The Challenges of Socio-Economic Reintegration of the Female Youth in Post-War Northern Uganda

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I. INTRODUCTION

Whereas it has not been easy to prevent or contain civil wars after the Cold War worldwide, and more so on the African continent, tremendous challenges continue to be faced by both state and non-state actors. The United Nations (U.N.), the African Union, as well as other non-governmental and community-based organizations are faced with problems of providing care for young people previously involved in armed conflict through abduction and conscription.

    Like many African nations, Uganda suffered a series of civil wars and coup d'états.[1] After its independence, Uganda was plagued with a series of

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conflicts, most of which were rooted in problems caused by colonialism.[2] "Of the [27] rebel movements following Museveni's [National Resistance Army or Movement] take[-]over, the most protracted, vicious[,] and debilitating has been Joseph Kony's [Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)] rebel insurgency in greater northern (northern and eastern parts) Uganda."[3] This bloody conflict has been attributed to a number of factors — poverty and general underdevelopment, loss of economic opportunities and jobs by former army officers, political repression, and struggle for political power.[4] But like any other social institution, war is socially constructed, and partly depends on the collective ideas about the inevitability of war and the desirability for achieving political gain, riches, and glory.[5] Characteristically, many of the civil wars in today's Africa have exposed a myriad of youth to the brunt of war experiences, including mass abduction and conscription into the armed forces.[6] The LRA is estimated to have abducted and conscripted tens of thousands of children and youths during the two-decade long armed insurgency in northern Uganda.[7] It is also reported that the government, too, in the early 2000s during the peak of the LRA insurgency

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1. RICHARD SANDBROOK, THE POLITICS OF AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY 50 (1993). *See* BBC News Africa, Uganda Profile, *available at* http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14112446 (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

2. Ronald R. Atkinson, From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army (An Unpublished Paper by the International Peace Institute) 4, *available at* http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4ADCC64D9D95A985852576790075389E-Full_Report.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015). *See* Sverker Finnström, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War History and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*, 22 J. REFUGEE STUD. 538 (2009).

3. David N. Tshimba, The unfinished business of the Lord's Resistance Army: Reinvigorating the abandoned Juba peace process 4, *available at* https://www.academia.edu/8620384/The_unfinished_business_of_the_Lord_s_Resistance_Army_Reinvigorating_the_abandoned_Juba_peace_process (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

4. *See* ANTHONY GINYERA-PINYCHWA, NORTHERN UGANDA IN NATIONAL POLITICS (1992).

5. Emanuel Adler, *Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics*, 3 EUR. J. INT'L L. 319, 347 (1997).

6. Although, and more especially in the African context, defining "youth" poses a big challenge since it connotes different characteristics across various cultures. This Article has defined youth as people between the age group of 18 and 30 as defined in Uganda's 2015 draft National Youth Policy. *See* Christopher Blattman & Jeannie Annan, *The Consequences of Child Soldiering*, 92 REV. ECON. STAT. 882, 883 (2010).

7. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 6.

in the North, did recruit over 3,000 people, predominantly young persons, into the auxiliary forces or the Local Defense Units (LDUs) to help boost the government armed forces or the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) efforts.[8]

In the case of today's greater north sub-regions of Uganda, where the guns have gone silent, the effects of the more or less two decades of armed conflict have been colossal.[9] Nowhere have these effects of war been much more salient than in the lives of the current generation of young people, many of whom endured traumatizing war experiences in their tender age.[10] One of the overwhelming challenges has been the identification of corresponding interventions — both holistic and efficient — that can jump-start the lives of these war-affected young people and the wider communities to which they belong, and help them recover through sustainable livelihood and social conscience in the post-war setting.[11]

In the aggregate, the burden of captivity of formerly abducted female youths, enmeshed in an armed insurgency throughout their formative years, remains too high for any post-war society to bear.[12] In particular, their psycho-social and economic reintegration after their life in encampment, abduction, or conscription — having come of age — constitutes as one of the toughest challenges of post-war recovery.[13] Based on a field study carried out in selected districts of Acholi, Lango, Teso, and West Nile sub-regions, this Article ultimately attempts to thrust the notion of context-specific reintegration of female youths into the debate about recovery and development of a post-war society in northern Uganda.

II. Contextual Background

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8. *See* Human Rights Watch, Briefing to the 59th Session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights on the Special Envoy for the Abducted Children in N. Uganda, *available at* http://www.hrw.org/news/2003/02/14/briefing-59th-session-un-commission-human-rights-special-envoy-abducted-children-n-u (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

9. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 5.

10. Blattman & Annan, *supra* note 6, at 1.

11. *Id.*

12. *See* Jeannie Annan, et al., The State of Female Youth in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY) Phase II (An Unpublished Paper of the Survey of War-Affected Youth) 69, *available at* http://chrisblattman.com/documents/policy/sway/SWAY.Phase2.FinalReport.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

13. *Id.*

Studies have convincingly demonstrated that Africa has the largest number of conflicts since the end of the Cold War.[14] It has also seen the highest military conscriptions of young individuals in war.[15] Uganda, in particular, has fought several wars since its independence;[16] with the longest conflict fought in northern Uganda.[17] In addition,

> [a]t the initial stage of the civil conflict, the uprisings led by Alice Lakwena's [Holy Spirit Movement,] which later on metamorphosed into Joseph Kony's LRA[,] had considerable support among the grassroots who found their homes, belongings[,] and cattle herds destroyed and looted en masse by the intruding soldiers (the NRA [ ] later on metamorphosed into the [ ] UPDF). In the former's view, [Acholiland] was under occupation by the latter, something they resisted in the name of social justice. The evolving war between government forces (UPDF) and the renewed insurgency (LRA) has[,] however[,] caused an enormous humanitarian catastrophe essentially in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda, home of the Acholi people; with no proper estimates of hundreds of thousands of those who periled in the two-decade[ ]long armed violence some 800,000 people and [70%] of the Acholi population were forcefully displaced to large camps cynically called 'protected villages.'[18]

Furthermore, the government's strategy to pursue a military solution to this armed conflict contributed to the suffering of the civilian population, and most significantly of the women, youth, and children.[19] It was reported that the UPDF together with its auxiliary LDUs committed human rights

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14. Mario Novelli & Susan Robertson, *The Politicization of Development Aid to Education after September 11, in* SCHOOLING AND THE POLITICS OF DISASTER 250 (Kenneth J. Saltman ed., 2007).

15. Vera Achvarina & Simon F. Reich, *No Place to Hide: Refugees, Displaced Persons, and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers,* 31 INT. SECURITY 127, 143 (2006).

16. UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, Uganda, *available at* http://www.ucdp.uu.se/ gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=160# (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

17. Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, Documenting Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict Situations in Uganda: The Case of Gulu District, 1986-1999 (An ISIS-WICCE Research Report) 1, *available at* http://www.isis.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/10/gulureport. pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

18. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 5. *See* JAMES O. LATIGO, NORTHERN UGANDA: TRADITION-BASED PRACTICES IN THE ACHOLI REGION (2008) & LUC HUYSE & MARK SALTER, TRADITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION AFTER VIOLENT CONFLICT: LEARNING FROM AFRICAN EXPERIENCES (2008).

