even a blanket. For girls, night commuting is especially perilous because they are vulnerable to harassment and rape during travel and while sleeping on the streets.

Most of the children point to education as their hope for a better life. But under such conditions, obtaining it is a major struggle.



*This 13-year-old “night commuter” clutches revision notes under his arm. He hopes to find a spot under a lamp to study after the thousands of other children in this park fall asleep. In the morning, he will walk back to his school and write his next exam.*

### Analysis: Children Not a Priority

For the past 10 years, there have been many reports documenting stories by children in northern Uganda, but children are still left in a very vulnerable situation. The story of the search for security by the children of northern Uganda raises important questions about priorities.

The welfare of northern Uganda’s children has consistently been secondary to other political goals, even though children are the main victims of this conflict. The Nairobi Accord of December 1999 between the governments of Sudan and Uganda, for example, included recognition of child abduction, but made child protection secondary to ending cross-border support of military factions. On both sides, allegations that Sudan was supporting the LRA and that Uganda was supporting the SPLA prevented serious attention being paid to the needs of young people caught up in the conflict.

One breakthrough for children occurred at the First International Conference for War-Affected Children

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<sup>26</sup> WFP sources. For more discussion, see Section IV.



*Child mother Joyce (pseudonym) was abducted 10 years ago. She is pictured with children who were born to her during her time in captivity with the LRA in southern Sudan.*

*(photo blurred to protect identity)*

in 2000, held in Winnipeg, Canada. The so-called Winnipeg Agreement was signed by the governments of Uganda and Sudan, with the governments of Canada and Egypt acting as guarantors. It made the protection of children a top priority, with commitments to work for the release of abducted children, to end the use of child soldiers, and to improve protection of children affected by the conflict. For a short time, some progress was made in releasing children and a short period of relative calm occurred in the North. Then other factors intervened and the agreement was not implemented. Meetings to hold everyone accountable for progress were delayed or cancelled for military or political reasons. Canadian diplomats chose to give priority to maintaining good relations with government officials in Sudan and Uganda, rather than holding them publicly accountable for their commitments to children. The one agreement that put children first was scuttled through a failure of diplomacy to take children and their welfare seriously.

Since 1999, the UN Security Council has passed five resolutions on the protection of children in armed conflict. These are 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). These

resolutions call for action by all parties to protect children from abduction, recruitment as child soldiers, and sexual/gender-based violence. Provision of humanitarian assistance, education and youth-centred disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs are named as high priorities. Each resolution is stronger and more specific, reflecting a growing commitment by the Security Council to improve implementation of international humanitarian laws that should protect children from the impacts of armed conflict. The last two resolutions call for specific action in specific situations, and the reports of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General to the UN Security Council include the situation of the children in northern Uganda as one situation to be addressed. Despite these important commitments, little has been done to translate the provisions of these resolutions into concrete action in northern Uganda.

During this timeframe, many international appeals were made to the UN and world leaders. Concerned organisations brought Ugandan young people to the UN Headquarters and to international conferences, such as the 2002 UN General Assembly for Children. Each time their stories shocked listeners and drew an empathetic response. Each time they went home with hope that international diplomacy would help solve the conflict, but little changed. While the extreme abuses of children in northern Uganda are now well documented and widely known, the international community has failed to find an effective way to protect these children.

On another front, the UN Commission on Human Rights has passed five resolutions since 1998 dealing specifically with the abduction of children in northern Uganda. These resolutions call for international attention to their situation; immediate cessation of all abductions and attacks on the civilian population, particularly women and children; and the unconditional release and safe return of all abducted children held by the Lord's Resistance Army. The resolutions made specific requests to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture to "provide assistance to the victims and their families suffering from the effects

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of torture inflicted by the Lord's Resistance Army." Regrettably, no applications have as yet been received for funding.

In 2001 an assessment mission was conducted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in co-operation with UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Its report, which had promise because it contained practical recommendations, was unfortunately delayed for over half a year because of disagreements between UN officials. By then the war on terrorism had changed the context. The LRA was declared a terrorist organisation by the United States and decisions were made to pursue a military offensive through Operation Iron Fist. However, from the perspective of children, the results have been disastrous. More attacks on their villages; more homelessness and displacement; three times as many abductions in 2003 as in the previous year; and more lives lost.

In the last year there has been an increase in the efforts to highlight Uganda within UN organisations. The 2003 report of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council (S/2003/1053) makes references to the situation of northern Uganda's children. A photo essay on the "night commuters," prepared by the Office of the Co-ordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and distributed through the UN's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), brought international attention to this issue. Similarly, the media statements by the World Food Programme's Uganda director Ken Davies and the high profile visits of Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, represent helpful attempts to highlight Uganda's crisis. In response to advocacy efforts, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will shortly deploy human rights experts to Uganda to build the human rights capacity of Ugandan institutions, civil society, and the UN itself.

Beyond these individual efforts, a coordinated UN approach under an appropriate, designated official is needed. The depth of the children's suffering and the length of time that the children in northern Uganda have suffered serious abuses represent a significant failure of all members of the United Nations to effectively uphold the basic rights that lie at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations.

## **Strategies to Improve Child Protection**

There are laws to protect children's fundamental rights as human beings, at both the national and international levels. The children of northern Uganda have a right to protection under Uganda's own laws, such as the Children's Statute and the rights for children included in Uganda's Constitution. They should also be able to claim their rights under the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of Children. Protection provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also apply to them, as well as the Optional Protocol to the CRC on Children and Armed Conflict. The abandonment of northern Uganda by many actors who have responsibility for child protection has left a vacuum that leaves children vulnerable to further abuse and neglect. Many factors contribute to improved protection. Below are some recommendations for both immediate and longer-term implementation. The key is to give protection of children a higher priority at all levels of decision-making.

### **I. Role of Ugandan Army**

Immediate measures are needed to strengthen both military and civilian protection systems. Child protection is best served by the engagement of a variety of actors, which means that other governing authorities responsible for child protection cannot leave the task to the army alone.

The response of the Ugandan army to this conflict is given detailed consideration in Section IV. From the perspective of security for children, greater priority by the Army needs to be given to defensive

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27 For a discussion, see Section VIII.

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measures that prevent intrusions of rebel groups into camps and villages. Greater attention to preventing the abduction of new children will also help to defeat the LRA by denying them the child hostages that they use to continue the war.

- **Recommendation:** The protection of civilians in northern Uganda become a primary focus of army strategies for restoring security, including the protection of the children.

## 2. Role of Child Protection Units

Children who either escape from the LRA or are rescued during battles are taken to Child Protection Units (CPUs) run by the Ugandan army. Child protection personnel are members of the Ugandan army. At present, there is no civilian child protection role engaged in this process at the CPU.

There have been serious questions raised about these operations, including allegations of lengthy detentions, and direct or indirect recruitment of returnees into the Ugandan army. The inclusion of a civilian, or a team of civilians, whose only mandate is to pursue the best interests of the children would significantly strengthen CPUs and increase public confidence that the best interests of children are being protected.

- **Recommendation:** UNICEF and Ugandan government officials responsible for the enforcement of the Children's Statute should work together to ensure that a civilian, or a team of civilians, with particular responsibility for pursuing the best interests of the child participate in all processes relating to the treatment of children who escape or are rescued from the LRA.

## 3. Role of Ugandan Laws

### The Children's Statute

The Children's Statute, passed by the Ugandan government in 1996, contains provisions that should help to protect all children from physical or psychological abuse. Implementation, however, is

left primarily to local communities and access to court procedures. Local communities in northern Uganda have been decimated and are unable to have functioning child welfare systems. Chronic underdevelopment in the North, one of the deep roots of the conflict, is another contributing factor to the lack of infrastructure that might protect children.

The number of documented reports of child protection issues in this region warrant greater attention by the national government, including the deployment of authorities whose primary mandate is protection of children under the Children's Statute. It is not the mandate of the army, nor is it effective to leave child protection to the army alone. Many measures that could help to protect children, such as education of young people about the dangers of abduction, how to survive if abducted, and assurance that they will be well-treated if they manage to escape, are best undertaken by persons with training in child welfare and child protection. The result of this vacuum is that the children of northern Uganda do not have equal protection under Ugandan law.

Implementation of the Children's Statute is urgent for the present and vital for the long-term well-being of the communities in northern Uganda.

- **Recommendation:** The Ugandan Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs (located in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development), who is responsible for the Children's Statute, should give urgent attention to the need for child protection in northern Uganda and work with UNICEF, the army, and local community structures to ensure that children at risk are afforded protection under the laws of Uganda.

### The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons

The draft policy contains important provisions for protection of the security and rights of displaced persons, including children. Through the proposed

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committee structure, it also provides some mechanisms to address protection concerns, with a high degree of local participation and ownership for the actual programs and initiatives within camps.

Implementation of this policy could significantly boost the civilian infrastructure available for general protection. Some camps have experience with Child Rights Committees, which work with camp leaders to address matters of concern for young people.

- **Recommendation:** The Ugandan government should pass the draft policy on IDPs and implement its provisions for protection of civilians, with special attention to children.

## 4. Role of International Agencies

### UNICEF and the ICRC

In situations where national governments are unable to protect children, there are actions that the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) can take with its mandate for child protection.

While numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been active in northern Uganda, there are interventions that UNICEF can make as an agency of the United Nations, which NGOs do not have a mandate to undertake, such as engagement with fighting forces on child protection.

In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross/Crescent (ICRC) has a particular mandate for implementation of protection provisions under the Geneva Convention, including the treatment of people held captive by forces engaged in conflict. This is the situation of the children taken hostage by the LRA, with the support of the Government of Sudan, and forced into combat both within Sudan and Uganda. Situations such as these call for the engagement of the ICRC, with its mandate and skills to engage fighting forces and patron governments on compliance with the Geneva Conventions.

In recent months, UNICEF has increased its presence in the north, bringing the total staff

members in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, and Apac districts to 11. Children are the primary victims of this war; in light of the number and the seriousness of the violations of the rights of children, more staff are needed in the war-affected areas, with a higher level of engagement to protect children.

ICRC officially resumed operations in northern Uganda in mid-July 2004. Within its re-established operations, there is room for the ICRC to take up the particular role of protection under the Geneva Conventions.

### Recommendations:

- UNICEF should increase its presence and engagement in northern Uganda, with a focus on child protection issues.
- The ICRC should focus attention on its unique mandate for implementation of child protection under the provisions of the Geneva Convention, especially in the cross-border movement and military camps of both the LRA and the Ugandan army.

## 5. Role of UN Security Council

Security Council Resolution 1539 provides a strong basis for the Security Council to take measures to address the situation of children in northern Uganda and in Sudan. It is hoped that the upcoming report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict will report on what actions have been taken by senior UN officials and recommend additional steps. The appointment of a special peace envoy, with a specific mandate for child protection, could help coordinate and advance individual efforts by UN agencies.

### Recommendations:

- The Secretary General should appoint a Peace Envoy for northern Uganda, including a specific mandate to improve protection of the security and rights of children under international law and UN Security Council resolutions.



*At 24, Deborah (pseudonym) has graduated from the World Vision Children of War Rehabilitation Centre's micro-enterprise program. She is now in business with her uncle, doing contract sewing. Her business allows her to support her two young children.*

- The Secretary General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict, to be submitted to the Security Council in October 2004, should include specific recommendations in relation to the situation of children in northern Uganda.
- The UN Security Council should take specific progressive measures to ensure implementation of Resolution 1539 in northern Uganda and Sudan, including increased monitoring with consequences for failure to comply; measures to stop the flow of arms to forces that abuse children; measures to protect the right of access to humanitarian assistance and education; and increased support for demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, with special attention to the needs of girls involved with fighting forces.

## 6. Long-Term Child Protection

The current situation requires emergency responses at the national and international levels. The LRA is a threat to children that goes beyond the ability of local communities to handle. The form of that response can contribute to building long-term mechanisms for child protection or it could undermine the development of sustainable systems.

### Education for Protection

Education provides a protection function through maintaining normal routines as well as the provision of information that can help children contribute to their own protection.

