

Community Based Reintegration Of Ex-Combatants: A Case Study Of The Lords Resistance Army In Northern Uganda

BY

Maxie J. Muwonge

Human Rights, Peace and Development Worker and Researcher
maxie@iyak-peace.org, maxiemimp2005@yahoo.com

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Introduction

The specific context of any conflict and the differentiating dynamics therein, inform the processes for resolving that conflict. In the case of northern Uganda Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war, the nature and scope of commitments and interventions; evolving political and security frameworks, vision and objectives set by the various stakeholders in an attempt to end this twenty years insurgency are informed by the nature and dynamics of this war. Many studies have indicated the nature of the LRA war; The LRA rebels mutilate, abduct children, widely kill civilians, commit rape and other acts of sexual violence as well as crimes against property including though not limited to burning down civilians' huts, vehicles, economic extortion and robbing food and medical stuffs.¹ Whereas it is right to argue that LRA nature of atrocities are synonymous to other armed conflicts in Africa like the Darfur insurgency in Sudan, the 1994 Rwandan genocide among other case scenarios, for the case of the LRA, many of those who have committed crimes against humanity are under coercion from their abductors. At the core of the internal organization of the LRA are the abductees, mainly children and the youth, who are turned into porters, soldiers and wives.

Many of the LRA ex-combatants who for the purpose of this paper will be referred to as Formerly Abducted Persons (FAPs), considering that they were abducted and forced to commit atrocities against their will, have over years escaped from combatant back into their communities. In many instances upon return from combatant, the FAPs due to their involvement in the violence against their community during the war, they are invariably portrayed as prone to violence and criminally inclined-summarily, perceived by various communities members from the centrally war affected communities as a menace to their communities in one form to another. Such perception are premised on the bitter realities, when the FAPs upon being abducted were coerced to commit an act of brutality, frequently against a relative, thereby incriminating and traumatizing them so that they are reluctant or unable to return to their villages, for fear of accountability to their community and revenge from those enraged as a result of losing their relatives.²

This paper creates a further understanding of the war situation in northern Uganda³, plight of the FAPs and an interrogation of the various initiatives undertaken to ensure sustainable community based reintegration of these FAPs. It also provides achievable recommendations to better their reintegration and functioning within their communities.

Situational Analysis of the LRA Insurgency on Northern Uganda

The entire Northern Uganda testifies to the vicious suffering emanating from the LRA twenty years conflict with the central government of Uganda, characterized by mass willful killings, abductions, rape and internal displacement of the civilian population. Poor living conditions are prevalent among the internally displaced persons (IDPs), who are highly impoverished, displaced from their traditional land, suffered illness like cholera, malaria, and HIV/AIDS. The region has witnessed interrupted education; families have had to endure severe social breakdowns as evidenced by the big numbers of orphans, child mothers, and child-headed families. Communities are faced by shortages of food due to the inaccessibility of their farmlands in the areas far way from the respective IDP camps, hence left to survive on the food rations provided monthly by World Food Program (WFP).

Recent August 2006 IDP revalidation exercise established that Gulu was having 460,226 (87 percent) persons out of its projected population estimate of 528,800 living in 66 protected internal displacement camps/settlements as a result of the repeated and protracted forced displacements triggered by the insurgency. This IDP population figure constitutes a total of 118338 families/ households.⁴ If the same scenario of Gulu is reflected in the districts of Kitgum and Pader which had the IDP population of 31011 IDPs in 22 camps and 319,506 IDPs in 30 camps respectively, then the total number of IDPs in the Acholi Sub Region is 1089843.⁵ Most of these camps are highly under-served with social services in spite of the efforts exerted by the Local Government together with its Humanitarian and Development partners.⁶ The IDP situation as a result of the LRA extended to the Lango sub region especially Lira district as well as the Teso region in the east.

Amidst this war traumatized IDP communities are the hundreds of FAPs who were affected in multiple ways by being abducted, tortured and forced to kill the same communities that they now seek to reintegrate into. Whereas the general feeling is that the FAPs have been forgiven by the war affected communities of northern Uganda, the idea for them to stay with former communities that they were forced to brutalize, has at times made some community members to palpably insult FAPs as rebels, which often stigmatize them, causing deep psychological scars. Therefore there is need of understanding their plight before interventions for their reintegration could be engaged.