19. Child Soldiers Global Report, Uganda, *available at* http://www.child-soldiers.org/user_uploads/pdf/uganda7067778.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

violations, which includes murder, torture, and rape among many other human rights abuses.[20]

In fact, since the 1990s, there has been a pre-eminence of a narrative — both at the national and the international levels — that the LRA can only be stopped by military intervention.[21] Supported by the United States' Africa Command, to date, the government forces have led offensives across the region and claimed that the LRA is nearly defeated.[22] In 1992, the first military offensive — codenamed "Operation North" — by Uganda's armed forces resulted in a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) housed in squalid and disease-ridden camps in northern Uganda.[23] Ten years later, the second military offensive, named "Operation Iron Fist," was launched against the LRA, aimed at attacking LRA rebels from the rear in the former southern Sudan.[24] This military offensive was "intended to deliver a final blow to the rebels by pursuing them, with more than 10,000 troops, to their bases in the former southern Sudan."[25] Again, the operation's failure had severe humanitarian consequences, which resulted in increased abductions by the LRA and IDPs in northern and eastern Uganda[26] — almost the same number as in the much more widely publicized case of Darfur.[27] However, while this operation inflicted huge damage to the LRA, "it nevertheless did not deliver a final blow to the LRA's rebel [activities] and [its] violence against civilians in the LRA-affected region [of East and Central Africa.]"[28]

With a self-serving use of the LRA abduction and brutality discourse, Uganda's government speedily facilitated the indictment of Joseph Kony and his top five commanders in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in

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20 Amnesty International, *Uganda Doubly Traumatised: Lack of access to justice for female victims of sexual and gender-based violence in northern Uganda*, *available at* http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR59/005/2007/en/6068628b-a2bb-11dc-8d74-6f45f39984e5/afr590052007en.html (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

21. Conciliation Resources, 'When will this end and what will it take?:' People's perspectives on addressing the Lord's Resistance Army conflict 9, *available at* http://www.c-r.org/sites/cr.org/files/PPPReport_Whenwillthisendandwhat willittake_201111_ENG.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

22. *Id.* at 15.

23. *Id.* at 10.

24. *Id.*

25. Atkinson, *supra* note 2, at 7.

26. Conciliation Resources, *supra* note 21, at 10.

27. Atkinson, *supra* note 2, at 4.

28. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 6.

October 2005.[29] The arrests by virtue of the ICC warrants "eventually underpinned the failed attempts to end the conflict by means of dialogue in the Juba peace talks from July 2006 to April 2008."[30] Officially opened on 14 July 2006 in Juba, the capital city of then Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), under the chief mediation of Riek Teny Machar, then Vice President of GoSS, a Cessation-of-Hostilities agreement was signed in August by both parties.[31] The Final Peace Agreement, however, was never reached by the parties, ostensibly because LRA leader Kony "wanted further clarification about the Disarmament, [Demobilization,] and Reintegration (DDR) of LRA fighters and the mix of 'traditional' and 'formal' legal proceedings that he and his fighters faced, including the role of the ICC."[32] Subsequently, the LRA's deliberate relocation to the rainforests of the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and south-eastern Central African Republic (CAR) simultaneously augured the silencing of guns in northern Uganda and the continuation of its rebel activism in the vicinities of those new locales.[33]

The third military offensive is the "Operation Lightning Thunder."[34] It was conducted "under the military intervention by the UPDF [—] in unison with DRC armed forces, [Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)], GoSS armed forces, [Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)], and CAR armed forces, FACA, in the very end [— and] was successively launched from the end of 2008 up [until] March 2009."[35] Although the Ugandan Government "and[,] more particularly[,] the UPDF referred to this operation as a joint military offensive with armies of the DRC and the [GoSS], this had been an overwhelmingly UPDF affair, with the two other forces playing a minimal support[ing] role at most."[36] The infamous Duru[37] and Makombo[38] massacres in north-eastern DRC by the LRA caused tremendous losses to civilian Congolese populations in those

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29. *Id.* at 6-7 (citing Atkinson, *supra* note 2).

30. *Id.* at 7.

31. *Id.* at 14-15.

32. *Id.* at 15.

33. Atkinson, *supra* note 2, at 4.

34. *Id.* at 13.

35. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 7.

36. *Id.*

37. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, THE CHRISTMAS MASSACRES: LRA ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS IN NORTHERN CONGO 4 (2009).

38. Human Rights Watch, DR Congo: Lord's Resistance Army Rampage Kills 321, *available at* http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/03/28/dr-congo-lord-s-resistance-army-rampage-kills-321 (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

locales, leaving a lot more to be desired.[39] Infamous of all attacks was the LRA-commanded 2008 Christmas massacre in the unprotected localities of far north-eastern DRC.[40] Human Rights Watch did a rapid assessment in the aftermath of the Makombo massacre — 321 persons reported to have been killed in a few days,[41] while local accounts claim over 600 persons — and was only able to report three months after the tragedy had occurred.[42]

Undoubtedly, the launch of this military offensive against the LRA elicited mixed reactions.[43] To some, this military operation created an avenue through which the LRA regrouped into smaller formations to attack the local populations and abduct children to join the rebel group's cause.[44] To others, the operation was successful in scattering the LRA, though not in ending the war.[45] Still, other analysts described it as a complete military failure — strikingly akin to Operation Iron Fist — because it turned out to be an ill-thought and poorly executed incursion that resulted in more suffering and upheaval for thousands of Congolese citizens.[46] The UPDF "disclaimed responsibility for protecting civilians from LRA reprisals, and, instead, blamed its faux partners [—] the FARDC in DRC[,] the SPLA in southern Sudan, [and the] U.N. peacekeeping forces in the DRC [—] for failing to do so."[47]

In the very end, widespread criticism of this military offensive against the LRA stood "in stark contrast to the equally, if not more, widespread support for the operation in its early stages."[48] To date, over half a decade since the Juba peace talks stalled, conventional wisdom still holds that although the recent intensification for the hunt down for LRA's Kony, and his remaining

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39. *See* HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, TRAIL OF DEATH: LRA ATROCITIES IN NORTHEASTERN CONGO 3 (2010) [hereinafter HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, TRAIL OF DEATH].

40. *Id.*

41. *Id.* at 31.

42. *Id.*

43. John Ahere & Grace Maina, The never-ending pursuit of the Lord's Resistance Army: An Analysis of the Regional Cooperative Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA (An Unpublished Policy and Practice Brief of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes) 3, *available at* http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/163149/ipublicationdocument _singledocument/2a3c8a34-0683-49b1-a5ea-644a8fa3361c/en/ACCORD-policy-practice-brief-24.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.* at 3-4.

46. *Id.* at 4.