- **Recommendation:** High priority should be given to restoring educational systems and schools that have been closed as a result of conflict. Where security prevents opening of schools, non-formal means of education should be pursued, with the goal of having as little interruption of education as possible.

### Youth Livelihoods

Existing reintegration programs have been critiqued for failing to help young people make a successful transition into the work force. This is extremely difficult in a collapsed formal economy due to conflict. Providing opportunities for economic livelihood is an important alternative to reduce the attractiveness of engagement with armed forces for under-age youth.

Economic livelihoods are put near the top when young people in northern Uganda are asked to identify what could help them. Micro-credit loan programs, jobs, training for "good jobs," and economic infrastructure like roads were listed as high priorities by youth involved in the Children as Peacebuilders group, an organisation of young people working together with community leaders to help build peace in their communities through awareness-raising and youth initiatives.

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Under the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), the government is attempting to address this problem. World Vision is implementing one of the components, the Youth Vocational Skills Development Programme, but there is not enough funding to meet the overwhelming needs.

- **Recommendation:** More attention should be paid to creating opportunities for youth-oriented economic livelihoods. As plans are made for post-conflict reconstruction, youth need to play an essential role in economic redevelopment.

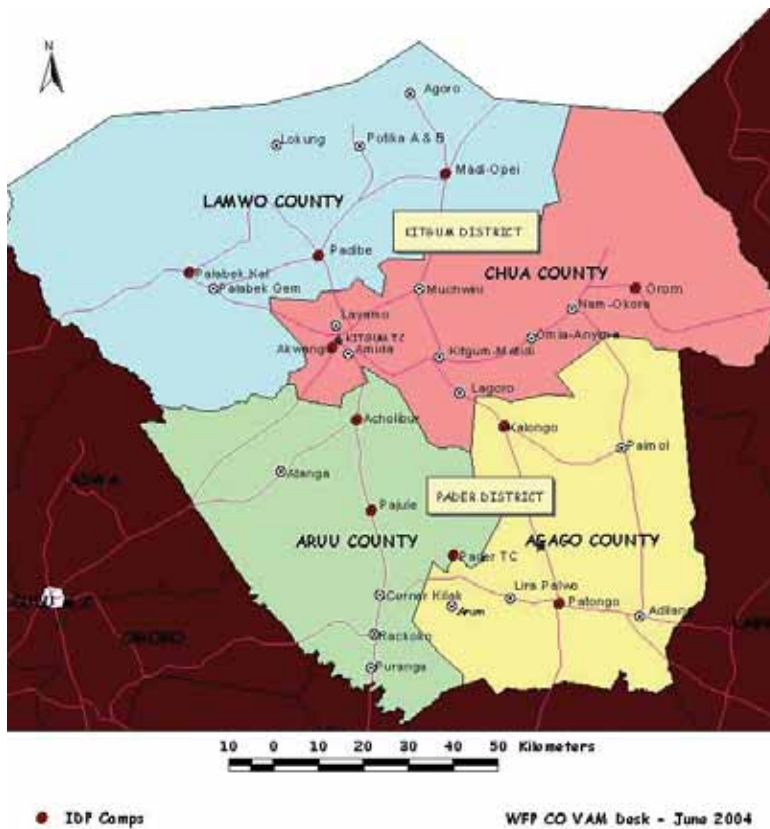
### **Youth in National Reconciliation**

As a response to the deeper roots of this conflict, many reports are now suggesting a national reconciliation initiative. The goal would be to improve relations between the Acholi people in the north, people groups in other parts of the country, and the national governing structures. Not only is some form of national reconciliation essential, it will be important to ensure that youth play an important role from the beginning of this process.

One of the observations of youth who have escaped is the difficulty of being considered as little children again after they had been fighters and, in some cases, commanders. Based on experience in other places such as Cambodia and Sierra Leone, the active participation of youth is essential to successful reconciliation and rebuilding programs.

- **Recommendation:** The need for national reconciliation initiatives should be discussed across the country and youth in all parts of the country should be given an important and visible role in the process from the beginning.

## B. Humanitarian Costs



Described by Jan Egeland, the UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, as “the world’s biggest neglected humanitarian crisis,” the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda has noticeably deteriorated since July 2002. The conflict and insecurity generated by the LRA have resulted in the massive displacement of civilians into camps, with limited or no access to arable land and social services. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), as of May 2004, a total of 1,609,744 people are displaced into camps throughout northern and eastern Uganda. In the 18 months from June 2002 to December 2003, over 10,000 children were abducted. Major humanitarian corridors outside of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader towns remain insecure and inaccessible without military escort. While the security situation deteriorates, humanitarian needs continue to steadily increase. According to nutrition surveys conducted in October 2003, global acute malnutrition rates among children 6–59 months of age vary from 7 per cent to 21 per cent in IDP camps in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, districts with the

<sup>28</sup> WFP sources.

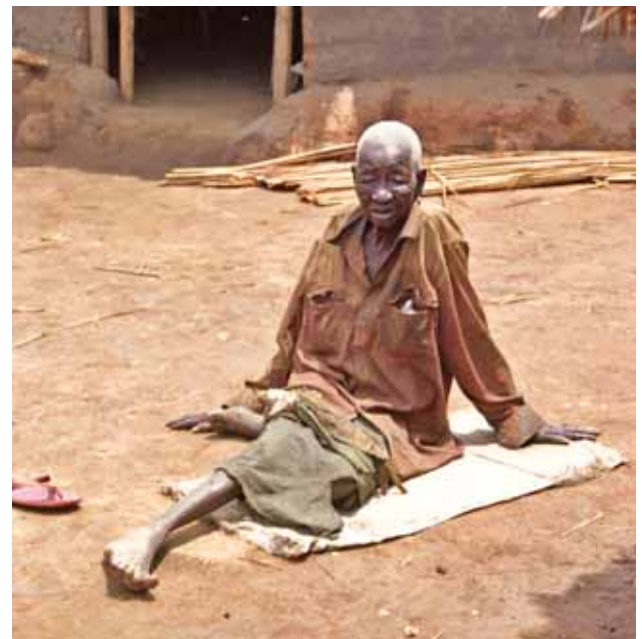
<sup>29</sup> Interview with IDP, in Unyama camp, Gulu, March 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Acholiland consists of the northern districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader.

longest history of enduring this conflict. According to WFP sources, in Pader District, 279,526 persons are displaced in 13 camps as of April 2004, representing about 88 per cent of the total district population. IDP estimates in April 2004 for Gulu are at 438,678; Kitgum, 273,078.<sup>28</sup>

Some people have been living in internally displaced camps for 10 years or more, with deteriorating health and social conditions. “We have been here so long that we have lost our humanity.”<sup>29</sup> Some young people in the camps have never known a stable home. Long-term displacement without essential services has serious impacts on productivity and social stability.

The numbers have increased exponentially since the increase in military operations by the GoU and the spread of attacks by the LRA. As a result, about 80 per cent of the population of Acholiland<sup>30</sup> are displaced.<sup>31</sup> The spread of the war farther south and



*The Unyama Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in Gulu District, Northern Uganda, is home to 18,500 people, some of whom have been there since 1996. Problems at the camp include a shortage of water; toilets built too close to dwellings, health issues, and a lack of schooling for all children.*

east, adding Kaberamaido, Katakwi and Soroti districts, has created a humanitarian crisis of over 1.6 million people who are internally displaced, up from 400,000 in 2002.

Because of extreme insecurity in the area, humanitarian access is severely hampered. Delivery of vital food assistance to IDPs is mainly done by the WFP, but can only happen under heavy military escort. The LRA rebels continue to attack IDP camps, ambush vehicles, abduct children, kill people and torch huts. Many NGOs have opted not to deliver food assistance because the use of armed escorts violates core principles of non-violence and neutrality. The heightened insecurity and increasing daily food needs have resulted in serious WFP pipeline shortfalls. A pipeline break in fortified blended food is anticipated for May to December 2004, unless donor governments respond quickly and generously to the Consolidated Appeal for Uganda. Insecurity makes areas that were once known as the “bread basket” of Uganda into a no-man’s land, and renders the population almost wholly dependent on international food aid. Living conditions in IDP camps and the public places accommodating displaced persons are squalid and cramped. There are regular reports of fires destroying huts, making the displaced homeless once again. Pabbo Camp, home to more than 60,000 displaced persons outside of Gulu town, is one of the largest IDP camps in East Africa, and is routinely plagued with destructive fires. Earlier this year, a fire destroyed 3,000 homes, leaving more than 10,000 people homeless. More fires in June destroyed 500 huts, leaving 5,000 people homeless. Sanitation is very poor and exacerbated by such cramped conditions. The water supply is grossly insufficient — varying by camp, the average ranges between 1,052 to 15,000 persons per borehole.<sup>32</sup> The provision of health and education services is minimal, as a high number of trained district health workers and teachers have fled the conflict areas. The lack of protection and the threat posed by the LRA virtually eliminates the



*The Unyama Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in Gulu District, Northern Uganda: Refuse in the garbage dump in the foreground gets washed downhill into a nearby stream, where some IDPs get their water. The small hut in the centre background is a latrine built too close the surrounding dwellings.*

possibility of farming, and those who risk venturing out of the camps to farm are often killed, abducted, or raped.<sup>33</sup>

## Recommendations

- Immediate passage and implementation of the draft policy on Internally Displaced Persons by the Government of Uganda.<sup>34</sup>
- Increased humanitarian assistance should be provided by international donor agencies to meet the requirements outlined in the 2004 UN Consolidated Appeal for northern Uganda, with particular attention to prevent predicted food shortages, to reduce malnutrition, to support education for IDP children, and to include protection and peace-building components in a more co-ordinated strategy for northern Uganda.

<sup>31</sup> “When the Sun Sets, We Start to Worry...”: An Account of Life in Northern Uganda, UN OCHA/IRIN, November 2003, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Official figures according to the Uganda Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment.

<sup>33</sup> UN CAP for Uganda, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Because IDPs are displaced inside their own country, unlike refugees who cross an international boundary, there is no international Convention that establishes protection guidelines and safety standards for IDP camp design and management, including the acceptable numbers of persons per water source, distance between houses, etc. There are voluntary codes that countries can choose to adopt and implement at their discretion.

With as much as 80 per cent of the population in the war-affected areas displaced, HIV/AIDS rates are soaring. Displacement, poverty, lack of health care, and the high prevalence of rape as a weapon of war all contribute to the high rates. Poverty, as a result of displacement, has forced many women to engage in unprotected “survival sex,” exchanging sex for food, soap or money. Similarly, many young girls who “night commute” to the towns for safety are raped: “I’m not lazy. I can run. I have been beaten. I have been taken to discos and raped. I am not scared any more.”<sup>35</sup> Poverty and the lack of parental controls forces other young female ‘night commuters’ to exchange sex in order to pay for their school fees.<sup>36</sup> The circumstances of war increase risky behaviours that directly lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The use of sexual bondage as a weapon of choice by the LRA, as discussed in Section II, further increases area prevalence rates. Fear of AIDS among LRA commanders has meant that many girls are released, rather than being re-assigned as a “wife” to another commander. If these girls make it back from the bush, they are sometimes rejected and abandoned by their families for a variety of reasons, including family bitterness around forced atrocities committed against them, perceptions of defilement, and the intense poverty due to war and displacement. As a result, some resort to survival sex, engaging in high-risk behaviours that increase the spread of the disease.<sup>37</sup>

The virtual collapse of a comprehensive health care system, due to historical underdevelopment, attacks on infrastructure, and the flight of many health workers, has meant that the population is unable to get information about HIV/AIDS prevention, or voluntary counselling and testing, nor are they able to receive adequate treatment unless they have the financial means to do so. All of these factors contribute to the war-affected areas having rates double that of the national average.

### A Comparison of Rates

Table 1 provides HIV prevalence rate estimates and projections based on methodology developed by UNAIDS. These figures are taken from the Uganda Ministry of Health HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report (2002). The latest available data on HIV infection rates, as of 2002, showing prevalence rates ranging from a minimum of 0.7 per cent in Matany hospital in Kotido district, to a maximum of 11.9 per cent in Lacor hospital, Gulu district. Stratified for major urban and outside major urban centres, pooled prevalence was 7.9 per cent and 5.1 per cent, respectively.