The Plight of the FAPs

It is imperative to note that the FAPs are the worst affected category by the LRA insurgency in northern Uganda. From 1996, a year marked by intense fighting between the LRA and the government forces- Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF), the LRA resorted to abductions and massacre of government suspected allies to terrorise the civilian population in northern Uganda.⁷ The LRA abducts children and adults to serve as soldiers, and girls to serve as sex slaves to its commanders. Those abducted are brutalized to deter them from escaping. Those abducted persons attempting to escape are killed or seriously wounded as an example to others abducted.⁸ UNICEF estimates that over 25,000 children have been abducted in the course of the 19 years LRA insurgency.⁹ The reportedly favours LRA 9 to 12 years old abductees because the age group is the most malleable.¹⁰

A deeper interrogation of the process and consequences of abduction of especially the children and youth into the ranks of the LRA informs us that;

- Most FAPs were abducted when they are children
- As an initial indoctrination of the FAPs, they were coerced to commit atrocities against their own communities as a way of incriminating them, thereby making it difficult for them to return home
- FAPs were isolated and turned against the members of their families and communities
- In many instances, FAPs were inflicted of physical and psychological abuse
- Frequently, the FAPs were forced to give up their personal identity by undertaking new names
- For the young girls, they were raped and forced into marriage with the LRA top commanders

Over 90 percent of the girls and young women abducted by the LRA were forced into marriage.¹¹ Of these, at least 73 percent continued to fight as soldiers even if married.¹² Although very infuriating to get in terms with, the young girls who allowed to be repeatedly raped under the 'marriage of convenience with the rebels' were more safer than those who were single. Interviews with some of female FAPs indicate that unmarried boys and girls were responsible for the heaviest and most dangerous

workloads such as carrying supplies or moving at the front of a military deployment in battle.¹³ I wish to clearly state that this does not necessarily imply that FAPs especially the young girls who raped under the disguise of being married to the LRA commanders did so voluntary. In reality, they were forced into marriage and have sex against their will, after being beaten, tortured and threatened with death.

In principle, the FAPs were physical and sexual slaves of their abductors. If you are to form a picture on the situation of the FAPs while under captivity, the chances are that the imagery will be very tormenting and traumatizing. Many researches and studies like the ones cited in this paper have been very good at helping us map out the ghastly and inestimable suffering the young men and women (FAPs) went through under LRA captivity, but fall short of answering the question of who is responsible for their suffering.

Uganda is one of the African countries that have signed and ratified most of the international conventions and treaties that define and prohibit slavery and practices similar to slavery like abduction of civilians in times of war and peace. To mention though not limited to, the UN charter of 1945, UDHR of 1948, Slavery Convention of 1962, Convention on the Right of Children, Geneva conventions, which place obligations on individuals and warring parties to govern their conduct in war, and of recent the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court among others. UDHR (1948) declares that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.¹⁴ The 1995 Uganda Constitutions provides for under general principle 3 that all organs of the state and the people of Uganda shall work towards the promotion of national unity, peace and stability.¹⁵ It is the primary responsibility and duty of the government of Uganda to protect the life and property of all Ugandans at all times. The existence of IDPs in northern Uganda, with some of their family members forced into military combat by the LRA is a clear testimony of the inadequacy of the various duty bearers, in Uganda and the international community to protect the rights of these victimized people.

The above should not be perceived to mean that nothing has been done by the responsible duty bearers in Uganda and beyond, primarily the Government of Uganda. There have been attempts both military and dialogue (stick and carrot) approaches, whose merits and challenges are not necessarily discussed in this paper. The discussion is around the stark realities of the civilian (IDPs) suffering as one category of victims

alongside the FAPs, who this paper takes to be the worst affected. For these, there is no contest over the actuality that they were not protected from being manipulated and used as pawns in sustaining the whole insurgency.

Whereas these sound as strong statements, they can be substantiated. Some scholars are in agreement with me that behind the LRA abductions is a systematically crafted strategy of turning the population of northern Uganda against the government in power, which has majority members from the south. This has widened the north-south divide, which the author like many nationalist do not support and look forward to see its end, through both academic and proactive activism engagements with the responsible stakeholders as analyzed in the authors other related papers: *The Northern Question in Uganda*; and *Joining Hands to Build a better Uganda through National Reconiliation*¹⁶

The above statement is premised on the reality that the LRA send the abducted young girls and boys on the battle front as human shield. During the UPDF offensive against the LRA, most often they could kill the armed abductees as rebels. From some of the interviews with the FAPs who survived the UPDF offensive, they narrated that:

We used to fight the UPDF troops once we fell into their ambush. We had to put up a spirited resistance against them to save our lives, because if you were to retreat the LRA commander of your group could shoot you. What we feared most were the government war planes that could drop deadly bombs, killing many of our colleagues. We were however instructed upon seeing there advance towards us, to remove our shirts, smear with dust or mud, take cover in a tree of bush, hiding both our finger and toe nails, and in that way the planes could not easily spot us.¹⁷

Whereas some of the FAPs survived combatant, many died. When these children are killed in combat by the UPDF, their parents condemn the government for killing their children. As a result many enraged parents of the killed abductees resent the government, which indirectly meets the intended objectives of the LRA of turning the people of the north against the central government of Uganda. There have been instances where the abductees who had managed to escape from the LRA during combat with the UPDF found themselves harassed and physically harmed by the community members where they had run for rescue. This is resentment is attributed to the fact that most of the families that had lost their relatives could not stand any LRA suspected aide or involved combatant. They transferred their rage to the escapee FAPs for revenge. Although such road blocks exist in the course of the FAPs pursuing of freedom from their

abductors, many found their way to the reception centers like Gulu Save the Children Organization-GUSCO and World Vision, where they were received and rehabilitated for a while before being rejoined with their families. Some of them who were captured by the UPDF were taken to the barracks and later transferred to the reception centers. There also exist those FAPs that directly escaped from combat and found their way home to their relatives, and for those who failed to trace their relatives or feared the communities revenging against them, they moved to the main towns within the war affected districts to engage in petty brokery jobs to earn a living.

Reintegration Initiatives for FAPs

Uganda's former child soldiers, haunted by exposure to violence at a young age, often find little solace when reintegrated into their home communities. When they return home, the nightmare continues, as they face stigmatization from their family and peers.¹⁸ The government of Uganda has not come up with a comprehensive plan for reintegration of FAPs back into their communities. Few IDPs feel that reintegration of FAPs has been satisfactory so far. Some FAPs have had difficulties for example, to adjust from the power of the gun as a source of self-reliance and the gun being taken away without facilitation for alternative livelihood skills. What exists as reintegration intervention processes by humanitarian agencies and the civil society, are basically adhoc activities implemented and duplicated by the various stakeholders. Nevertheless, the government of Uganda instituted the Amnesty commission to process blanket amnesty for the LRA.

I Amnesty for the FAPs

As a response to the persistent insurgency in Uganda, the government enacted the amnesty act in the year 2000. This move was to pardon, exempt and discharge former rebels who voluntarily give up fighting the government through military means from criminal prosecution or any form of punishment from the state. The blanket amnesty that the government offered to all people engaged in rebellions against the government of Uganda, including the LRA covers all rebel movements since the 26th day of January 1986. For the LRA ex combatants interviewed in the process of writing this paper, the greatest significance of the amnesty law is that it confers upon them as beneficiaries of amnesty, an irrevocable legal immunity from prosecution or punishment. Indeed Key LRA rebels like the former notorious Brigadiers: Sam Kolo and Banya received blanket amnesty from the government. A number of junior LRA commanders and FAPs who

managed to escape from combat and gave up arms have equally been granted the amnesty status. There is a general consensus within the war affected communities to grant full amnesty to the FAPs especially those who were in the lower ranks of the LRA because most of them were victims of abduction against their will. It is imperative to note that, “the Amnesty Act 2002 of Uganda empowers the Amnesty commission to promote appropriate mechanisms of reconciliation in the affected communities”.¹⁹

The affected communities perceive Amnesty process insufficient in causing reintegration and reconciliation as understood by the war victims. At most some of the FAPs are given amnesty certificates, blanket and mattress, plus some basic farm equipments. The victim communities perceive the amnesty packages from many folds. Some argue that the government is empowering the FAPs, who are perceived by some community members as the perpetrators that contributed to the communities' suffering in the camps. While others feel that the packages are necessary to enable the FAPs start a new life after abduction. The families of the FAPs feel that proper reintegration of their children should on top of the Amnesty process involve traditional cleansing; *Mato oput*.

II Acholi Traditional Justice Mechanism-*Mato Oput*

This is the traditional justice mechanism among the Acholi people who are mainly affected by the conflict. This practice is widely accepted within the IDP communities as ideal for cleansing FAPs before their reintegration with their families. It is carried out usually at both family and IDP camp levels for the FAPs with and without amnesty certificates.