47. Tshimba, *supra* note 3, at 7 (citing Atkinson, *supra* note 2).

48. Atkinson, *supra* note 2, at 15.

commandants has severely impaired the group's rebel activism, the current
military offensive against the LRA in East and Central Africa is far from
over.[49] Some informed commentators have already argued — and rightly so
— that the LRA has progressively mastered the art of reinventing itself
against all odds by resiliently operating in terribly harsh conditions. It keeps
replenishing its rank-and-file fighters through fresh abductions, rearming,
and may be preparing to fight again.[50]

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This Article has adopted the conceptual understanding of reintegration from
a study by the Initiative for Inclusive Security in collaboration with
International Alert and Women Waging Peace.[51] Here, reintegration in two
phases is looked into — initial reinsertion and long-term reintegration.[52]
Reinsertion "refers to the short-term arrival period of ex-combatant into his
[or] her former home or a new community[,]"[53] while "[r]eintegration is a
much longer-term process with the goal of ensuring permanent disarmament
and sustainable peace."[54] This includes "assisting the community and the ex-
combatant during the difficult transition to civilian life."[55]

The need for the "recreation" of positive relationships between these
ex-combatants and the community arises as a result of what northern
Ugandan reintegration scholar Margaret Angucia termed as "the broken
citizenship status."[56] Some youth were victims-made-perpetrators during
captivity, and then victimized after captivity due to the war conditions they
had to endure.[57] In this regard, these formerly abducted and conscripted

49. *See* Karen DeYoung, *Obama boosts effort to find Kony*, WASH. POST, Mar. 23, 2015, *available at* http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/2015/03/23/aa468ca6-b2d0-11e3-8020-b2d790b3c9e1_story.html (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

50. PETER EICHSTAEDT, FIRST KILL YOUR FAMILY: CHILD SOLDIERS OF UGANDA AND THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY xvi (2009).

51. International Alert & Women Waging Peace, Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action (An Unpublished Paper by the International Alert and Women Waging Peace) *available at* http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/101864251-Toolkit-for-Advocacy-and-Action.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

52. *Id.*

53. *Id.*

54. International Alert & Women Waging Peace, *supra* note 51.

55. *Id.*

56. MARGARET ANGUCIA, BROKEN CITIZENSHIP: FORMERLY ABDUCTED CHILDREN AND THEIR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA 3 (2010).

57. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, TRAIL OF DEATH, *supra* note 39, at 39.

youths may "enter job placement services, participate in skills training, credit schemes, scholarships, or rehabilitation programmes."[58]

In a more integrating bid, Johan Galtung, who is one of the pioneer scholars on peace, distinguishes between what he calls "negative peace" and "positive peace."[59] Both concepts are illustrations of the ideal kind of peace that a post-war society, such as today's Uganda, should be working on in order to create an environment where its citizenry can enhance their capabilities. Negative peace means the sheer absence of war or direct violence[60] without addressing the causes, or rather, the structural aspects, of conflict. For Galtung, therefore, the silence of guns in itself is not an indicator of peace. This is true in the case of today's northern Uganda. Have the issues that led to the war or that which may regenerate violent conflict in the region been addressed? This should be the question to reckon with in the aftermath of armed conflict in northern Uganda.

Meanwhile, positive peace refers to a condition where harmony, cooperation, and integration exist.[61] Positive peace requires the restoration of hitherto conflictual relationships and the creation of social systems that serve the needs of all sections of the population,[62] various war-affected youths included. Peace may not make sense in an environment where inalienable human rights are not respected, protected, and promoted. For example, in northern Uganda, some sections of the population, particularly the female youth, are marginalized and do not have access to vital means of production, like land.[63] Positive peace necessitates the presence of social justice and equality, and the absence of structural or indirect violence.[64] Structural violence, therefore, signifies the presence of social structures or institutions that prevent people from meeting their basic needs and accessing their basic human rights.[65] One important form of structural violence to consider here

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58. International Alert & Women Waging Peace, *supra* note 51.

59. Jose Manuel Pureza & Teresa Cravo, *Critical Edge and Legitimization in Peace Studies*, *in* MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH: A VIEW FROM EUROPE 80 (Francisco Ferrándiz & Antonius C. G. M. Robben eds., 2007).

60. *Id. See* Erin McCandless, *Synopses of Major Concepts*, *in* PEACE, CONFLICT, AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A READER 27 (Erin McCandless & Tony Karbo eds., 2011).

61. KATHLEEN MALLEY-MORRISON, STATE VIOLENCE AND THE RIGHT TO PEACE: WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA 188 (2009). *See* McCandless, *supra* note 60, at 27. *See also* Pureza & Cravo, *supra* note 59, at 80.

62. *See* MALLEY-MORRISON, *supra* note 61, at 188.

63. *See* Annan, et al., *supra* note 12.

64. McCandless, *supra* note 60, at 27.

65. *Id.* at 29. *See* MALLEY-MORRISON, *supra* note 61, at 188.

is "cultural violence" due to its effect of normalizing violence, hence, rendering it acceptable.

IV. THE MULTI-FACETED CHALLENGES OF WAR-AFFECTED FEMALE YOUTHS

One of the most serious legacies of mass violence is the trauma experienced by individuals and communities.[66] In this context, the psychosocial dimension gains particular relevance. It involves interventions aimed at "overcoming trauma and achieving reconciliation at individual and inter-group level[,] as well as working on identity issues."[67] Indisputably, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) remains one of the most undertreated legacies of people who, in their tender age, had been trapped in civil conflict.[68] These previously abducted and conscripted minors are vulnerable to three profound sequels in their adult lives.[69] First, these may lead to de-socialization and self-perpetuating de-humanization of a young adolescent's mind.[70] Consequently, the excitement of interpersonal physical conflict, of combat, of dominance, and of sexual violence entraps such victims.[71] Second, the "lost childhood" of these victims means that schooling and subsequent rehabilitation are very difficult to attain.[72] Third, although there is scarcely published work on the long-term sequel of "childhood and life in combat ranks," all who work with young individuals are aware of the inescapability of PTSD.[73]

The LRA, in the fight against the Ugandan Government for over two decades, caused children and youths to endure and subsequently inflict war crimes, such as rape, torture, slavery, abduction and recruitment, pillage, and

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66. Valentina Baú, Telling stories of war through the screen: Participatory video approaches and practice for peace in conflict-affected contexts (An Unpublished Article Describing the Impact of Using Participatory Video as a Tool for Overcoming Hostility Among Groups, as Well as for Healing and Reconnecting Communities) 5, *available at* http://cco.regeneronline.de/2015_1/pdf/ba% C3%BA.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

67. Martina Fischer, Recovering from Violent Conflict: Regeneration and (Re-) Integration as Elements of Peacebuilding (An Unpublished Paper Submitted to the Bergof Research Center), *available at* http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/fischer_h andbook.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

68. John H. Pearn, *Children and War*, 39 J. PAEDIATR. & CHILD H. 166 (2003).

69. *Id.*

70. *Id.*

71. *Id.*

72. *Id.*

73. *Id.*

indiscriminate killings, simply because of both their vulnerability and suppleness.[74] Studies done by Els De Temmerman,[75] Angela Veale and Aki Stravou,[76] and Colin MacMullin and Maryanne Loughry[77] demonstrate that the consequences of violent conflict on children and the youth are devastating. But the consequences of forceful recruitment of youngsters into armed forces — rebel group or otherwise — are even more despicable.[78] Chris Coulter's penetrating empirical study eloquently revealed that while young male abductees oftentimes perform as fighters, porters, or are in support positions,[79] young female abductees, too, have sometimes been actively involved in fighting, although they have been used predominantly as sexual slaves.[80]

V. PREDICAMENTS OF FORMER FEMALE ABDUCTEES

A. The Social Predicament of Former Female Abductees

It has been noted in OXFAM Novib's Country Gender Strategic Plan (2011-2013) that despite the explicit gender dimensions of conflict and post-conflict, the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), which established "the guiding principles, the institutional framework[,] and the strategic objectives for any future peace building recovery and development interventions"[81] for the northern region has been silent on gender.[82] For

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74. ANGUCIA, *supra* note 56, at 33-40 & Achavarina & Reich, *supra* note 15, at 155.