- **When data was pooled for all sites, the national prevalence rate was 6.2<sup>38</sup> per cent compared with 6.5 per cent in 2001, indicating a national decrease in HIV/AIDS prevalence.**

World Vision found that rates are often higher in urban and peri-urban areas, which accounts for the higher prevalence rates in Mbarara. However, the highest rates were found at Lacor Hospital in Gulu, at 11.9 per cent.

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<sup>35</sup> “In Uganda, Terror Forces Children’s Nightly Flight,” by Emily Wax, *The Washington Post*, 13 February 2004.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Interviews with WV Gulu staff, Jan. and March 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Reflecting the most recent officially published GoU statistics. Unofficial reports put the national rate in 2004 at 5%.

**Table 1: HIV Infection Prevalence Rates (%) at Antenatal Sentinel Sites**

Sentinel site	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Nsambya	24.5	25.0	27.8	29.5	26.6	21.8	16.8	15.4	14.6	13.4	12.3	11.8	9.5	8.5
Rubaga	-	-	27.4	29.4	24.4	16.5	20.2	15.1	14.8	14.2	10.5	10.7	10.4	8.1
Mbarara	21.8	23.8	24.3	30.2	18.1	17.3	16.6	15.0	14.5	10.9	11.3	10.0	10.6	10.8
Jinja	24.9	15.8	22.0	19.8	16.7	16.3	13.2	14.8	11.0	10.5	10.8	8.3	7.4	5.0
Tororo	-	4.1	12.8	13.2	11.3	10.2	12.5	8.2	9.5	10.5	4.5	4.7	7.0	6.3
Mbale	3.8	11.0	12.1	14.8	8.7	10.2	7.8	8.4	6.9	6.3	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.9
Kilembe	-	-	-	-	7.0	16.7	11.1	10.4	8.5	-	7.5	4.2	2.1	4.2
Soroti	-	-	-	-	9.1	-	8.7	7.7	5.3	7.7	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.6
Hoima	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.7	9.0	5.4	3.5	-	5.3	4.6
Arua	-	-	-	-	4.4	-	-	-	-	-	5.2	5.2	4.8	5.2
Pallisa	-	-	-	7.6	5.0	1.2	-	-	3.2	2.6	3.2	3.8	3.7	-
Matany	-	-	-	-	2.8	7.6	-	2.0	1.6	1.3	0.9	1.9	1.7	0.7
Kagadi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.3	11.5	11.0	10.5	7.4	6.4
Mutolere	-	4.1	5.8	-	4.2	-	3.6	2.6	-	2.5	2.3	2.1	4.1	1.5
Moyo	-	-	-	-	5.0	-	3.1	-	-	3.2	5.2	2.7	2.7	4.3
Lacor	-	-	-	-	27.0	21.9	14.7	14.3	16.3	12.8	12.3	13.1	11.3	11.9
Masindi-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.7
Lwala	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	8.7	7.7	-	-	-	-	7.9	4.4
Nebbi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3
Aber	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	7.6

Source: AIDS Surveillance Report – Ministry of Health, Uganda

Similarly, among those dying in conflict-affected areas, World Vision found that **HIV/AIDS was the leading cause for death, constituting 69 per cent of deaths in the Gulu area. This is three times higher than direct killings during military confrontation.**<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the national decrease in HIV/AIDS, prevalence rates are actually on the rise in conflict-affected areas, most notably in Gulu, the largest and most populated of the war-affected northern districts. Rates in this area were almost double the national average. If the conflict continues to spread

further south and east, and a culture of war and displacement begins to take root, HIV prevalence rates are likely to rise elsewhere, and Uganda will lose many of the gains that the country has worked hard to achieve.

- **Recommendation:** Appropriate HIV/AIDS control activities should be added to all interventions done by government, NGOs and UN agencies, tailored for the different aspects of the conflict, e.g.: emergency response, IDPs, abducted children, “night commuters,” and post-conflict reconstruction.

<sup>39</sup> Based on findings of Dr. Morris Ogenga Latigo, from May – October 2001. Dr. Latigo's research covered 6 out of the 22 counties of Gulu district. His report was commissioned by World Vision Uganda. For lessons learned around HIV/AIDS programming in the area, see Annex II

## D. Other Social Costs

### Insecurity

Over 18 years of conflict, the north has suffered insecurity, manifested by violence against civilians, abductions and displacement. This insecurity has resulted in death, loss of property, and disruption of development activities. For example, more than 20,000 children and adolescents have been abducted between 1986 and 2003, of whom only 11,000 have returned to their homes. The insecurity of war has created an uncertain future for children. Children are losing vital educational opportunities; they are at greater risk for contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs; and they are forced into child prostitution, child soldiering, and other forms of bondage.

### Quality of life

Key indicators for quality of life are gauged by the levels of literacy, health, type of dwelling, sanitation, and water supply. A measure of these clearly shows that northern Uganda is far behind, despite the progressive development of other parts of the country over the last decade.

- **Education and Literacy:** More than half (53 per cent) of the population in northern Uganda is illiterate — far above the national average. The national literacy rate is 65 per cent.
- **Health:** The northern population experiences diarrhea twice as frequently as the rest of the country, and the major causes of morbidity and mortality are largely preventable or curable, suggestive of weak health services. Infant mortality rose from 99 to 106 deaths per 1,000 births between 1995 and 2000.
- **Water and Sanitation:** The water supply is limited to boreholes because the population is displaced into camps and cannot use other forms of water supply. The population per borehole is extremely high: 1,052 to 15,000 persons per borehole.<sup>40</sup> In urban areas, installed facilities are often non-functional. More than half of all the households in the North use an uncovered pit latrine or the open bush, as compared to one third of the households in Uganda.

- **Dwelling Type:** The housing status and quality in the North continues to deteriorate. For example, households in single-family dwellings declined from 55 per cent in 1995 to 15 per cent in 2000. The proportion of people living in IDP camps has risen from 400,000 in 2000 to over 1.6 million in 2004.

### IDP Vulnerability

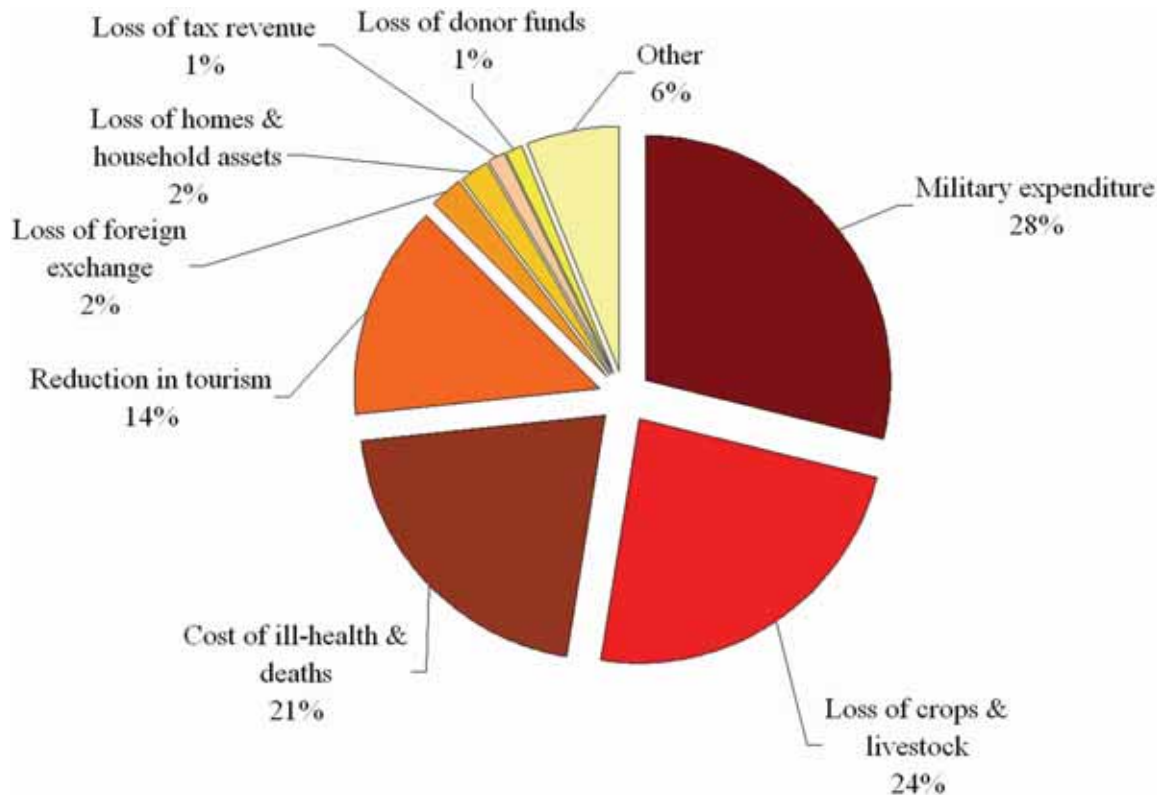
The displaced are among the most vulnerable to insecurity, poor quality of life, and psychological trauma. They live in camps that are characterised by overcrowding, inadequate levels of health, education and water facilities, and high rates of malnutrition. The most vulnerable groups include the aged, youth, girls and women, people with disabilities, and formerly abducted children.



*A sample of weapons seized by the Uganda People's Defence Force from child soldiers abducted and forced into the service of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army.*

<sup>40</sup> Official figures according to the Uganda Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment

### Breakdown of Estimated Costs Relating to War in Northern Uganda



\* All data and text from “E. Economic Costs” section, unless otherwise noted, is from “The Net Economic Cost of the Conflict in the Acholiland Sub-Region of Uganda,” a paper carried out by CARE International, commissioned by the Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) D, a coalition of more than 40 Ugandan and international non-governmental organisations, including World Vision, in September 2002. This research was commissioned by CSOPNU, which came together in a campaign to encourage policy makers to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict, by emphasising the tremendous costs of the war.

Throughout the mid and late 1990s, Uganda was seen as an African “economic miracle,” experiencing bullish economic growth rates as high as 8 per cent. Uganda’s overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaged 6.5 per cent per annum between 1990/91 and 2002/03.<sup>41</sup> However, growth rates have slowed, partially on account of the continuing and rising economic costs of the war in the Acholi-subregion.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to attempt to translate the profound emotional and psychological impacts of the suffering of people affected by this war into purely economic terms. The loss of a child, or a lifetime of poor health and poverty cannot be reduced to a per capita GDP figure. Without trying to minimize the impact of this suffering, it is important to recognise that the

economic costs that can be measured indicate that Uganda’s northern conflict has been ruinous. The war is understood to be the single factor most responsible for the low level of development of the Acholi region; however, it is also a significant factor holding back the development of Uganda as a whole.

- Over the life of the conflict, the total cost of the war in Acholiland<sup>42</sup> to Uganda has been estimated conservatively at close to US\$1.3 billion.
- Per year, the total economic cost to Uganda is at least US\$100 million.

This number does not reflect the recent economic costs of GoU military “Operation Iron Fist II,” launched in March 2004. Due to insecurity, comprehensive data for Kitgum and Pader was

<sup>41</sup> Poverty Eradication Action Plan Draft for Stakeholder Workshop-Ugandan Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 20 March 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader.