The mechanism is based on the offender's (FAP) declaration of the wrong he or she committed. Inherent to this process is the identification of behavior act committed by the FAP, which is *Kir* (Taboo) to the Acholi Traditions. These acts range from war crimes to antisocial-violent acts. The Taboo (*Kir*) is cleansed through extensive rituals, which often constituted part of the reaffirmation of common values or behaviors. A common ritual involves stepping on a raw egg, which symbolizes pure and untouched, the *Laibi* stick, used for opening the granary symbolizing that the individual is returning to eat home, and a twig from the *Opobo* tree, traditionally used to make soap symbolizing cleansing.²⁰

The same rituals are conducted for IDPs that have started the voluntary return and resettlement into their original homes especially in Gulu district. A deeper interrogation of the whole Mato-Oput system reveals that;

- Mato-Oput is a cultural resolution of conflict in Acholi carried out by the *Rwodi Moo*, the traditional institution concerned with reconciliation.
- It focuses on genuine forgiveness for the offenders like FAPs who ask for forgiveness, leading to reconciliation of the offender and offended. Usually, the elders from the FAPs clan acknowledge guilt and regret it, while the victims' clan elders agree to amend fences after factual investigations.
- An agreement is worked out by the elders, including a kind of compensation in form of livestock, usually cattle, or handing over a young girl to the deceased family and clan, expected to produce children to replace the dead.
- On the agreed date the compensation is done, elders conclude the process by sharing a bitter drink (made from the roots of the Oput tree) in common source. This is the ceremonial way of swallowing the bitterness.²¹

The author wishes to clearly highlight that the component of handing over the girl to the family of the deceased is not generally supported by all the Acholi people in the contemporary times, much as there are some conservative groups who wish to keep the entire Acholi custom intact with that component. Many of the families, who opt for Mato-oput, give cattle to the deceased family, which is expected to be used by that family to marry a woman for one of their sons, who will give birth and replace the deceased member of the family and clan. Summarily, the tradition practices that are partly used to restore the broken relationships of the FAPs and the victimised communities have some shortcomings.

- The process is very expensive for the highly impoverished IDP communities whose children are FAPs. Some civil society organizations like Northern Uganda Peace Initiative tried in 2005, to sponsor a team of Acholi leaders to undertake rituals of mato oput in welcoming back the FAPs to be reintegrated into their families.
- Many human rights activists are contesting the component of giving a way a girl to be the deceased family to compensate for the dead family and clan members.

Consequently, many FAPs whose families and clans have logistical support to meet the cost involved in undertaking this traditional practice have tended to fill that they are not cleansed, hence not properly reintegrated into their communities.

III Reintegration into the National Armed Forces

Some of the FAPs upon escaping from the LRA opt to join the national armed forces. It is imperative to note that by and large, the decision and process of FAPs joining the armed ranks of the state are voluntary. For this category of FAPs, they feel better being reintegrated into the army to provide services- safety, to the communities that they were once forced to brutalise while under the LRA captivity. These FAPs are given full military training and passed out in various categories. Some, as part of the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and others as Local Para-militias. In some communities like eastern Uganda, the FAPs formed part of the AMUKA and Arrow boys to protect their own communities from LRA and the Karamojong cattle wrestlers. This paper does not intend to examine the merits of this process. It nevertheless wishes to point out that this approach for reintegration of some FAPs has been under attack by sections of both local and international communities. In generic terms, those opposed to this mechanism ground their allegations on the perception that the government is using the reintegrated FAPs into the military ranks, as human shields in the process of military confrontation with their former abductors, the LRA.

IV Reception Centers

This intervention was the earliest attempt modeled by the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to receive FAPs. Gulu Save the Children Organisation (GUSCO), World Vision International, were among the first agencies to establish reception centers for FAPs. More agencies like Jamii Ya Kupatanisha-JYAK, a Swahili phrase for Fellowship of Reconciliation in Uganda, among others, joined to support these initiatives of FAPs reintegration especially at the grassroots levels.

Upon arriving at the reception centers, the details of the FAPs are taken and with their assistance the search for their families, from which they were abducted commences. While at the reception centers, the FAPs undergone counseling as part of psychosocial therapy, considering that many continue to experience traumatic disorders due to the gruesome acts they were forced to engage into while under LRA abductions. Alongside

the counseling, the FAPs at the centers are physically rehabilitated through provision of food stuffs, treatment of wounds and other health hazards they contracted in the bush. Peace education components, like non-violence skills are offered to the FAPs to help them adjust their interpersonal relations with the communities were they are reintegrated. In World Vision reception center for children, “Bible teaching and prayers are emphasized as ways through which FAPs seek for forgiveness from God for themselves and to forgive their abductors”.²²

The field officers under the reception centers, upon finding the family relatives of the FAPs, they do arrange with the community members who gather at a specified time frame and location, usually the IDP camp were the family relatives of the FAPs live. The FAPs are handled over by the reception center field team to their families in the presence of other IDPs, who are called upon to be supportive of the FAPs. This intervention as well has its own shortcomings.