75. *See* ELS DE TEMMERMAN, ABOKE GIRLS: CHILDREN ABDUCTED IN NORTHERN UGANDA (2001).

76. *See* ANGELA VEALE & AKI STAVROU, VIOLENCE, RECONCILIATION, AND IDENTITY: THE REINTEGRATION OF LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY ABDUCTEES IN NORTHERN UGANDA (2003).

77. Colin MacMullin & Maryanne Loughry, *Investigating psychosocial adjustment of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Uganda*, 17 J. REFUGEE STUD. 460-72 (2004).

78. *See* ANGUCIA, *supra* note 56, at 33-40.

79. *See* CHRIS COULTER, BUSH WIVES AND GIRL SOLDIERS: WOMEN'S LIVES THROUGH WAR AND PEACE IN SIERRA LEONE (2009).

80. *Id. See* Annan, et al., *supra* note 12.

81. Centre for Women in Governance, Women Count for Peace and Development: A report on the progress Uganda has made in the implementation of the Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, 1820, and the Goma Declaration (An Unpublished Project of the Uganda 1325 Coalition) 14, *available at* http://www.cewigo.org/sites/default/files/publications/UNSCR %201325%20Monitoring%20Report%20for%202013.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

instance, whereas the introduction of universal primary education resulted in the closing of the gender gap in primary school enrolment the challenge has remained that relatively higher levels of girls drop out and have poor performance.[83] This high young female drop-out rate is further reflected in high adult female illiteracy rates.[84]

While this captures the current situation of youths enrolled in formal education in today's rural Uganda, regardless of their past experiences, this situation is even more dire for those former female abductees, most of whom are still coming to terms with the consequences of life in rebel captivity.[85] They are faced with the loss of opportunity during their formative years, poor reproductive health status,[86] and in some instances, the burden of child-motherhood.[87] One such plight was narrated by one former LRA female abductee who participated in a focus group discussion (FGD) — "I got married when I returned from LRA captivity in 2006, but up to now (2014) I have not been able to conceive, although I have come back home safe. Only God knows [if] I will conceive."[88] Another participant, in another FGD session, echoed the following —

> Most of the males (those who were not abducted) in this community continue to fear us (former female abductees) and even stigmati[z]e us for not having come back with our male sex partners (those with whom they were in rebel captivity) given that we simply escaped from rebel captivity[.] Most of us have now lost [the] opportunity for formal education [ ] and additionally, we [ ] now possess [a] slim chance for marri[ed] life[,] and[,] if the chance [for marriage] ever happened, it would be pounded with marital challenges.[89]

During another FGD with former LRA female abductees hailing from Otuke District in Lango sub-region, the following revelations were made —

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82. *See* Republic of Uganda, Peace, Recovery and Development of Northern Uganda (PRDP) 2007-2010, *available at* http://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/Ug.PRDP.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

83. Annan, et al., *supra* note 12, at 78.

84. *Id.* at 18–19.

85. *Id.*

86. *Id.* at 58–65.

87. *Id.* at 43.

88. Focus Group Discussion with a 20-year old participant, together with eight formerly abducted female youths in Morungatuny Village, Amuria District (June 12, 2015).

89. Focus Group Discussion with a 27-year old participant, together with eight formerly abducted female youths in Morungatuny Village, Amuria District (June 12, 2015).

When I returned from rebel captivity[,] it was really not easy to get along with people back in my community [—] not even with those whom I considered to be my close relatives [and] even people from the Church. The stigmati[z]ation [I was subjected to] was just too much that I [could not] stand living [on] my own. But even though I got married to a man after life in LRA rebel captivity [in order] to combat the stigmati[z]ation I was subjected to, this sense of stigmati[z]ation is still affecting me. Oftentimes, once drunk, my husband keeps referring to me as a rebel, Kony's wife, and eventually beats me up or abuses me. I am only comfortable mingling with my few friends who, ever since I came back home, welcomed me and [understood] my situation; they always sympathi[z]e with me.[90]

Overall, however, the social reintegration process of former female LRA abductees in Acholi sub-region seems to have been rather successful to a greater extent in comparison to other LRA-affected sub-regions of northern Uganda.[91] In a telephone interview with Alfred Akena, Local Council IV Chairperson of Pader District — one of the hitherto severely affected districts of Acholi characterized by massive LRA abductions of minors — pointed out the concerted efforts to facilitate the social reintegration process of these former female abductees whenever they returned. It was said —

At the beginning[,] there was no good reception [of former LRA female abductees] because of stigma [that resulted from the] statements people uttered due to atrocities the LRA did. However[,] because of full social support [by various stakeholders] to the population[,] there is no [such] stigma [anymore]. All of them (former LRA female abductees) are fitting in the community[.] [T]he families have accepted their [female] children although there are some who have joined the fathers of their children after they have heard that they [(these former LRA male abductees who fathered their child or children)] have also returned from [rebel] captivity. They[,] therefore[,] join their husbands and live as husband and wife. But we (political leadership at the district level) have not noticed a situation where a child is living alone without anybody[,] except one particular child whose parents were both killed[,] and the baby was brought back home [to a homecare center]. The [child] was female[,] and the director [of the homecare center] considered her as her own baby.[92]

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90. Focus Group Discussion with a 25-year old participant, together with seven former female LRA abductees in Olilim Sub-County, Otuke District (June 21, 2015).

91. *See* Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity, Northern Uganda Conflict Analysis (An Unpublished Report of the Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity) 47-48, *available at* http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ACCS_Northern_Uganda_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

92. Telephone Interview with Alfred Akena, Local Council IV Chairperson of Pader District, in Pader District Headquarters (July 2, 2015).