Rank	Cost Item	Percentage	Millions (US\$)
1	Direct Military Expenditure	27.58	367.2
2	Loss of Income from Crops	15.96	212.5
3	Reduction in Tourism	13.90	185.0
4	Increased Medical Costs	10.38	138.2
5	Loss of Output due to Ill Health	7.47	99.5
6	Loss of Income from Sales of Livestock	4.80	63.9
7	Loss of Livestock (Cattle)	2.61	34.8
8	Loss of Life	2.58	34.3
9	Costs Related to West Nile District	2.42	32.2
10	Loss of Foreign Exchange Earnings	2.27	30.3
11	Loss of Houses	1.46	19.4
12	Loss of Tax Revenue	1.42	18.9
13	Loss of Donor Funds due to Conflict	1.01	13.4
14	Loss of Crops due to Forced Move to Camps	1.00	13.3
15	Loss of Household Goods and Tools	0.98	13.1
16	Loss of Investments due to Conflict	0.50	6.6
17	Loss of Production/Income due to Illiteracy	0.50	6.6
18	Cost of Externalising Debt	0.26	3.5
19	Impact of War-related to Lira District	0.24	3.2
20	Environmental and Land Degradation Costs	0.13	1.7
21	Frozen Investments in IDP Camps	0.11	1.5
22	Roads and Bridges Destroyed (Gulu only)	0.10	1.3
23	Outmigration	0.03	0.4
24	Cost of Government Offices Destroyed	0.01	0.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,331.3</b>

inaccessible. This economic estimate will rise when information from these two districts become available. Based on available information, the impact of the conflict is costing Uganda over 3 per cent of its GDP.

The main cost items contributing to the US\$1.3 billion total are as follows, ranked according to their contribution from highest to lowest:

To put this into perspective, the Ministry of Health's "Health Financing Strategy for Uganda – March 2002" states that the annual central government contribution to this sector is approximately US\$95 million (170.1 billion Ugandan shillings). The annual cost of the war in the North is at least US\$100 million — more than the central government health budget for the whole country.

The following is a discussion of findings for key areas of economic costs as laid out above.

### **Military Expenditures**

The figures for the cost of military expenditures for the conflict in Acholiland are taken from the annual "Background to the Budget" obtained from the Ministry of Finance. Costs do not include expenditures for "Operation Iron Fist." Because of the sensitivity of defense spending, it was not possible to obtain exact estimates of the cost of military activity associated with the LRA rebellion. Discussions were held with public sector staff, NGOs, and donors on what percentage of the budget was allocated to the conflict in Acholiland, whereupon conservative rough estimates of 25 per cent of recurrent military expenditures are attributable to the war.

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## Loss of Tax Revenue

The base figure of US\$762,000 is for Gulu only and covers the base year of 1985. Subsequent years are estimated at an annual rate of growth of 3.6 per cent.

Figures were not available for Kitgum and Pader; therefore, lost revenue for these two districts is excluded. When data for Kitgum and Pader becomes available, the figure will rise significantly, perhaps by 40 per cent. Gulu is the largest city in the region and a majority of government and private activities are concentrated there, but economic activity is also significant in the other two districts for which data is not available.

## Lost Foreign Exchange from Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign exchange has been generated by the region in significant amounts, through the sale of tobacco and cotton, despite the conflict. Virtually all tobacco (98 per cent or more) is exported, so earnings are virtually all in foreign currency. Farmers are paid in local currency at the equivalent of US\$0.70 per kilo of tobacco. Over 80 per cent of the lost foreign exchange earnings relate to potential earnings from tobacco that are unrealised due to the conflict. British American Tobacco Company (BAT)<sup>43</sup> is providing strong support to its tobacco farmers in Gulu and Kitgum. It gives technical advice, access to inputs, and operates five buying sheds (out of 25 that were built in the mid-1970s and were open for buying in the past). The big producing area is the West Nile (Arua), but all farmers in that region who want to grow tobacco already are growing it. BAT is looking toward the middle north region to increase production for its plant in Kampala. Worldwide demand for tobacco of the type produced in northern Uganda (flue-cured Virginia) is soaring, and tobacco is a high-value crop. Instead of the 500 T (tonnes) that is its current production, the district could be producing 6,000 T by now, with a potential to increase to 10,000–15,000 T in the future. Though there are legitimate health concerns associated with the use of tobacco, it is a cash crop that can provide much needed income.

Cotton earnings are low due to decreased production and depressed international prices. However, cotton is a crop that farmers in the region are familiar with and has a ready international market in competition with long staple cotton from Egypt and the United States. With the support given by the Cotton Development Organisation (CDO), the ginners association and the entry of two international cotton companies into the market in the northern region, this crop is poised to make a rapid comeback in those areas of the north that have attained peace or relative peace (Lira, Soroti districts, etc). By the same token, cotton could be expected to rapidly regain its role as a major cash crop in Acholiland. There is underutilised ginning capacity at West Acholi Cooperative Union, and the roads to Lira and other areas are good, allowing buyers from there to enter the region with their transportation and to compete for farmer's cotton once the conflict is settled.

It should be mentioned that cotton is the crop that traditionally has prepared the seedbed for finger millet and other food crops (which follow in rotation after cotton). Thus, reductions in cotton acreage have food security implications for the region.

## Loss of Livestock

Like other regions in the North (Karamoja, Teso, Lango), Acholiland was largely a cattle-based economy. Cattle are a source of power, prestige, and a store of wealth earned from cash crops (which, in the past, were tobacco and cotton). Sales of livestock financed educational expenses for growing children, family medical expenses, and other domestic emergencies.

The District Veterinary Officer for Gulu calculated that by 1985 there were 185,000 cattle (not counting suckling calves) in the district; within two years — as a result of rustling, forced sales and slaughter to avoid theft, and disease brought on by the inability to provide veterinary care — their numbers had been reduced to less than 1,000. Wealthy men, of high prestige within the community, lost all their wealth,

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<sup>43</sup> British American Tobacco Company's reputation is controversial among some international civic groups.

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in some cases in a single night. The ability of families to meet necessary expenditures was lost and their ability to meet domestic crises was eliminated. A fiercely independent population, whose surplus production fed other parts of the country, became dependent overnight and for years thereafter, on handouts from the government, WFP and NGOs. Their ability to farm what land they could reach on foot in times of relative peace was vastly reduced by the lack of ox-power and the ploughs and yokes needed to harness it.

### **Loss in Food Crop Production**

The rural populace first moved to trading centres for their own protection and later they were concentrated into IDP camps. People are forced to live far from their farms. Long walking distances cut down on the time people have to work on their land even during times of relative peace. Meanwhile, all land within easy walking distance of the camps is subject to intensive use and degradation. Some areas are mined, and because mine fields are not mapped, when one person falls victim to a mine, large surrounding areas become off-limits to the population, taking much larger areas out of production. Women, who bear principal responsibility for food crop production, are frequently mistreated and raped by members of whichever force encounter them, be it rebels or UPDF<sup>44</sup>. There are also reports that men found by the UPDF to have gone farther than what commanders consider “normal” distances from camps, are at times, mistreated or suspected of collaboration with rebels. Together with the loss of animal power to prepare the land, the impact of these changes on food crop production has been severe, leading to a reduction of about 50 per cent of the area planted between 1986 and 1997. After 1997 until 2001, there was a gradual increase in the area planted, as relatively peaceful conditions prevailed — until mid-2002 with the coming of Operation Iron Fist.

Food crop production has decreased because of a reduction in the area that could be planted, which has resulted in decreased yields as a result of

limitations on labour input, lack of inputs, and failure to follow normal crop rotation practices on land planted near the camps. Nevertheless, most families achieved some production of food crops and this production was sufficient to keep people from starving completely, although not sufficient to prevent widespread malnutrition, especially among children.

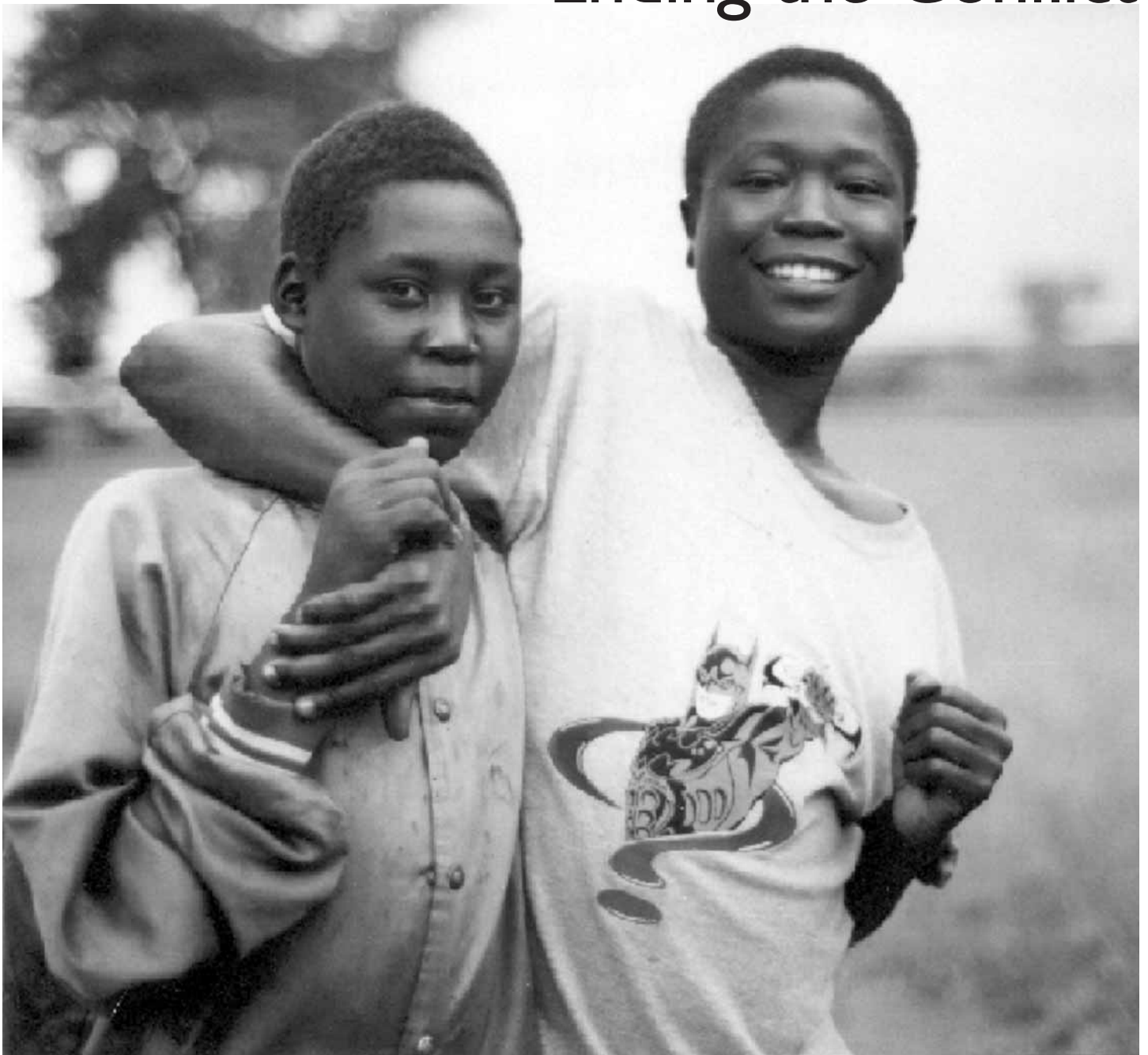
- **Recommendation:** Information on the full economic costs of the war for all of Uganda should be regularly reported. This will encourage resolution of the conflict and re-investment, so as to make the north an economically productive region, rather than a drain on the national economy.