- The FAPs upon being handled to the local communities, there is a very big gap in their livelihood support system. They come to the IDP camps were unlike in the centers, they can not easily access free food, accommodation facilities, luxuries like TVs and videos, which they used to enjoy at the centers.
- As such, it is usually very difficult for the FAPs from the reception centers to fit and resettle within these IDP communities. Some IDP camp members are not friendly to them. They call them all sorts of names as rebels. This traumatizes them again.
- Consequently, some of the FAPs who fail to fit into the communities run back to the reception centers, while others opt to stay in the major trading centers and towns within their respective districts, were they do petty jobs like driving manual and motor bikes carrying passengers, who pay them hence supporting their livelihoods.

Implication of the Juba Peace Talks on the Reintegration of FAPs

Generally the peace negotiations in Juba after several failed peace talks attempts have largely been viewed by the war stricken communities of northern Uganda as the greatest opportunity for ending the conflict through peaceful means. This sanguinity was raised largely due to the increased commitment and the desire by both the LRA and central

government of Uganda to find a peaceful end to the conflict, manifested through the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA). The success of the peace talks in Juba is largely viewed to increase the number of FAPs, mainly children and women returning to live with their families. This will likely create challenges for their community based reintegration and resettlement. The author of this paper is aware that by the time of writing this paper, the peace talks at Juba had stalled due to several counter accusations between the LRA, GoU and Government of Southern Sudan under the auspices of the chief mediator Reik Machar. For the purpose of this paper, the author distances himself from interrogating the reasons for the stalling of the peace talks. It is his felt desire like many other peace lovers of the world that non violence solutions are reached to end this war. Considering that the hopes of the war communities were galvanized by the Peace talk's success, he shares moral support with the advocates for the success peace talks until the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement as expedite as possible.

Implication of the International Criminal Court on FAPs Reintegration

The ICC is the first ever permanent, treaty based international criminal court established to promote the rule of law and ensure that the gravest international crimes do not go unpunished. "The 1998 Rome Statute of the ICC which established this court was entered into force on the 1st July 2002. Accordingly anyone who commits any of the crimes under the statute after this date will be liable for prosecution by the court".²³ Considering that Uganda signed the Rome Statute of the ICC on the 17th March and ratified it on the 14th of June with no reservation, as a matter of state practice, president Museveni of Uganda referred the situation concerning the LRA in northern Uganda to the ICC in December 2003. On the 29th of January 2004.

The Argentine ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo announced that, "there was sufficient evidence to start inquiring into the grave human rights violations committed by the LRA".²⁴ On the 13th October 2005, the ICC pre-trial chamber unsealed the warrant of arrest for five senior leaders of the LRA for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Uganda since July 2002. The chamber concluded that, "there were reasonable grounds to believe that Joseph Kony, Vicente Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Raska Rukwiya, ordered the commission of crimes within the jurisdiction of

the ICC".²⁵ On the basis of the above background a lot of excitement regarding the arrest of Kony and the end of the war was registered among the civic, civil and war affected communities. The hopes of the community were frustrated when the ICC failed to immediately arrest the indicted LRA commanders. As such, the war affected communities inspired by their traditional, religious and political leaders opted for traditional justice system of *Mato Oput* that has been discussed above. Part of the reasons advanced against the ICC include though not limited to; the fact that the ICC does not have retrospective powers to prosecute crimes committed before the 1st of July 2004, its intended justice is not fully representative and healing for all the war victims, who suffered from the bloody LRA offensive. In principle, the ICC justice is seen by the war affected communities to be insufficient in bringing about sustainable peace and reconciliation in northern and as such not preferred as a justice intervention for the LRA conflict at least for now.