It is, however, important to remember that as a sub-region, Acholi is not a geographical coverage with a homogenous reality. Depending on the peculiarities of each of its districts and the contending pressures therein, one social issue may gain prominence in one particular locale while the same issue may almost never be featured in another locale. The revelation by Betty Oyella Bigombe, Member of the Parliament representing Amuru District Woman's Constituency and former State Minister for the Pacification of Northern Uganda, alluded to this —

> The way the program [ ] (PRDP) was designed did not take into consideration [ ] many issues that are now emerging after the program [ ] implementation had started. A case in point, for example, is psychosocial healing. There [are still] a lot of children of former LRA abductees who have huge psychosocial problems. In my district alone (Amuru), in one month, there were some 46 suicidal attempts, and even then, those were the cases that were reported. We (the [d]istrict leadership) do not know about others that were not reported.[93]

Feedback received from formerly abducted youths on social protection extended to their offspring — born during LRA captivity, if any — were widely varied across the sub-regions. Expectedly, such feedbacks varied on a case-to-case basis, in that, even though two female youths were previously abducted from the same locale and underwent the same experience of rebel captivity during which they mothered a child, the social reintegration process of both their offspring and themselves could still be dependent upon various factors, like the socio-economic status of their respective families to which they returned. In a FGD with former female LRA abductees hailing from Olilim Sub-County in Otuke District, two participants — one who was formerly abducted and another who came back with no offspring from the LRA rebel captivity — made the following revelations —

> When I came back [and joined my family and relatives in an International Displaced Peoples Camp (IDPC)], I was received with no stigmati[z]ation whatsoever from my family members. But still, some of those with whom we were in camps [with] kept referring to me as a rebel. To avoid such [labelling,] I started living with a man who got me pregnant[,] and I delivered a baby boy. But, unfortunately, we separated [ ] as we [too] could not get along well. I returned the baby boy back to the man[.] [S]oon after[,] I got married to another man with whom I am happy, although [we] have no steady income[,] [because] we do not run any business to sustain ourselves.[94]

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93. Interview with Honorable Betty Oyella Bigombe, Member of the Parliament, Amuru District Women's Constituency, in Kampala (June 13, 2015).

94. Focus Group Discussion with a 25-year old participant, together with seven former female LRA abductees in Ogwere Village, Otuke District (June 21, 2015).

Yet, in an another, with former female LRA abductees hailing from Morungatuny Village, Omodi Sub-County in Amuria District, one participant made the following gruesome revelation —

> I just wanted to commit suicide upon [my] return from rebel captivity with my baby. I felt isolated[,] and up to now, due to fear of stigma, I keep [ ] to myself and [to] my few friends with whom [I was] abducted [with] and [who] returned home [with me]. In addition to [having] no occupational activity to sustain my well-being and that of my child, I have not received any medical care for my poor health status.[95]

Nonetheless, the social reintegration process of formerly conscripted female youths in the Teso sub-region, in the case of ex-Arrow Brigade, was even self-guaranteed. For Robert Adiama, former Chief Intelligence Officer of the former Arrow Brigade during the peak of the LRA incursion in Teso, all ex-Arrow Brigade combatants are, in fact, highly regarded in society, irrespective of their gender —

> We also had Arrow Girls who fought during the war [against the LRA incursion]. In Achua Battalion[,] a girl even rose to the level of Battalion Intelligent Officer[,] and then in Gwere[,] [ ] we had a girl who became a Section Commander. All these people (ex-Arrow Boys and Girls) are social heroes; they are highly respected by everyone [ ] here in Teso, for they gave [ ] their utmost sacrifice to salvage the situation here.[96]

Whereas ex-Arrow Brigade combatants, including ex-Arrow Girls who fought against the LRA during its incursion in Teso, are honored by their communities for the defensive service they rendered; the former LRA abducted youths, especially the female ones, who also hailed from Teso have been discriminated against, stigmatized, or even treated with contempt by some members of their communities. Hence, while one category of war-affected youths in Teso sub-region (ex-Arrow Brigade combatants) has undergone a sort of community-embracing social reintegration process after the guns have gone silent, another category of war-affected youths from the same sub-region (ex-LRA abductees) have had a sort of community-excluding social reintegration process in the aftermath of their rebel captivity. This was alluded to in an interview with Betty Ikorot, Senior Welfare and Probation Officer for Katakwi District, when she said —

> I think there still is a huge challenge to reintegrate these former LRA abductees into communities. A while ago, there were about 30 youths who had come from LRA rebel captivity and were trying to be integrated back into the community. Like in Usuk (one of the counties in Katakwi

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95. Focus Group Discussion with a 26-year old participant, together with eight former female LRA abductees in Morungatuny Village, Amuria District (June 12, 2015).

96. Interview with Robert Adiama, former Chief Intelligence Officer of the former Arrow Brigade, in Soroti Municipality (June 18, 2015).

District), these people (former LRA abductees) were faced with the challenge associated to how the community could welcome them. They eventually suffered stigma. We (at the district level) did not have a specific livelihood [program] that targeted them. PRDP [eventually] came[,] but even our very own budget vote for community-based development was deleted from PRDP funds on the ground [ ] that the money was targeting other areas and not social services where we (at the District Welfare and Probation Office) could have slotted in such category of people.

Under the Promotion of Children and Youth [program] anchored in the Ministry of Gender, [Labor,] and Social Development, we used to have (until the financial year 2013-[2014]) some funding support to look after such category of disadvantaged youths[,] as such former female LRA abductees[,] by way of training them in life skills trainings and support them thereafter. Not long ago, we (District Local Government) together with the [Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU)][97] carried out massive community [sensitization] on right to land for former female abductees upon return from rebel captivity as well as full acceptance [in terms of social integration] of their off-spring whom they might have mothered during rebel captivity. Eventually, the levels of [stigmatization] of these ex-female abductees and their off-spring have now dwindled.[98]

Important as it may be, the social reintegration process of former female abductees cannot take place as a process devoid of an economic dimension. In fact, to be sure, the economic reintegration process of this special category of war-affected persons, such as former female abductees or combatants, does reinforce the social dimension of their reintegration process.[99] For, without a sustained source of basic livelihood on the part of these war-affected youths, it would rather be utopian to imagine their sound social reintegration and full re-assumption of civilian life.[100] The social reintegration process of formerly abducted and/or conscripted youths, therefore, calls for economic reintegration — a scenario where their chances for earning a decent living and adequate income, and making meaningful contribution to society remains within the realm of possibility.[101]

B. *The Economic Predicament of Former Female Abductees*

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97. LEMU is a national non-governmental organization working on land rights advocacy. *See* LEMU — The Land and Equity Movement of Uganda, About LEMU: What is LEMU?, *available at* http://land-in-uganda.org/lemu/about/ (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

98. Interview with Betty Ikorot, Senior Welfare and Probation Officer, in Katakwi District Headquarters (June 19, 2015).

99. Annan, et al., *supra* note 12, at 77.

100. *Id.*

101. *Id.*

As the longest surviving rebel movement claiming to be fighting against the current Ugandan Government — though now in operation outside of their country of origin — the LRA has been known for forced conscriptions, large scale atrocities, abductions of children, and youths for rebel activism, as well as rape and forced marriage of their female abductees.[102] Despite the focus of both state and non-state peace-building institutions on recovery, since the ceasefire agreement of 2006 — under the auspices of the PRDP — there continued to be a significant division between southern and northern Uganda, especially in the districts more directly affected by the LRA insurgency.[103] Coupled with an alarming rate of unemployment and underemployment,[104] the challenges facing a generation of youths in today's Uganda, in general, and post-war northern Ugandan region, in particular — many of whom having grown up in neglected IDPCs; some abducted and even conscripted — ought to remain a cross-cutting priority among government institutions, development partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.[105]