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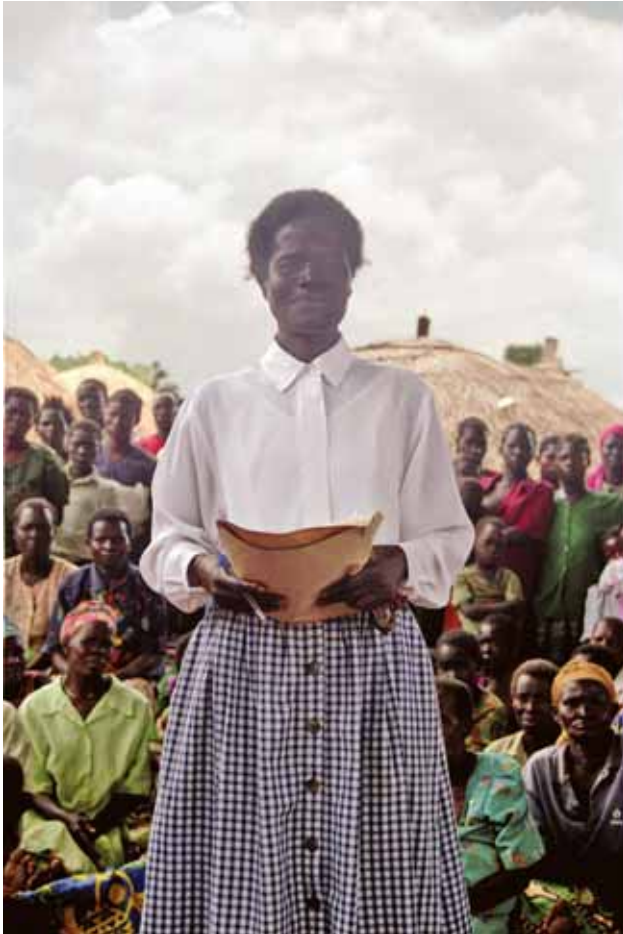
<sup>44</sup> See HRW, “Abducted and Abused”, vol. 15, no. 12 (A), July 2003.

# IV. **Waging** *Peace*

Ending the Conflict



# Waging Peace: Ending the Conflict



*Katherine Akumu, Chairperson LC3 for Unyama IDP camp presents a list of grievances and recommendations about life at the Unyama IDP camp to a World Vision delegation in March 2004.*

Ending the war goes beyond capturing Joseph Kony. Full resolution of the LRA conflict will happen only when all of the following occur: (1) When Joseph Kony surrenders, is captured, or agrees to some sort of political settlement; (2) hidden LRA weapons caches are found; (3) LRA commanders are resettled and reintegrated; and (4) IDPs are able to safely leave camps and resettle. Although neutralising Kony is a large part of ending the conflict and the humanitarian crisis, any senior LRA commander with access to hidden weapons caches could inherit the cause and take his place. There have been different attempts from a variety of actors to stop the war: military intervention; local-

led peace initiatives; amnesty and attrition; and government-led peace initiatives. Beyond this particular conflict, national reconciliation and peacebuilding will be essential to create a lasting peace.

## A. Military Solution

Although the Government of Uganda has expressed interest and, at times, explored different avenues of conflict resolution, it remains committed to finding peace through military victory. The determined resolve to this course has paradoxically translated into reinvigorated diplomacy with a once hostile neighbour.

### Sudan & “Operation Iron Fist”

The LRA conflict took on new international relevance during the 1990s because of its entanglement with the civil war in southern Sudan. Other regional issues of concern to the international community, including conflict in the Great Lakes region, brought global attention to Uganda as it was discovered that forces were diverted to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).<sup>45</sup> Since 1994, the ruling National Islamic Front of Sudan has supported the LRA, providing a safe haven, military training and a steady flow of arms. The NIF’s support for the LRA is purportedly in response to the GoU’s support for the SPLA, with the intent of destabilising the SPLA’s southern base of support. However, beyond retribution, the LRA has become an important fighting force for the NIF against the SPLA inside southern Sudan, one they are not eager to lose. Sudan’s recent attempt to end its political and economic isolation has directly affected its support of the LRA. When the U.S. declared the LRA a terrorist organisation in late 2001, Sudan quietly claimed to have cut off supplies to Kony, in an effort to improve relations with Washington. However, this purported cut-off was short-lived. After the LRA helped the NIF recapture the Sudanese garrison town of Torit from the SPLA/M in October 2002, the flow of arms and ammunition, including anti-tank landmines, resumed.<sup>46</sup> Sudan’s military support has been vital to

<sup>45</sup> Since April 2003, Ugandan forces officially pulled out of the DRC.

<sup>46</sup> “Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict,” *International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 77*, 14 April 2004, p. 7.

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the survival of the LRA, and has likewise entrenched Ugandan leadership in a military response. However, one of the major challenges to a military offensive is that abducted children make up the majority of the LRA – armed offense essentially inflicts more violence against children.

Efforts by the Carter Centre to facilitate peace talks between Uganda and Sudan successfully resulted in the normalisation of relations in 1999 and the re-establishment of a Sudanese embassy in Kampala in 2001. As a demonstration that the NIF had ended its support of the LRA, a military protocol was signed by the two governments early in 2002, allowing Uganda limited access into southern Sudan to attack the LRA at their bases. Launched in March 2002, “Operation Iron Fist,” the code name for UPDF military operations in southern Sudan, has had as many humanitarian consequences as it has had military successes. It was supposed to “wipe out” the LRA, which had camps in southern Sudan, including a headquarters at Lubanga-tek that was well equipped with vehicles, radio communications and weaponry provided by Khartoum. The operation destroyed these camps and documented Sudanese support of the LRA, but it did not destroy the LRA.<sup>47</sup> The operation, which saw the deployment of as many as 10,000 Ugandan troops, had an unintended effect. Those rebels who did not retreat further inside Sudan returned in force to northern Uganda in June 2002, reportedly with new equipment, uniforms and training. From then on, the LRA, which split into smaller operational units, stepped up its attacks, targeting religious leaders and other civilians, and abducting an estimated 10,000 children. “It was like stirring up a hornet’s nest.”<sup>48</sup> The group also attacked convoys delivering relief supplies for IDPs and refugees from southern Sudan.<sup>49</sup> The humanitarian consequences have been severe, resulting in the exponential increase in displacement from 400,000 people at the beginning of Operation Iron Fist, to over 1.6 million, and an expansion of the conflict further south and east into Lira, Soroti, Apac and Katakwi.

There was agreement between Sudan and Uganda for a second round of operations inside Sudan, starting in March 2004. In mid 2004, the GoU military offensive bore some fruit with the capture of key LRA commanders and the rescue of some abductees by the UPDF. Still, diplomacy has had to tacitly defer to strategic defense — the LRA’s fighting ability has made it quite valuable for the Sudanese government’s efforts to counter the SPLA.<sup>50</sup> At the time of writing, there has been substantive progress in peace talks between the NIF and the SPLA, but there are indications that the NIF will continue to protect Kony and the LRA and support other militias in order to maintain influence over the military/security in southern Sudan, even once a final peace agreement is reached.

### **Problems of Protection and the Arming of Local Defence Units**

The humanitarian fallout from Operation Iron Fist has further exposed the GoU’s military weaknesses and the failure of its own “protected villages” policy. As attacks by the LRA increased, many villagers voluntarily fled to nearby towns, which are perceived to be more secure. But forced displacement was also government policy. Starting in November 1996, populations in the most war-affected areas were, in some instances, given 48 hours notice to leave their homes to relocate to IDP camps, so that the army could “better protect the people and better pursue the LRA.”<sup>51</sup>

The people have not been fully protected, nor the LRA adequately pursued, as evidenced in the escalation of displacement since the start of Operation Iron Fist and the increased frequency of LRA attacks against civilians. Key commanders in the UPDF identified a lack of resources to both protect civilians and to wage an offensive war. To fill the gap in protection, local defence units (LDUs), also known as “home guards,” have been armed and given some training. Army officials throughout the region insist that the LDUs are controlled by the UPDF and deployed as “zonal

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Private briefing with aid workers and U.S. government officials, February 2003.*

<sup>49</sup> “*When the Sun Sets, We Start to Worry...*”: *An Account of Life in Northern Uganda*, UN OCHA/IRIN, November 2003, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> ICG, p.7.

<sup>51</sup> *Interview with military official, Gulu, March 2004.*

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forces,” protecting fixed community areas in the rear, as the UPDF pushes forward to pursue the LRA.<sup>52</sup> However, legitimate concerns are repeatedly raised by many voices, including IDPs, civil society groups and donor government officials, about the capability of LDUs to adequately protect people against the LRA, which is often better trained and armed. In March 2003, the Arrow Group LDU was formed in response to the LRA’s continuing presence in the Soroti area and the UPDF’s inability to cope with its continued incursions. The LDU was able to halt the spread of the LRA further east; however, other LDUs were not initially as successful. The Amuka, or “Rhino” group was mobilised in Lira, but it was initially not as successful as the Arrow Group because of fewer supplies and weaker support.<sup>53</sup> However, since its initiation, more people have been recruited and they are better armed.

Recent attempts by the UPDF to mobilise LDUs in Acholiland have been met with reluctance. Memories of vicious attacks by better armed LRA forces, marked by their signature cutting off of lips, noses, ears and limbs, in response to the Acholi forming militia against them in 1990/91, has frightened the population into ambivalence at reforming LDUs. But other reasons for opposition are also cited: “Many volunteered for the LDUs here, but they were then sent off to the (DR) Congo. Because they (the LDUs) are not accounted for, they could send them off, but they signed up to protect their own people here.”<sup>54</sup> Although the UPDF has officially pulled out of the Congo, the recent practice of redirecting LDU recruits increased mistrust among the area population towards the army.

### **Concerns of Rising Ethnic Tensions**

The spread of LRA attacks to non-Acholi areas brought increased tensions between communities and expressions of concern about the renewal of historic ethnic divisions. Reports include allegations of Acholi support for the LRA and rising tensions in retribution for harm done by the LRA. There is a

lingering fear of attacks against individual Acholi as retribution. Community leaders have played an important role in reducing animosity and fostering cooperation by emphasising their common search for an end to the armed conflict that threatens the entire region.

### **Of “Ghosts” and “Junk”: The Haunting Consequences of Corruption**

The amount of corruption in the army has reached levels that can no longer be hidden, which further erodes the population’s confidence in the UPDF. The types of corruption vary widely and include low-level theft and extortion from civilians; creation of “ghost soldiers,” whose pay is pocketed; and acquisition of faulty equipment.

A notable example of this is the “Junk Helicopters” scandal. Concerns about the purchase of MI-24 attack helicopters from Belarus, through a Ugandan intermediary, led to a judicial commission of inquiry, whose findings were later endorsed in a parliamentary White Paper. The commission recommended that high-ranking officials be prosecuted for their roles in the handling of the purchase. It also pointed to failures in the procurement system. A proper assessment of needs and the utility of the system had not been undertaken. As a consequence of a flawed procurement process exploited by corrupt individuals, the government bought helicopters that, on delivery, were found not airworthy, contrary to the conditions of the contract and the reports of personnel involved in the transaction. The government lost between US\$6 million to US\$12 million and had to spend additional funds to make the two defective aircraft useable.<sup>55</sup>

The latest public manifestation of corruption within the army is the “ghost soldiers” saga. The ghost soldier phenomenon is reported to have arisen in the mid-1990s in the 4th Division based in Gulu, which included the use of personal bank accounts to deposit and disburse public money. The starkest demonstration of the problems was the recent discovery of reportedly some 4,000 Rwandans who

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with senior UPDF spokesman, Kampala, March 2004.

<sup>53</sup> *Refugee Law Project*, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with local NGO activist, Gulu, November 2003.

<sup>55</sup> ICG, p. 17.

left the NRM's forces in the early 1990s, but who still remained on the UPDF payroll along with dead Ugandan veterans.<sup>56</sup>

While recent reports highlight more success in capturing LRA commanders, erosion of confidence in a military solution by the UPDF continues, partially because of the problems of corruption.

### Recommendations:

- Conduct a full-scale audit of the military, and implement measures to combat the serious problems of corruption, which is debilitating the military.
- Roles, reporting, and accountability for LDUs should be clarified and strengthened in military strategies for civilian protection.
- The international community should recognise that this is international mass hostage taking, and therefore apply all tools available for freeing hostages.

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## B. Non-Military Conflict Resolution

### Local Peace Initiatives

As a result of insecurity in the region, economic activities have virtually halted. Unable to collect local revenue, local governments in the affected districts have long shifted from their original functions of administration and development, to disaster management and security monitoring. Working with almost no resources, and mainly with NGOs and international donor organisations, they concentrate on mobilising the displaced communities into camps, IDP registration, and working out mechanisms for keeping law and order, while trying to help distribute the meagre amount of goods and services available.

Working with the army, the Local Councils mobilise unemployed youth for registration into the LDUs for the protection of people in camps. In some



*Formerly abducted children march for peace in the streets of Gulu.*

districts they have also played a crucial function of organising youth into support groups for skills development, entertainment and sport. The challenge is keeping the youth and young adults positively productive.

### Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI)

The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) was founded in 1998 as a consortium of Catholic, Anglican, Muslim and other religious and traditional leaders, to engage Acholi society and the Ugandan body politic in finding a peaceful solution to the war. ARLPI's accomplishments include leading the fight for the passage of the Amnesty Act in 1999, training hundreds of local leaders in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and creating confidence and opening avenues of negotiations by acting as "Track 2" interlocutors between the conflicting parties. Other prominent northerners have also attempted to play a leadership role, in ending the conflict. For example, the Acholi traditional chiefs (Rwot) were formally reinstated in 2000 in an effort to further contribute to the peace process. The peacebuilding organisation ACORD engaged in a traditional leadership revitalisation programme, and helped create two new structures to

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

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assist the peace process: the Council of Elders Peace Committee, headed by Okot Omony, and the Council of Chiefs, chaired by Rwot Acana.<sup>57</sup>

Independently, leaders of the ARLPI have initiated negotiations with some of the rebels. Various ARLPI members have met with certain LRA commanders at least four times, and have made sustained contact over 20 times.<sup>58</sup> This has been important in creating confidence and opening alternative avenues of negotiations. In April 2000, for instance, a breakaway faction of the LRA asked for pardon and requested the ARLPI to reconcile them with the government. Its leader claimed that 800 former rebels based in Kenya were ready to be repatriated to Uganda if the ARLPI would provide guarantees of safety. Some of the returning rebels have felt more secure surrendering to the ARLPI than to the army.<sup>59</sup>

Because of the ARLPI's success at establishing contact with the LRA, the government appointed a peace team in late 2002. In March 2003, Kony announced a unilateral ceasefire. Museveni initially rejected it, and then responded with a limited ceasefire in areas where the rebels were to hold talks with the Presidential Peace Team. However, hopes for peace were dashed in April when the LRA broke the ceasefire arrangements and killed an emissary of the Presidential Peace Team, causing the government to resume open warfare against the rebels. The peace team was disbanded in May 2003 and attempts at establishing a negotiated peace appear seriously constrained, as the military option is vigorously pursued.<sup>60</sup>

In May 2004, the ARLPI made another attempt at peaceful resolution by proposing Graca Machal, Betty Bigombe (former Ugandan Minister for Northern Uganda), and Washington Okumu (international mediator in conflict resolution) as peace envoys. By mid August 2004, this initiative had stalled. This was due to the intensity of fighting against the LRA in Southern Sudan and the surrender or capture of many high-ranking LRA Commanders. On August 17th

2004, the New Vision (a major Ugandan paper) reported that the executive secretary of the Joint Christian Council, who had been assigned the role of liaising with the mediators, the GoU, and the ARLPI said, "The environment is not stable for meaningful talks to take place".

- **Recommendation:** The efforts of the ARLPI should be supported, as part of a larger peace framework involving the Government of Uganda, the LRA and the Government of Sudan.

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## C. The Amnesty Act

The Amnesty Act, passed into law in November 1999 and enacted in January 2000, provides blanket amnesty for all rebels. The Amnesty Act was promoted by many people in the north because, in spite of their suffering, they were convinced that forgiveness was the only way to achieve peace and reconciliation. The Act has handled 11,972 cases since it came into force in January 2000, including insurgents from other regional conflicts. Since April 2004, the Amnesty Commission reports that 42.5 per cent of those seeking amnesty, approximately 5,092, are LRA fighters who are not children. Success would be greater, but Kony has condemned the Amnesty and threatens captives who attempt to escape. Fear of Kony and violent reprisals by other LRA commanders, as well as routine brainwashing of children, limit the number of those who would take advantage of the Amnesty. Returnees from the LRA testify that one of the techniques Kony uses to continue holding abductees hostage is to tell them that they will not be accepted by their community if they try to return home.

The Amnesty Act needs frequent renewal. At the time of writing, an amendment was proposed to make commanders ineligible. Along with groups in northern Uganda, World Vision requested that the government reconsider that proposal. (See adjacent box.)

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<sup>57</sup> *Refugee Law Project*, p. 44.

<sup>58</sup> *Interview with ARLPI representatives*, Nov. 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Khadiagala, Gilbert, "The Role of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in Peace Building in Northern Uganda." Report appendix to USAID report, *The Effectiveness of Civil Society Initiatives in Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace, Greater Horn of Africa Peace Building Project (March 2001)*, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> "When the Sun Sets We Start to Worry...", p. 12-13.

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## Recommendations for Strengthening the Amnesty Act

The following recommendations were made in May, 2004, and are still under consideration:

1. Remove commanders from the list of persons not eligible for amnesty by deleting paragraph 2 (2) (b) from the Act. The reasons are:

- Some commanders are abductees acting under threats by Kony, who has convinced them that they have no other option.
- The strategic value of the Amnesty Act to help break the hold Kony has on those under him would be enhanced by a willingness to consider the cases of everyone except Kony himself.

2. Add to Section 3 of the law language guaranteeing due process for persons who apply for amnesty. These might include a clear process for hearing cases, access to counsel for applicants, an appeal process, and time limits for detention without resolution of the case. The rationale is:

- The conditions outlined in Section 3 undermine confidence in the Amnesty Act because there is no guarantee of due process during detention. Whether valid or not, current allegations of unreasonable detention erode confidence in amnesty as an alternative to staying with the LRA.

In addition to improvements to Bill 25, consideration can be given to improving implementation of the Amnesty Act. Suggestions include:

1. Extension of the Act for a period beyond three months at a time, for all except Kony. This would increase confidence that applications can be processed before time runs out and allow for effective implementation.
2. Consistent messages from political leaders about the amnesty. Inconsistent messages undermine confidence in the GoU's commitment to implement the law. Messages should include positive, public information campaigns to build community confidence and indirectly get the message to those in the clutches of the LRA that they will be accepted if they can escape.
3. Public information campaigns targeted for young people. These should be intensive, in local languages covering all of the affected areas. This will ensure that anyone who might be abducted by the LRA is well aware of his or her options and less liable to be swayed by false indoctrination during captivity.
4. Speedy resolution of cases. This will reinforce GoU commitment to implementation of the law. This process could include cooperation with community-based initiatives for reintegration services.

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## D. Government-led Peace Efforts

Dialogue initiatives have frequently failed because of contradictory messages sent by both the government and the LRA. The following comment exemplifies this widely held view:

*The leaders establish contact and something was going on, then someone in government says these are bandits! Get out in two weeks! These things are said in the press, on the radio, and it defeats the purposes of the effort. If you tell your children to go and collect honey, you don't throw stones into the hive. That's what's happening. It cost the life of a very respected elder here.<sup>61</sup>*

Kony, as well as the government, often scuttles peace initiatives. "Sometimes Kony calls for a ceasefire, and then he massacres many people. So people should be honest and know that it is not only Museveni who does not respect cease-fires."<sup>62</sup> However, previous peace talks have yielded some results that provide a basis for future initiatives. The negotiations held by Betty Bigombe in 1994 are often referred to as having been the best opportunity for peace; the eventual failure of the Bigombe talks is attributed to both the government's lack of firm political will behind a negotiation strategy and the LRA's turn to Sudan for arms re-supplies. Furthermore, the talks at Awoo Nyim (a Ugandan sub-county near the border of Sudan) in 2001 highlighted that limited demilitarised zones and control of looting could be achieved with the LRA through negotiations.<sup>63</sup>

Carter Centre peace initiatives contributed to improving relations between the governments of Sudan and Uganda, and established contact with Kony again. Although their efforts to organise meetings between Acholi elders and Kony were not successful, they and others helped community leaders in the north work together for peace. Over

the years, solidarity among the various groups at the community level has increased, laying a strong foundation for current peace initiatives.

The Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI) is a U.S. government-led initiative with two main tracks: initiating a peace process through negotiating humanitarian access; and, where possible, increasing humanitarian assistance to war-affected areas. Attempts have been made to get in touch with Kony via U.S. contacts within the GoS, but getting a coherent, consistent and favourable response has been a challenge.

Not much is known about the details of NUPI. Key U.S. officials see NUPI as an opportunity to build on anticipated success in the Sudanese peace talks, since elements of the LRA and the Ugandan government reportedly have indicated privately that they could talk with each other. Nevertheless, since no meetings have been held and none are scheduled, immediate prospects for peace talks are unlikely.<sup>64</sup>

The U.S. sent a letter to the LRA asking for a meeting with representatives of USAID and the Museveni government, to talk about humanitarian aid because of the growing access problem presented by attacks on assistance convoys. It asked for a written reply through the Sudanese government. The SPLA indicated that it would provide security so the LRA could get to such a meeting, and Khartoum said it would provide security at the negotiating venue. If humanitarian aid agreements could be reached and implemented, then the parties could talk further. The letter was delivered on 17 September 2003 through the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum. The U.S. heard nothing until a message came back from one of the interlocutors asking about security for Kony at the talks. A response through another interlocutor demanded food for the LRA as a precondition for a meeting. The U.S. is uncertain about whether either of these responses was from Kony, and is unwilling to put anything on the table (e.g., food) as a precondition for talks.<sup>65</sup>

Individual peace initiatives have made small gains

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<sup>61</sup> *Refugee Law Project*, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> *ICG interviews*; *ICG*, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> *ICG*, p. 26.

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at different times, and they provide important groundwork for a full-scale, coordinated peace initiative, which has never been tried in northern Uganda. With the changing circumstances in Sudan and the urgency of the situation in northern Uganda, now is the time to substantively increase and coordinate all the efforts for peaceful resolution of this conflict.

### **Recommendations:**

- A coordinated, high-level effort by international donors is needed to support grassroots conflict resolution initiatives through diplomacy and resources to sustain peace dialogues. A modest investment could yield huge results compared to the huge cost of continuing armed conflict.
- Consistent messages and actions in support of peace negotiations are needed from the governments of Uganda and Sudan.
- Leaders of the LRA should demonstrate a serious commitment to peace by:
  - ending the practice of abduction, with the release of all children and adults still in captivity;
  - agreement on human rights monitoring of all parties to ensure everyone complies with international humanitarian laws;
  - coherently outlining achievable political objectives and cooperating with mediators attempting conflict resolution; and
  - negotiating and implementing a ceasefire with independent, international monitoring of all parties.
- For the medium term, the LRA and its supporters should direct their energy into non-violent political dialogue and organisations to address root causes of the conflict and work toward the development of political structures in Uganda that respect diversity, treat all peoples equitably, and foster development in the north.
- The new African Union Peace and Security Council should give high priority to the situation

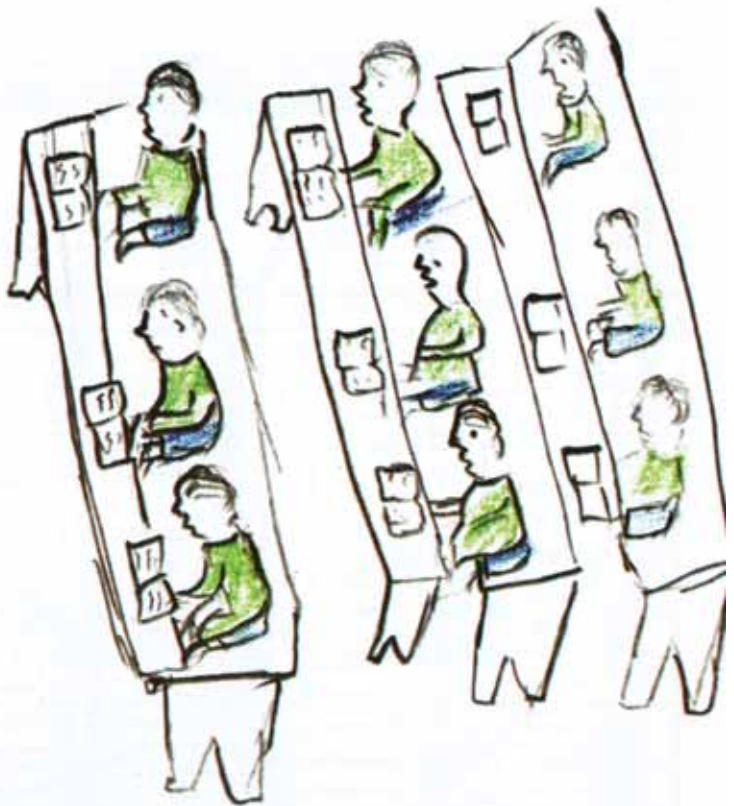
in northern Uganda and provide African leadership within international efforts for non-violent conflict resolution.