The ICC indictments of the top LRA commands directly inhibited the FAPs' escaping from the LRA captivity. The rebel commanders used the ICC against their abductees, who they convinced that they would be arrested by the government forces and taken to the 'whites' to be imprisoned by the ICC. This propaganda worked on the FAPs psyche for sometime as informed by this paper:

We were told that the whites are looking for us to be taken to the ICC supported by president Museveni. We feared to come back home first. But later when we learnt from the Radio Megga-(Gulu based FM), that they wanted the top commanders we decided to escape and come back home.²⁶

For some of the FAPs in the IDP camps, the ICC indictment news made them scared that they would also be arrested from the camp and taken to the ICC. The author is certain of the lack of information within the war affected communities as regards the ICC mandate and operation. This is attested too. In some of the interactions with the IDPs, a community member inquired if ICC was a person they could talk too and explain the plight and innocence of their abducted and victimised sons and daughters-FAPs.²⁷ It is therefore very crucial a need, for the ICC to develop a communication strategy intended to sensitize the war affected communities whose justice they intend to represent and foster.

Needs Assessment and Constraints for FAPs Reintegration

- Long term reintegration beyond reception centers. Support from reception centers is limited leading to apathy about status in community. Reception centers can only follow up a few FAPs for a few months after being returned to their communities.
- Not all FAPs pass through reception centers. Most of the FAPs in Kitgum and Pader did not pass through reception centers and as such missed out on the basic counseling and rehabilitation to help them deal with the violent situations they might be confronted with within the IDP camps.
- The Amnesty Commission can provide amnesty certificates and a one off resettlement package in their Gulu Office. Access to service of the Amnesty commission from Pader is very difficult because of travel to Gulu for the poor FAPs
- Awareness, respect and redress for rights of FAPs especially for peace, life, health, property ownership, self determination is insufficient.
- Sense of belonging and coexistence with communities is needed and anticipated for by the FAPs. The reconciliation with community is obstructed because of fear of vengeance and lack of self confidence and image. They need receptive home communities.
- The livelihood systems for the FAPs are lacking. As such they are in a state poverty and lacking knowledge of practical ways they can improve their well being
- Many young FAPs express the need to continue with their education. It is imperative to point out that many IDP camps especially in Gulu and Kitgum have a nearby school. Some of these schools commonly referred to as bush schools are started by the government, former teachers and camp inhabitants who have attained some level of higher education
- Health services especially HIV, primary health care and access to medical services are insufficient.
- Psychosocial support to deal with effects of trauma is dearly needed. Many FAPs say they still experience post traumatic stress disorder even after reception centers and traditional cleansing ceremonies. FAPs are called many derogative names like; demon possessed, murderers and LRA prostitutes.
- Skilled leaders able to provide support community reintegration mechanisms

- Risk of re-abduction or killing if found by rebels
- Community bitterness because they feel that FAPs were part of the rebels who caused their suffering in the IDP Camps.
- Skepticism about what the government or community may do either to punish the ex-rebels or seek revenge.
- The weakest interest groups like child mothers, the disabled, HIV affected and the female gender feel much disempowered because of stereotypes about roles of the female gender.
- The different initiatives undertaken by the various Humanitarian agencies to support livelihood systems of the FAPs in the camps have not seriously engaged the question of whose land they are using giving rise to land conflicts

Conclusion

Community based reintegration of FAPs has of recent become well recognized to be a necessary intervention in transforming societies in northern Uganda by various key stakeholders like the government of Uganda and its development partners. It is imperative to point out that this development is not a cure-all, for sustainable reintegration and reconciliation of the FAPs and their communities, which they once assaulted.

I wish to point out that some of the NGOs like JYAK, have undertaken community based reintegration initiatives of the FAPs from the reception centers and those who directly found their way into their villages. JYAK for example attempts to transform the state of apathy, guilt, isolation, trauma and violent response to provocation of the FAPs to reconciliation within the FAPs, their families and communities, initiating self development activities to foster their responsible and human rights observant living with other IDPs. The main activities are: establish and strengthen FAPs' groups; peace and self-help training; psychosocial support; support for Amnesty registration, public engagement; advocacy and networking; economic reintegration of FAPs through vocational and entrepreneurship skills development. Such initiatives of JYAK and other likeminded partners are intended to support sustainable grassroots initiatives for effective community based reintegration of the FAPs, with the major component of promoting their livelihood systems.

Community based reintegration of the FAPs could be a success story, if it was to be engaged in an integrated way by the various stakeholders; civil society, the government, religious and cultural institutions represented in the region, working in conjunction with the primary war affected communities to realize social and conflict transformation, under the themes of forgiveness, peace, unity and reconciliation.