In a FGD with former female LRA abductees hailing from Morungatuny Village in Amuria District, one participant alluded to the economic lifestyle they have been pursuing in the aftermath of their return from rebel captivity —

> Ever since we defected from the rebel captivity, had we been taken good care of in terms of support for our livelihoods, we would have been very far in terms of economic recovery[.] [W]e would not even have thought of getting married as the only available opportunity [out of stigmatization and abject poverty] by then. We are just primary school drop-outs; there is nothing much we can do on our own. If anyone like you (NGOs) could

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102. Grace Maina, An Analytical Evaluation of the Reintegration Process of Formerly Abducted Children in Northern Uganda and the Role of the Various Actors (An Unpublished Article of the Journal of Peace, Conflict, and Development) 3, *available at* http://www.bradford.ac.uk/ssis/peace-conflict-and-development/issue-14/analyticalevaluation.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

103. Robert S. Esuruku, *Youth Identity, National Unity and Development in Uganda: Prospects and Options*, 3 J. DEV. STUD. 5, 6 (2013).

104. *Id.* at 9-10.

105. International Alert, Youth Perceptions on Economic Opportunity in Northern Uganda: Findings from Acholi and Lango (An Unpublished Paper by the International Alert) 10, *available at* http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Uganda_YouthEconomicOpportunity_EN_2013.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015) [hereinafter International Alert, Youth Perceptions].

help us upgrade our vocational school and diversify it with other activities, this [would] support our livelihood[.][106]

With special reference to the districts studied in Acholi sub-region, the increase in land wrangles following resettlement from IDPCs more than half a decade ago,[107] coupled with a conspicuous insecurity in terms of land rights, more especially in the case of unmarried female members of the community, has further increased the economic vulnerability of former female LRA abductees upon their return from rebel captivity.[108] In effect, considering that most of the land in northern Uganda is customarily-owned[109] and given that the customary practice of passing on land through the male line has persisted despite the 1998 Land Act and its subsequent amendments,[110] which provide for women's inheritance rights, female youths — particularly those who returned from rebel captivity with their off-spring — have remained economically marginalized.[111] In a FGD with war-affected youths from Amuru District, one former female LRA abductee said —

> The second conflict upon our return from rebel captivity has now shifted onto land; we (former female abductees) do not even know land demarcations[ ] to begin with. Even children born [ ] during rebel captivity or those whose parents were forcibly displaced, abducted[,] or killed in

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106. Focus Group Discussion with a 23-year old participant, together with eight formerly abducted female youths in Morungatuny Village, Amuria District (June 12, 2015).

107. Samuel B. Mabikke, Escalating Land Grabbing in Post-conflict Regions of Northern Uganda: A Need for Strengthening Good Land Governance in Acholi Region (A Paper Presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing), *available at* http://www.future-agricultures.org/publications/ search-publications/global-land-grab/conference-papers-2/1280-escalating-land -grabbing-in-post-conflict-regions-of-northern-uganda-a-need-for- strengthening/file (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

108. *See* Annan, et al., *supra* note 12, at 77.

109. UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE & ACHOLI RELIGIOUS LEADERS PEACE INITIATIVE, MITIGATING LAND BASED CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN UGANDA: A MUST GUIDE FOR STAKE HOLDER MEDIATION, SENSITIZATION AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES 9 (2012).

110. Fredrick Immanuel Kindi, Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Land Rights in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda (A Research Working Paper of the MICROCON: A Micro-level Analysis of Violent Conflict) 11, *available at* http://www.microconflict.eu/publications/RWP26_KFI.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

111. Sarah Adelman, et al., Resettlement and Gender Dimensions of Land Rights in Post-conflict Northern Uganda (An Unpublished Study) 6, *available at* http://www.landandpoverty.com/   agenda/pdfs/paper/adelman_full_paper.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

rebel captivity have been denied access to land in their respective communities.[112]

The land question for former female abductees and their offspring seems to be further compounded by the gender of their offspring. In case the latter is of female gender, the issue of land becomes less pertinent due to the expectation that the female child would eventually be married; hence, there will be no pressure on the clan or family land.[113] But in the event that the offspring is of male gender, the land question becomes much more salient as it is always expected that the male child, once of age, ought to be allocated a portion of land to kick-start his own livelihood.[114] One former female LRA abductee currently attending formal secondary education in Pader District alluded to this in a FGD —

> The male child will have [a] difficult time accessing property, and more so land, in the homes of their mothers. Of course[,] if there are many male children in the home, then the male child of that daughter (child mother) will not get [his] fair share since that male child is culturally considered [a] foreigner in her mother's family. However, baby girls have no big problems because they (the child mother's family members) think they will be married off.[115]

In the cases of Teso and Lango sub-regions, where respondents (former female LRA abductees) identified and touched base with their male partners with whom they were abducted in LRA rebel captivity and who fathered their offspring, the former still pointed out that the economic status of the latter in the aftermath of the rebel captivity has neither sustained nor empowered the former's economic status, as well as that of their offspring in the aftermath of rebel captivity.

Female respondents in the two sub-regions further alluded to the fact that former male abductees, in comparison with their female counterparts, seem to have experienced better economic recovery in the aftermath of their abduction in rebel activism. One former female LRA abductee who hailed from Ogwere Village in Otuke District made the following revelation in a FGD —

> Currently, the [stigmatization] one undergoes (as [a] former female abductee) becomes too much to bear when one is poor, not being able to look after her basic needs and [ ] have a decent life. In comparison to the

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112. Focus Group Discussion with a 30-year old participant, together with seven war-affected female youths in Labongo Village, Amuru District (June 30, 2015).

113. *See* Adelman, et al., *supra* note 111.