- Consistent, coordinated, high-level diplomacy by all international actors, including the withdrawal of military support that enables the conflict, will force combatants to engage in serious efforts to resolve conflicts.
- The United Nations should appoint a Special Envoy to coordinate all UN efforts in the direction of peace, with a particular focus on protection of civilians and accountability for compliance with international law. This would include independent human rights monitors to deter abuses by all parties, and engagement with all parties on compliance with international laws.
- Without waiting for the conflict to end, the Government of Uganda and local community leaders in the North should begin a process of reconciliation through constructive dialogue, including participation by youth and women. Areas emerge for immediate actions that could prepare the way for the longer term:
  1. Increased provision of government services to the people of the North, with priorities on education, including non-formal education, and HIV/AIDS strategies, two areas of high priority in the other regions of the country.
  2. Preparations for the transition from military protection through strengthening civilian police and judicial systems.
  3. Joint strategies to increase the opportunity for economic livelihoods as an alternative to joining the armed forces, especially for young people. Work could begin to restore a well-functioning economy in the North.

When the war ends, it will take some time for people to feel secure enough to return home. Medium- and long-term interventions will be necessary to restore stability and to create an enabling environment for development.

# V.A Vision for the Future:

## Post-Conflict Reconstruction



## V.A Vision for the Future: Post-Conflict Resolution

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An integrated strategy for post-conflict reconstruction will need to include all the areas mentioned separately, such as health, education, reintegration of former combatants, and economic development. International development organisations, such as the World Bank, have already begun to develop plans. A top priority will be assistance for the resettlement of internally displaced persons. Sustained resources will be important to give northern Uganda time to achieve its potential to be a productive and attractive place to live.

### Medium-Term Interventions

- **Support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children impacted by the war, including ex-combatants.** Expanded programs for children should include the provision of medical care, psychosocial support and vocational skills training. Young people must be equipped with start-up tools/capital, and primary and secondary education support. Reintegration activities should include a sensitisation and reconciliation process for the community, using appropriate cultural tools.
- **Make special provisions for girls and child mothers,** who have most often been victims of sexual bondage. Counselling and special efforts at community reintegration will be needed.
- **Support for transitional emergency relief.** Until IDPs feel secure enough to resettle, and the agricultural economy revives itself, there will be a need to maintain a level of emergency provisions.
- **Advocacy.** All stakeholders should promote increased public awareness of the lingering effects of conflict on children. Special emphasis should be placed on building local capacities for peace to enhance community mechanisms for peacebuilding, conflict management and resolution.
- **Scaling up of HIV/AIDS interventions** and innovative programming geared for transitional

and post-conflict settings is imperative. Effective programming will build upon local capacities for prevention, care, and advocacy.

- **Donor, GoU and NGO consultation.** As relief and development funds are channelled to war-affected areas, to ensure maximum impact, adequate consultation should be done to ensure that the affected population has a voice in how funds are used.

### Long-Term Interventions

Once the conflict has ended, sustainable peace will require strategies to improve the livelihood of affected communities through improved socio-economic opportunities and services. We envision a coordinated response that will include the following:

- **Demobilisation of IDP camps and reintegration.** Adequate support by the Government of Uganda, the international community and NGOs will be needed to assist displaced people in their return home and resumption of productive livelihoods. This will include basic housing, start-up seeds and tools, psychosocial counselling, and the moving of social services back to the community.
- **Community-based Policing.** Strengthening local civilian law enforcement agencies, human rights commissions and child protection agencies to enable a transition from military security to civilian security.
- **Large-scale infrastructure development.** The rehabilitation and expansion of transport infrastructure is crucial for economic development and the delivery of basic social services, e.g. schools, health centres, agricultural extension and economic empowerment activities. Given the break down of infrastructure for service delivery in local governments, due to the flight of technical staff, there will be need for capacity building and technical support of local governments.
- **Skills development for youth.** As described

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above, so many children have missed opportunities for adequate formal education, either because of abduction or displacement. It will be important to provide opportunities for learning marketable vocational skills to this large number of youth.

- **Reconciliation.** It will be important to provide ongoing support for healing and reconciliation to ensure a peaceful coexistence between former rebels and the local population, especially those who lost close family and relatives in the war.
- **National Reconciliation.** A truth and reconciliation process to address the historical grievances that generated this and other conflicts will be an important part of healing the trauma of this conflict and building a culture of national unity in Uganda.

### **Economic Prospects**

Recovery will be very difficult, but there is cause for optimism. Based on experience in Teso and Lango regions, where conflicts were quelled a decade ago, self-sufficiency in food and production, with a surplus for sale in other parts of the country, can be achieved relatively quickly in the aftermath of conflict. Major investment projects are being held up until the conflict is resolved. There is likely to be an immediate spurt in investment when peace is established, followed by a sustained period of substantial growth. Advantages include prospects for demand both domestically and abroad, including regional markets in the Congo and Sudan. The key to these developments is an end to the war and the establishment of security for investment in profitable and socially desirable enterprises.

## VI. Conclusions

Peace is possible in northern Uganda. Ending the current tragedy makes the necessary investment worthwhile and a moral imperative. The cycle of violence can be broken with new respect for human rights and the establishment of community

institutions and opportunities for advancement. Turning the corner will require cooperation at the local level, at the national level in both Uganda and Sudan, and at the international level. There is no time to lose.



# Annex I: Historical Legacies — A Political Survey

## Pre-colonial Divisions

Today's population of Uganda is 24.6 million people, inhabiting 242,554 square kilometres.<sup>66</sup> Within this population, there are more than 50 tribes, as listed in the current Ugandan constitution. No one ethnic group has a majority. This type of diversity did engender cultural differences and rivalries prior to the establishment of British rule circa 1900. Nilotic-speaking pastoralist peoples such as the Acholi, Iteso, Langi, and the Karamojong generally clustered to the North and East, while Bantu-speaking agriculturalists primarily settled in the South. The people of Buganda were the most politically organised, with a powerful king (also known as the Kabaka), a large standing army, and institutional structures that resemble the modern state.

The Bantu-speaking agriculturists multiplied over the centuries and evolved a form of government by clan chiefs. This kinship-organised system was useful for coordinating work projects, settling internal disputes, and carrying out religious observances to clan deities, but it could effectively govern only a limited number of people. Larger polities began to form states by the end of the first millennium A.D., some of which would ultimately govern over a million subjects each.

Nilotic-speaking pastoralists, located primarily in the north and eastern parts of the country, were more mobile and their political organisation was less formal, based on kinship and decision making by kin-group elders<sup>67</sup>

## Colonialism: Enshrined policy of Divide and Rule

The creation of Uganda's modern nation-state was founded in policy-driven regional splits that began during the colonial era. The British colonial regime was interested in securing political control over Uganda against other imperial contenders, as well as establishing an economically profitable enterprise

for Britain. To achieve this, it adopted a “divide and rule” policy that split Uganda into functional regions for maximum administrative efficiency, and maximum economic profit. The Baganda in the south were rewarded generously for their cooperation with the British. The south was used as an agricultural base for sugarcane and tea, while the north was seen as hostile territory because there were some tribes powerful enough to offer stiff and prolonged resistance against the British. Colonial authorities characterised and reinforced ethnic images relative to the “usefulness” towards colonial goals, leading to ethnic-based labels and stereotypes that have persisted to date.

The British may have exacerbated these prejudices and rivalries, but they did not invent them. Many were present before the colonists' arrival. The British policy of “divide and rule” was successful because the pre-colonial environment in Uganda enabled it. The British, simply by exploiting existing ethnic tensions, were able to undermine any possible coordinated resistance of Ugandans.<sup>68</sup>

## Independence Era: A Legacy of Militarised Politics

Uganda's approach to independence was unlike that of most other colonial territories where political parties had been organised to force self-rule or independence from a reluctant colonial regime. Such conditions would have required local and regional differences to be subordinated to the greater goal of winning independence; however, in Uganda, parties were forced to cooperate with one another, with the prospect of independence already assured. One of the major parties was even opposed to independence unless its particular separatist desires were met.<sup>69</sup>

## Obote I, 1962–1971; Idi Amin, 1971–1979

At independence, in 1962, Milton Obote was elected Prime Minister. At the time of independence, Obote was politically adept at

<sup>66</sup> *Uganda Statistical Abstract*, March 2004.

<sup>67</sup> *Library of Congress Country Case Studies — Uganda*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/gdc/cntrystd.ug>, accessed 21 April 2004.

<sup>68</sup> “Behind the Violence: Causes, Consequences and the Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda”, *Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 11*, February 2004, p. 10. Available at [www.refugeelawproject.org](http://www.refugeelawproject.org).

<sup>69</sup> *LOC Country Case Study — Uganda*.

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holding together a myriad of regional and ethnic factions to create a parliamentary coalition. However, he recognised and valued the power of the military in settling political disputes, and he came to heavily rely upon his protégé, Idi Amin, to quell dissent. With this reliance, the military began to assume a more prominent role in political life. But with two assassination attempts on Obote in late 1969 and 1970, he began to question Amin's loyalty.

In January 1971, Idi Amin orchestrated a coup that forced Obote into exile in Tanzania. An illiterate soldier, having only a military background, Amin ran Uganda like a military unit: he renamed Government House "the Command Post" and quadrupled the size of the military. Amin never forgot the source of his power: he spent much of his time rewarding, promoting, and manipulating the existing ethnic divisions within the army in order to maintain control. An African proverb best summed up Amin's treatment of his army: "A dog with a bone in its mouth can't bite." But the erratic and brutal nature of his regime created more and more instability and rapid economic decline. An estimated 300,000 people were murdered under Idi Amin's rule.<sup>70</sup>

With growing domestic chaos, Amin blamed Tanzania for his woes, so as to distract the populace and occupy the military. In November 1978, Amin's troops invaded Tanzania, annexing territory across the Kagera River boundary. Tanzania responded and fought back Amin's force, eventually pushing back into Uganda, with the aid of disaffected Amin troops and various Ugandan exile groups. Tanzanian forces took the capital, Kampala, in April 1979.

### **Interim Government, 1979; the rise of Yoweri K. Museveni**

At the beginning of the interim government, the military numbered fewer than 1,000 troops that fought alongside the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) to expel Amin — who fled in exile to Libya and then Saudi Arabia.<sup>71</sup> But in 1979, in an attempt to consolidate support for the future, such

leaders as Yoweri K. Museveni and Major General (later Chief of Staff) David Oyite Ojok began to enrol thousands of recruits into what were rapidly becoming their private armies. When interim government leader Godfrey Binaisa sought to curb the use of these militias, which were harassing and detaining political opponents, he was overthrown in a military coup on May 10, 1980. The coup was carried out under the general direction of Paulo Muwanga, Obote's right-hand man and chair of the Military Commission. The Military Commission, headed by Muwanga and included Ojok and Museveni, effectively governed Uganda during the six months leading up to the national elections of December 1980.<sup>72</sup>

### **Obote II, 1981–85**

Uganda's second election since independence, and the first in 18 years, was viewed by most as fraudulent. With the help of his trusted ally, Muwanga seized control of the Electoral Commission and Obote was declared the winner. In February 1981, shortly after the second Obote government took office, with Paulo Muwanga as Vice President and Minister of Defense, Yoweri Museveni and his armed supporters declared themselves the National Resistance Army (NRA). Museveni vowed to overthrow Obote by means of a popular rebellion, in what became known as "the war in the bush". Several other underground groups also emerged, attempting to sabotage the in-coming regime, but they were eventually crushed. Museveni, who had guerrilla war experience with the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique—Frelimo), campaigned in rural areas hostile to Obote's government, especially central and western Buganda and the western regions of Ankole and Bunyoro.