Recommendations

- For sustainable resettlement and reintegration of the FAPs and IDPs to be attained, there must be security guarantee for both their lives and property. The government and its development partners need to have in mind a fall-back position on how to deal with the same community in case the Juba peace talks that have raised hopes for peaceful end of the war fail.
- The government action plans for northern Uganda like the National Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP), out in specific terms to address the livelihood component of the FAPs and IDPs for their sustainable reintegration in a strategic planned manner.
- Local communities' initiatives to facilitate reintegration are tempered by the fact themselves are strapped with psychological, economic and social constraints that have already depleted their traditional and socially entrenched coping mechanisms. Additional mechanisms that serve to shift responsibility from individuals to a system are necessary to compensate for the lack of resources.
- Specifically, mechanisms that serve to aid local communities' capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of resources allocated to uplift their livelihoods and community initiatives for reintegration and reconciliation would assist in developing an effective overall response to improve FAPs and IDPs livelihoods.
- Skills training and learning centers have are needed so that FAPs can continue their educations and learn Income Generating Activities.
- Sensitization training should be made available to community members in order to address the negative attitudes that clearly exist and impede community based reintegration and reconciliation with the FAPs
- Equalization of reintegration programming across sub-counties and districts especially Pader and Kitgum need to be tracked to ensure everyone has access to program resources, through researches and studies.
- Cultural leaders need to be facilitated in performing traditional cleansing rituals

as a part of the welcoming and reintegration ceremony for the FAPs into their former communities.

- Community forums are needed for the FAPs to share their experiences with the rest of the community. This aspect will strengthen reconciliation given that some FAPs harbor bitterness over the fact that few attempts were made to rescue them from the Bush when they were abducted.

Community Based Reintegration suffers from a lack of shared vision between the community and the FAPs. While the community provides the basic necessities for survival, the FAPs generally feel that this is insufficient given what they have been forced to endure. This failure to anticipate the expectations of the FAPs is at the heart of the dysfunction within the IDP community. Several approaches can be taken to engage this issue:

- An open, consultative process along the lines of traditional community dialogue between the parties to arrive at some sort of shared position and to answer the question of what type of practical assistance would be deemed sufficient.
- FAPs should create Groups of their own, with elected leadership, which can interact directly with local leadership and NGOs. The FAPs groups should be able to critically assess their own needs and inform the parties of their intentions. This would also help to avoid duplicity in programming.

Health concerns regarding HIV/AIDS and malaria, water and sanitation and other basic health services are prevalent in the camps. Reduction of avoidable mortality and morbidity from trauma as well as communicable and non-communicable disease and maternal risks, through access to safe and quality primary, secondary and tertiary health care services, as well as environmental health for all affected populations should be the central objectives for all health interventions.

- Monitoring of health threats and risks, including provision and /or enhancement of the early warning surveillance and outbreak response systems
- Address critical threats with appropriate and quality primary health care actions and strengthening secondary levels of medical care in the affected areas

- Address gaps in health services delivery, and support in re-establishing essential and emergency medical, public health and environmental health services
- Ensure that FAPs and IDPs – with particular emphasis on women and children – have access to facilities, supplies and information that contribute to their hygienic status and protect them from water-borne diseases
- Awareness campaigns and counseling for the community and FAPs about the risks of HIV/AIDS
- Prevention and support for victims of Gender-Based violence (GBV) among IDPs and FAPs
- Establishing mobile health care units and strengthening functional health centers capable of delivery maternal and child health, non-specialized mental health services, and chronic disease management
- Increase sanitation facilities for IDPs living in public facilities, and support their maintenance and operation
- Increase access to hygienic supplies for IDPs and FAPs so they can maintain personal hygiene levels and protect themselves from water-borne diseases
- Related promotional activities, ensuring in particular appropriate participation and sustainability of interventions

There is a concern that current Reintegration activities that involve construction of shelters in the camps only benefit the long-term residents and not those that would relocate once the FAPs and IDP community resettlement into their original homes is undertaken. Thus appropriate sites must be identified for the accommodation of FAPs, and for the communities to pursue land-based Income Generating Activities, such as agricultural or animal husbandry.

- Designing shelter assistance strategies to minimize tension between the displaced persons and host communities
- Identifying possible new sites and or/communal building, and undertaking rehabilitation, where necessary, to keep minimum living standard

Effective implementations of the assistance and protection activities outlined in this paper are fully dependant on stable security situations within the camps. Due to displacement and the accompanying increase in the levels of poverty there is a greater

risk of domestic and sexual violence and economic exploitation, especially of children and women. Conflict resolution mechanisms between the FAPs and IDPs are also inefficient, as there is little or no police presence in the camps, only a camp commander. Issues above his ability to resolve are currently referred to the army, which is not in position to provide adequate resolution. Interventions aimed at improving the security situation should focus on:

- Ensuring a systematic protection monitoring system of all IDP sites.
- Ensure physical and material safety of identified vulnerable FAPs with particular emphasis on women, children and elderly.
- Ensure children are protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- Contribute to securing a safe environment for women, girls, young people from gender-based violence, and support victims.