114. *Id.*

115. Focus Group Discussion with a 19-year old participant, together with nine war-affected female youths attending school at Pader Girls Secondary School (July 2, 2015).

former male abductees, the latter cope [ ] very well [socially and
economically] given that they are believed to be stronger (for harder
manual work) and capable to avenge whenever they are [stigmatized] or
discriminated against, unlike we[,] former female abductees. Therefore, I
urge that there should be no special treatment extended to former male
abductees principally different from that of former female abductees,
precisely due to the fact that we all went through the same experience of
war — abduction![116]

Accordingly, in another interview with Moses Otim Omuron, Political
Office Assistant to the State Minister for Disaster Preparedness, the following
was captured regarding the socio-economic status of former female abductees
hailing from Amuria District —

You know, as it is said, 'blood is thicker than water!' [In] my opinion, no
instance of rejection of these former female abductees took place at [a]
social level. Although, I must say that more acceptance [of these former
female abductees and their offspring] would have ensued had continuous
and effective [economic] support from both state and non-state actors had
been guaranteed. To me, both former female abductees and their offspring
have been socially accepted into their respective communities upon their
return from rebel captivity. What has been missing is the corresponding
support, and more so economic, to cater for the basic needs of these
former female abductees and their offspring. Otherwise, in the coming
years, I see the emergence of [dangerous] land conflicts compounded by
the presence of male children borne during rebel captivity. This would be
confined [not only] to Teso as a sub-region[,] but also to all other LRA-
affected sub-region[s].[117]

In a study by International Alert on socio-economic reintegration of
former combatants,[118] it was posited, and rightly so, that "[r]eintegration is
essentially a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily
taking place in communities at the local level."[119] It ought to be part of the
general development of a national responsibility, and as such, often
"necessitates long-term external assistance."[120] One major challenge of

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116. Focus Group Discussion with a 26-year old participant, together with seven
    formerly abducted female youths in Ogwere Village, Otuke District (June 21,
    2015).

117. Interview with Moses Otim Omuron, Political Office Assistant to State
    Minister for Disaster Preparedness, in Soroti Municipality (June 19, 2015).

118. Charlotte Watson, Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: What
    Role for the European Union (An Unpublished Reintegration Briefing Paper
    by the International Alert) 4, *available at* http://www.international-
    alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/Economic_Reintegration_march_2010.
    pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

119. *Id.* at 8.

120. *Id.*

reintegration of post-war youths is their economic reintegration in the often war-torn economy, which is characterized by high unemployment rates.[121] This remains even a challenge for the reintegration of formerly abducted and conscripted female youths in post-war northern Uganda.[122] For example, studies conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics have found out that only eight per cent of the overall business establishments in the country were in northern Uganda and about 90% of them had less than four permanent employees.[123] The study further established that only two per cent of the businesses were owned by youth.[124] It follows that the chances for post-war northern Ugandan youths, and more especially those formerly abducted and conscripted female youths, to gain sustainable employment, and income remain even slimmer.

C. Need for Context-Resonating Interventions

On the whole, all respondents remained concerned with the need for adequate socio-economic reintegration of the war affected youth in today's northern Uganda. Making reference to some robust evidence from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports and various research by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC), it has been underscored that people in post-war northern Uganda face the lowest probability of living to the age of 40, the highest illiteracy rate, and multidimensional intergenerational poverty.[125] Furthermore, "the majority of the population in northern Uganda is now young"[126] with little memory of living outside of the IDPCs. In addition to having the highest rate of children underweight for their age,[127] many of them are now living in households headed by females who have almost no assets.[128] By and large, positive peace remains desirous in post-war northern Uganda. In line with this, various stakeholders — state and non-state actors, grassroots groups, and war-affected female youths themselves — suggested what they consider to be

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121. International Alert, Youth Perceptions, *supra* note 105, at 9.

122. *See* Annan, et al., *supra* note 12, at 68.

123. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Census of Business Establishments, 2010/11 (An Online Report on The Census of Business Establishments) 105, *available at* http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/ 2010%20COBE%20Report.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

124. *Id.*

125. Kirsten Gelsdorf, et al., Livelihoods, basic services and social protection in Northern Uganda and Karamoja (Working Paper 4 Published by SLRC) viii, *available at* http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7781.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

126. *Id.*

127. *Id.*

128. *Id.*

ways-forward to a sustainable path to sound socio-economic reintegration of youths.

Faced with such urgent issue of socio-economic reintegration of the war affected youth, one such corresponding challenge on the part of the post-war society leadership is what Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for Amuria, Joesph Osoto, termed as "the acumen to know what to do."[129] The RDC for Amuria further pointed out the following —

> In most cases, most of our staff here [at the district level] go through formal secondary and post-secondary [university] education and get through. But now[,] a speciali[z]ed training to handle such scenarios (holistic care for war-affected youths) is something that remains a challenge[,] and they (district staff) need it (specialized training) in order to have the capacity to do that (holistic care for war-affected youths). The second challenge is that, even if we had expertise in that area, the funding aspect is also a challenge. If you see the money that comes to the department of community services, especially gender, it is very small. Even if you were an expert in that area, you could comprehensively have the resources to do what you think is best for such a scenario.[130]

Against this set of challenges mentioned above, the outgoing Women Member of Parliament (MP) for Amuru and former State Minister for the Pacification of Northern Uganda, Betty Oyella Bigombe, made mention of lacunas in both the design and implementation of government programs meant for such youths —

> PRDP and other programs did not take that into consideration [ ] both these severely affected victims and survivors of the insurgency (those formerly abducted and conscripted into rebel activism)[. But] instead[,] paraly[z]ed [people even more]. Most of the [government] interventions are coordinated ... but most of them that are not coordinated are also done in an ad hoc manner and hence[,] not systematic.
>
> For me, [the] [g]overnment will have to make a decision on how to do this (socio-economic reintegration of youths in post-war northern Uganda). The challenge is not lack of resources per se, but how the resources are [utilized]. In some instances, these [resources, especially financial,] are diverted and sometimes stolen[,] such that very little reaches the beneficiaries.[131]

According to one opinion leader and pastor of the Victory Life Church in Adjumani, Pastor Cosmas Madile, one of the ways to respond to the issue

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129. Interview with Joesph Osoto, RDC for Amuria, in Soroti Municipality (June 19, 2015).

130. Id.

131. Interview with Betty Oyella Bigombe, outgoing Women Member of Parliament (MP) for Amuru and former State Minister for the Pacification of Northern Uganda, in Kampala (June 13, 2015).

of socio-economic reintegration of these war-affected female youths would
be making direct investments in post-war northern Uganda that directly
affects and participated by war-affected youths —

> For long, PRDP has put much emphasis on physical infrastructural
> development with very little direct investment into the socio-economic
> well-being of these people yet adversely affected by the armed conflict.
> Furthermore, one wonders how is the giving out of a cow[,] in the name
> of re-stocking, to a household that lost a whole kraal[,] be of any
> meaningful contribution [to] that household [ ] facing a host of
> hardships.[132]

The government, NGOs, aid agencies, and local communities
themselves are making efforts to build their livelihood through a series of
agricultural and food security programs, as well as alternative income
generation projects.[133] It is apparent, however, that many of these programs
and projects benefit those already viable groups — those who have assets and
can even take advantage of opportunities to produce a surplus for the market
— instead of the vulnerable sectors including young women who still
undergo the agony of war-induced trauma.[134] This is perhaps why the
current Youth MP for northern Uganda, Evelyn Anite, echoed the need for
affirmative action for post-war northern Ugandan youths in a bid to
consolidate peace dividends in that part of the country —

> [There] is need for an affirmative action for the particular group of people
> who experienced war. The government[,] therefore[,] needs to focus more
> of its effort on pulling up young people from areas of post-war, more so in
> terms of education. The war is [over,] but the standards of education are
> still very devastating even up to university level. There has been an
> [increasing drop-out rate among girls], especially those in Primary Seven.
> This is common with people who have left their families behind and [who]
> work temporarily.