The second Obote government's four-year military effort to destroy its challengers resulted in vast areas of devastation and greater loss of life than during the eight years of Amin's rule. Government forces, then known as the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA), were comprised of many

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Amin died in exile in Saudi Arabia, August 2003.*

<sup>72</sup> *LOC Country Case Study — Uganda.*

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ethnic Acholi and Langi recruits, who had minimal training and little sense of discipline. Although they were survivors of Amin's genocidal purges of northeast Uganda, in the 1980s they were armed and in uniform, conducting similar atrocities against Bantu-speaking Ugandans in the south.

### **“Luwero Triangle”**

In early 1983, to eliminate rural support for Museveni's guerrillas, the area of Luwero District, north of Kampala, was targeted for a massive population removal affecting almost 750,000 people. These internally displaced persons (IDP) camps were under military control, which, in reality meant military abuse. Civilians outside the camps, in what came to be known as the “Luwero Triangle,” were presumed to be guerrillas or guerrilla sympathizers and were treated accordingly. The farms of this highly productive agricultural area were looted—roofs, doors, and even doorframes were stolen by UNLA troops. Civilian loss of life was extensive, as evidenced some years later by piles of human skulls in bush clearings and alongside rural roads. The overall death toll from the second Obote government (1981–1985) was estimated as high as 500,000. Obote, once seen by the donor community as the one man with the experience and will to restore Uganda's fortunes, now appeared to be a bloody liability to Uganda's recovery.<sup>73</sup>

In this deteriorating military and economic situation, Obote subordinated other matters to a military victory over Museveni. But the army was war-weary, and after the death of the highly capable General Oyite Ojok in a helicopter accident at the end of 1983, the military began to split along ethnic lines. Acholi soldiers complained that they were given too much frontline action and too few rewards for their services. Obote delayed appointing a successor to Oyite Ojok for as long as possible. In the end, he appointed one of his own tribesmen, a Langi, to the post and attempted to counter the objection of Acholi officers by spying on them. Obote gave orders for the arrest of a leading Acholi

commander, Brigadier (later Lieutenant General) Basilio Olara Okello, who, in turn, mobilised troops and entered Kampala on July 27, 1985, and installed General Tito Lutwa Okello (no relation) as president. Obote, together with a large entourage, fled the country for Zambia;<sup>74</sup> this time, unlike the last, he allegedly took much of the national treasury with him.<sup>75</sup>

### **Acholi at the Helm — Interim Government of Tito Okello**

The military government of General Tito Okello ruled from July 1985 to January 1986 with no explicit policy except the goal of self-preservation—the motive for his defensive coup. To stiffen the flagging efforts of his army against the NRA, Okello invited former soldiers of Amin's army to re-enter Uganda from the Sudanese refugee camps and participate in the civil war on the government side. As mercenaries fresh to the scene, these units helped, but they were equally interested in looting and did not discriminate between supporters and enemies of the government. The reintroduction of Amin's infamous cohorts was poor international public relations for the Okello government and helped create a new tolerance of Museveni.

### **Museveni assumes power, January 1986**

In 1986 a cease-fire initiative from Kenya was welcomed by Okello, who could hardly expect to govern the entire country with only war-weary and disillusioned Acholi troops to back him. Negotiations dragged on, but with Okello and the remnants of the UNLA army thoroughly discouraged, Museveni had only to wait for the regime to disintegrate. In January 1986, welcomed by many in the civilian population, Museveni and the NRA moved against Kampala. Okello and his soldiers fled northward to their ethnic base in Acholiland.<sup>76</sup> Yoweri Museveni formally claimed the presidency on January 26, 1986.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Obote is still exiled in Zambia.*

<sup>75</sup> *LOC Country Case Study — Uganda*

<sup>76</sup> *Acholiland encompasses the districts of Gulu, Kitgum & Pader.*

<sup>77</sup> *LOC Country Case Study — Uganda.*

## Annex II: Lessons Learned on HIV/AIDS Programming in Conflict Areas

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- A holistic integrated approach is most effective in HIV/AIDS interventions, including generic prevention; care and advocacy programmes may not be as effective in conflict areas because of unusual living circumstances of target populations.
- Partnership with the judicial and local police force is crucial for the success of HIV/AIDS responses. This helps in deterring people who take advantage of conflict situations to commit crimes that expose victims to HIV/AIDS infection.
- Because of the double tragedy faced by people living with AIDS and affected family members, psychosocial support must be prioritised in a conflict situation.
- Security personnel working in and around conflict areas should be among the prime target group for HIV /AIDS prevention and advocacy programmes, and should be involved as change agents.
- For children, World Vision found that videos and stories are very powerful in raising awareness of the linkages and addressing the concerns around conflict and HIV/AIDS. Stories should be well selected to help children better understand and adjust. Stories can cover areas of children, adults and families affected by HIV/AIDS and the conflict; coping strategies; care for people infected by HIV/AIDS, and how to protect others from the infection.
- Art and Craft activities have the power to comfort children from the worries of conflict, and the many concerns around HIV/AIDS. They provide opportunities for children to express their thoughts and ideas creatively, while challenging their imagination, fostering reflective thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills, and the development of discipline.
- Use of drama is helpful to offer children opportunities to act out roles, anxieties and feelings but also as a means to communicate important messages and information regarding prevention and care for those affected by, and infected with HIV/AIDS.
- Youth-to-youth strategy, like child-to-child strategy, being used in the formal school system for health messages, should be encouraged in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Peer messages have more appeal for peer groups than adult messages.
- Technical education can also hold promise for vulnerable children.

### Abduction

*“I was in Primary 2 when I was abducted. I was coming home for lunch and as I rounded a bend, eight rebels suddenly appeared and aimed a gun at me. They dared me to run else they would shoot me. They took my books and tore them all, and tied me up. One person was given to guard me and asked me if UPDF soldiers likes patrolling that route. I denied but they maintained their ambush.*

*At five o’clock in the evening, I heard gunshots and after a short while, four rebels were shot dead by the UPDF. When the others came back, they then decided to kill me because I had deceived them and made them lose four soldiers.*

*They tied me up again but one of them decided that I should not be killed. I had lost all hope of living again, and my heart pounded loudly, and still, I believed they would kill me during the night.”*

### Life in the bush

*“We walked most of the night and the next day in the evening we met a bigger group. The four rebels each wanted to take me to join his household at the time of distribution of captives, but their commander prevented a quarrel erupting by taking me for him. I became his escort and would go with him to the battlefield. I carried his bag, tent and hoe. When we went for operations two times, he recommended that I should be given my own gun because I am not afraid and I am well disciplined.*

*The next day I proved my worth at battlefield during an attack by UPDF. I charged them*

*and got four magazines of ammunition and the commander gave me two very important assets.*

*One day after several operations, I threw away my gun during a battle, but I was forced to go back and get it or else I would be killed. I fought at Opit, Lagile, Lira, Aromo and many times at Soroti.*

*At Soroti, I was given to kill a man but I refused, so I was slapped with a machete on my bare back and was about to be killed. I gave in and killed the man by hitting on the head with a club. Another man was brought and again I refused and I was beaten severely, until I killed him. I could not eat for 3 days because of the sight of blood.*

*I also witness commander Tabuley killed during a battle. He was shot at the neck and his escorts carried him away. I was also shot on the head but was not badly injured.*

*We also laid an ambush and shot a bus along the Lira-Soroti road, only two people survived whom we took captives, a man and a child. Thereafter we suffered several attacks by the UPDF. We also attacked a UPDF detach, we were 40 in number but we were repulsed and 16 people were killed and only I and three others were not injured. Some of the casualties were ghastly to look at.”*

### Life in Sudan

*“Joseph Kony the Commander sent a message that sodas, soap, clothes and other supplies be taken. We walked from Lira district and took 3 days to enter Sudan. We suffered hunger and six recruits (Children) died of hunger. We had to attack Pajok in*

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Sudan (occupied by SPLA) for food. We walked through the Imotong Mountains and many people died of fatigue and hunger while climbing. After six days of trouble, even attacks by Lotuko Militias, we reached the other side of the mountain and met Joseph Kony who insulted us and warned us not to escape.

Thereafter he planned a mission to raid the Morule of cattle and they brought over six hundred cattle. They counter attacked twice but were repulsed. The SPLA also attacked us for the cattle and we realised them to be tough soldiers.”

## Escape

“In March we suffered a heavy attack by UPDF helicopter gunships and a woman, child and two boys were killed. The commander Vincent Otti ordered that everybody should spread out and moves alone to avoid casualties. I took this chance to escape and went and got lost but kept moving for four days without any food and water. I carried my gun and ammunitions pouch. I reached the river Nile on the fifth day and drank water at a certain point, dodging SPLA soldiers who were fishing. I walked and followed the river upstream and went and drank water again, but when I stood up and moved, I heard something following me in the water. I looked back and saw a dark, large animal like a bull. It began to move in upon me, looking straight at me, its tail up and its eyes dark and terrible. I realised it was a buffalo, very dangerous. I was feeling very weak and felt dizzy with hunger. I turned to look ahead, and I saw an SPLA soldier take his gun and aimed at me. He said “de munu” meaning, “Who are you”

in local Arabic and began to fire at me. I was too weak to react and the bullets clouded me in dust. I turned round and saw the buffalo, mad with anger but undecided whether to charge or not, partly distracted by the bullets. I was in a dilemma. I held my gun at a firing position but did not cock it and tried to decide which way to go.

I decided that I better be killed by men, not this cruel and terrible buffalo. The man completed a whole round of ammunition and I wasn't hurt, but during this interlude, over thirty SPLA soldiers came in and released a volley of bullets at me. I fell down by instinct and crawled to a nearby outcrop of rock. I looked back and saw the buffalo, mad with rage and intent upon crushing me as it followed me.

My attackers released a rocket-propelled grenade, which split the outcrop of rock, which almost crushed me as it rolled past. They thought I was the one rolling so they directed their line of fire towards the spot where the rock stopped. I creped and looked back from among the rocks and the buffalo had disappeared. My attackers were surprised when I stood up again and leaned against a tree. One of them (whom I later realised to be an Acholi from Atiak in Uganda) became inquisitive and came over and ordered me to throw my gun and pouch down. I responded but he ran back in fear. He came again and I threw the gun down and my pouch too. He snatched it and ordered me to follow him.

The SPLA everywhere shouted, “Kill him” but the man refused. We reached their barracks amidst insults and many people wanted to stone me. The SPLA had always

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*suffered at the hands of the LRA and I now faced their anger alone. A woman who carried firewood had a machete in her hand and cut at me and missed my face.*

*I clung to the man called Otim, and he protected me for a week until one day he sent a message to Attiak and UPDF soldiers came and took me across the boarder to Uganda. The SPLA followed me but the UPDF refused to release me. I was subsequently brought to World Vision Children's Centre at Gulu."*

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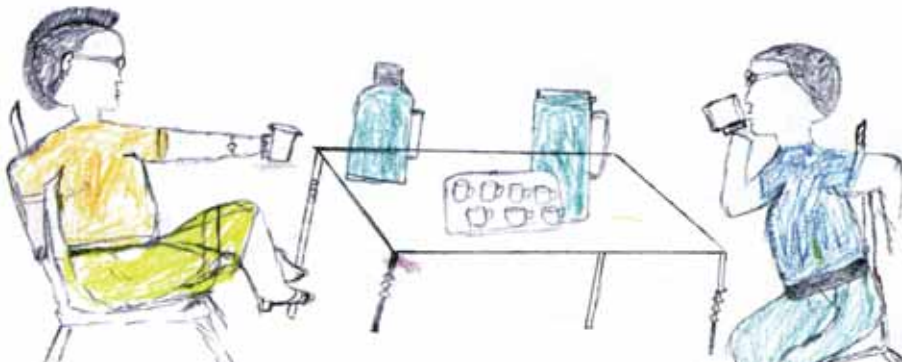
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