End Notes

¹Refugee Law working Paper No.11 (2004), *Behind the Violence: Causes, Consequences and Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda*, Faculty of Law, Makerere University, Kampala-Uganda.

²ICG African Report N°77 (14th April 2004), *Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict*.

³In this paper, the northern Uganda region constitutes of the districts of Gulu, Pader, Amuru and Kitgum within the Acholi sub region; Apac, Oyam, Dokolo, Amolatar and Lira districts within the Lango sub region; Moyo and Adjumani districts in Madi sub region; Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripiti and Kaabong districts in Karamoja sub region; Arua, Koboko, Yumbe and Nebbi forming the West Nile sub region. The political definition of the north takes into account all those districts that have suffered under the armed conflicts, despite the fact that they are categorized statistically to be in the eastern region. These districts in the North Eastern Teso region include, Soroti, Katakwi, Kumi, Kaberamaido, Pallisa and Amuria.

⁴Muwonge Maxie et al (2006), *Needs and Impact Assessment of the FAPs in Kitgum, Pader, Amuru and Gulu districts*, Jamii Ya Kupatanisha-Fellowship of Reconciliation, Kampala Uganda.

⁵WFP report (July 2005), *Northern Uganda Revalidation Exercise*

⁶OPM-Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Report (December 2005), *Return Resettlement and Reintegration of IDPS Strategic Plan in Acholi Sub region*.

⁷Before 1996 Kony was perceived many people including some leaders from Northern Uganda as hero promoting Acholi sub nationalism, and indeed some of the fighters he started with voluntarily joined him to pursue this cause. When the communities shifted from supporting him, he adopted a revenge approach of terrorizing him through such activities as abducting their children.

⁸Jemera Rone (September 2005), *Uprooted and Forgotten Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, report available at [http://: www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005](http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2005)

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰see Behind the Violence, supra note 1 at 23.

¹¹The Justice and Reconciliation Project, Field Notes No.2 (September 2006), *Young Mothers, Marriage, and Reintegration in Northern Uganda: Consideration for the Juba Peace Talks*, Liu Institute for Global Issues and Gulu District NGO Forum.

¹²The figures were obtained from structured interviews that Liu Institute for Global Issues and Gulu NGO forum conducted with 147 young mothers formerly married to the LRA in the district of Kitgum, Pader, Amuru and Gulu in northern Uganda.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 3.

¹⁵Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), *National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy III*

¹⁶The author has written a research paper on the northern Question in Uganda for the Center of Basic Research-Kampala. The paper; *Joining Hands to Build a Better Uganda Through National Reconciliation* was written for the Coalition of Organizations and Institutions working towards National Reconciliation in Uganda, presented during their Consultative Conference at Speke

Resort Munyonyo-Kampala, 12th -14th February were it was discussed by Professor Joanna Quinn from the University of Western Ontario Canada.

¹⁷Interview with a group of FAPs from Palabek Ogili IDP camp in Kitgum district; the author implements a community based reintegration project of FAPs in Kitgum, Pader, Amuru and Gulu districts.

¹⁸Micheal Bionx Akena (February 2006), *Uganda's Former Child Soldiers Challenged After War*, Uganda Conflict Action Network.

¹⁹See section 9 C of the Uganda Amnesty Act 2002

²⁰Tito Owor Shanon et al (2003), *Peace Building For Elementary Schools, A Teacher's Resource Guide*, Jamii Ya Kupatanisha-Fellowship of Reconciliation in Uganda.

²¹Ibid.

²²Report by a senior Counselor, World Vision Children of War reception center in Gulu town

²³See International Criminal Court: *Historical Introduction*, available from <http://www.icc-icpt.int>.

²⁴Global Policy Forum Report (2004, January 29th): *International Criminal Court Gets its First case: Against Rebels in Uganda*, <http://www.globalpolicy.org>

²⁵Rene Wadlow (20th October 2005): *Uganda: ICC Issues Arrest Warrants for Lords Resistance Army*, <http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/6321/1>

²⁶Interview with a group of FAPs at Atanga IDP camp-Pader district

²⁷The author works with both IDPs and FAPs to strengthen their community based reintegration, resettlement and return within six IDP camps in the districts of Kitgum, Pader, Gulu and Amuru.