> There is [also a] need for [socio-economic] rehabilitation; exposure is also
> necessary for the young people [from post-war northern Uganda] so that
> they can see what others are doing elsewhere. This is important because it
> helps the youth [ ] to work hard and get out of the dependency syndrome.
> Much as the [g]overnment is playing its part, there will never be enough
> jobs [from the government, central or local,] to employ all the youths since
> every other time[,] there are children transforming into youth [ ]. In other
> words, the [g]overnment should facilitate the youth [ ] in terms of capacity

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132. Interview with Pastor Cosmas Madile, Victory Life Church Pastor in Adjumani,
    in Moyo Town (June 27, 2015).

133. Gelsdorf, *supra* note 125, at viii.

134. *Id.* at viii–ix.

of thinking outside the box and therefore[,] have what it takes to sustain themselves [through] land, peace[,] and all other factors of production.[135]

The recommendations above seem to mesh well with the informed opinion of Francis Ogema, the Spokesperson for Northern Uganda Business Forum for Peace and former Coordinator of Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Lira Branch —

> This [process of economic empowerment for war-affected youths] should be about skills development. [I]n the private sector[,] if you check for instance in the hotel industry here (Lango sub-region), you will find that one or two workers went to private schools of catering but the rest just learn [while working]. The implication of this is the likelihood that many [inexperienced individuals] will not get jobs if the business desires high expansion in a throat-cutting competitive environment. There is no serious business person who will be conformable having unskilled personnel. There is[,] therefore[, a] need for the private sector to offer apprenticeship to these war-affected youths in a bid to bridge the gap between education and experience[.] [Hence,] they (post-war [northern Ugandan youths) may get hands-on skills training that [would] enable them [to] tap into more opportunities, including training for self-employment [or in] the private sector. This should be in terms of the private sector actors availing mentorship for job creation and/or vacancy.[136]

In their recent research paper, SLRC documented that "majority of household heads (53.5[%]) in Acholi and Lango [sub-regions] had not completed formal primary school [education], and consistently reported some of the worst households outcomes."[137] Furthermore, available statistical data speak to such proposal for affirmative action towards youths in northern Uganda.[138] Whereas Uganda was rated 27th highest in the world in terms of development aid in the tunes of $1.7 billion in 2012,[139] half of the northern Ugandan population live below poverty level or less than $1.25 per day,[140]

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135. Interview with Evelyn Anite, current Youth MP for Northern Uganda, in Moyo Town (June 27, 2015).

136. Interview with Francis Ogema, Spokesperson for Northern Uganda Business Forum for Peace, in Lira Municipality (June 21, 2015).

137. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, Recovery in Northern Uganda: How are people surviving post-conflict? (An Unpublished Briefing Paper 4 by the SLRC) 2, *available at* http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/SLRC/ Recovery_in_Northern_Uganda.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

138. *Id.*

139. Global Humanitarian Assistance, Uganda, *available at* http://www. globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/uganda (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

140. University of Oxford, Uganda: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (An Unpublished Report About the Multidimensional

and, according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, Uganda is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world.[141] This profile of the multi-dimensionally poor people in northern Uganda is undeniably worse than the national average of 81% for Somalia.[142] Undoubtedly, while the disarmament and demobilization parts of the DDR process are relatively straightforward, the socio-economic reintegration of the formerly abducted and conscripted female youths has proved to be far more complex. Indeed, the continued presence of unemployed, formerly armed, and traumatized persons poses a threat to community and national-level security, and can thereby jeopardize all other efforts at economic recovery as well as peace-building.

VI. Conclusion

Many scholars whose work have focused on DDR do acknowledge that as a process, DDR is directed primarily at ensuring the transition of combatants to civilian life, and that this process often entails a combination of reintegration into standing armies and police forces, as well as into civilian life. Although northern Uganda, more than half a decade since armed insurgency ceased, enjoys relative peace, many people affected by the over two-decade long armed conflict — most especially the youth — have remained traumatized and live in poverty.[143] Indisputably, life in encampment and in rebel captivity for many, especially the female youth in northern Uganda, have negative psycho-social effects. Many of them are still in an unhealthy physical and mental state and have lost opportunities for both formal and non-formal education during their formative years.

Poverty Index of Uganda) 2, *available at* http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Uganda-2013.pdf?0a8fd7 (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

141. *See* Sebastian Levine, et al., A Robust Multidimensional Poverty Profile for Uganda (An Unpublished Working Paper Submitted to the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative) 18, *available at* http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ophi-wp-55.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

142. United Nations Development Programme, Somalia: HDI values and rank changes in the 2015 Human Development Report (An Unpublished Report Submitted to the United Nations Development Programme), *available at* http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/SOM.pdf (last accessed Jan. 9, 2015).

143. Margaret Angucia & Kennedy Amone-P'Olak, *The Interface Between Early School Leaving and the Conflict in Northern Uganda, in* THE BURDEN OF EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION: UNDERSTANDING AND CHALLENGING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN AFRICA 127-40 (Jacques Zeelen & Josje v.d. Linden, D. Nampota & M. Ngabirano eds., 2010).

Female youths, both in adolescence and adulthood, constitute more than half of the population in northern Uganda.[144] Therefore, there is need to pay greater attention to their deep-seated concerns — rooted from their traumatizing war experiences. Worryingly, the issues of youth unemployment and underemployment pose particular political, economic, and social challenges to peace-building in northern Uganda, where thousands of young people have returned from encampment to a community with shattered socio-economic state. According to Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity, over 80% of youths in northern Uganda are "unemployed or unemployable in the formal sector due to low qualification levels," and majority of them are the female youth.[145]

The formerly abducted young females who turned into young mothers during their rebel captivity, and who have now returned to their respective communities, with their offsprings, arguably seem to undergo an experience of double jeopardy. They were forced to become child mothers during rebel captivity (some of them incurred serious gynaecological distress, including fistula) and are faced with hardships due to systemic rejection in the aftermath of rebel captivity. Oftentimes, young female abductees suffer as single mothers of children whose paternity remains unknown, if not contested. Hence, failure to effect holistic socio-economic reintegration of war-affected youths — whether formerly encamped, abducted, or conscripted — would greatly worsen the already bad situation. An effective and efficient socio-economic reintegration of these female youths (many of them now in their adulthood) in post-war northern Uganda should be seized to restore their life of dignity.

Looking at the multi-faceted marginalization — both real and perceived — of the war-affected female youth, this Article underscores the need for the central and local governments, together with the civil society (national and international), as well as the private sector, to play important roles to rebuild the lives of the war-affected youth. The central government should undertake an appropriate and comprehensive socio-economic reintegration of the youth in northern Uganda. The government should involve the war-affected youth in the design, planning, and implementation of its programs. In the same vein, Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development, and Ministry of Education and Sports, with civil society and the private sector, should work together to provide relevant skills-driven vocational education for the youth in northern Uganda.

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144. International Alert, Youth Perceptions, *supra* note 105.

145. Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity, *supra* note 91, at 26.