

**AGAINST ALL ODDS:
SURVIVING THE WAR ON ADOLESCENTS**

Promoting the Protection and Capacity of
Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda

Participatory Research Study with Adolescents in Northern Uganda

May – July 2001

CONTENTS

I.	Foreword	1
II.	Executive Summary	1
III.	Map	5
IV.	Northern Uganda, The Basics and Who's Fighting Whom: A Glossary	6
V.	Introduction	7
VI.	Adolescence and Youth: A Community in Crisis	9
VII.	Protection: Abduction and Sexual Violence Plague Adolescents	11
VIII.	Education: A Fundamental Right Denied	24
IX.	Livelihood: Options Are Limited and Dependency Deepens	31
X.	Health: Chronic Camp Congestion and Violence Undermine Adolescent Health	37
XI.	Psychosocial: Reintegration in an Environment of Disintegration	42
XII.	Survey Results: Devastation on All Sides — Insecurity is at the Root	53
XIII.	Adolescent Researchers in Charge: Methodology and Lessons Learned About Adolescent Participation	63
XIV.	International, National and Local Responses to Adolescent and Youth Concerns	69
XV.	Recommendations	78
XVI.	Appendix	81
	Political Background to the Conflict in Northern Uganda and Peace Negotiations	81
	Methodological Materials	83
	Acronyms	85
XVII.	Endnotes	86

I. FOREWORD

From May to July 2001, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) conducted a research study on the situation of adolescents in three Districts of northern Uganda: Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. Young people's lives in these areas have been shaped by interrelated armed conflicts that have raged in northern Uganda and across the border in southern Sudan over the last two decades. The principal researchers and the principal respondents were Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents. The results of this collaborative work are presented here. While this report faithfully represents the findings of all of the researchers, unless otherwise attributed, the views expressed here should be considered those of the Women's Commission. Additional reports of the research findings produced solely by the adolescent researchers are available separately from the Women's Commission.

While the findings here focus on circumstances for adolescents in Kitgum, Pader and Gulu Districts, the neighboring Districts of Moyo, Arua, Adjumani, Lira and Apac in the north are facing a similar situation. Recommendations for responding to the situation of adolescents in the region should also apply to these areas. Children and adolescents enduring war in the west of Uganda also require urgent international attention.

This research is the second in a series of four participatory studies with adolescents conducted by the Women's Commission. The first was in Kosovo, the third will be in Sierra Leone, and the fourth in an Asian country to be determined. The studies will provide a comparative look at the experiences of adolescents affected by war and persecution and the international and local responses to their situation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR's) *Guidelines for the Protection and Care of Refugee Children*, the United Nations *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are used as guiding principles in this work. Reports and recommendations from these studies will be used for advocacy purposes and by program and policy decision-makers to address concerns raised in each site covered. They will also contribute to wider international efforts to improve services and protection for

refugee, internally displaced and other adolescents affected by armed conflict and persecution.

This study in northern Uganda builds on the ongoing advocacy work of the Women's Commission with and for adolescents in the region. In November 1999, a delegation from the Leadership Council for Children and Armed Conflict, a joint initiative of the Women's Commission and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), visited Kitgum to support the needs and rights of war-affected children. The Leadership Council subsequently published *Our Children Are Missing*, a delegation report on the situation of children and adolescents in one district of northern Uganda. This work has been followed by expanded, intensive advocacy efforts to win the release of the thousands of children abducted by rebel forces, to support programs for formerly abducted children and to help bring peace to the region.

Together with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governments, the Women's Commission supported efforts bringing together leaders of Sudan and Uganda at the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada in September 2000. The Women's Commission has also provided leadership to form the Friends of the War-Affected Children of Northern Uganda, a coalition of NGOs focused on improving the lives of young people caught up in the conflicts and promoting the release of the abducted children.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dozens of Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents interviewed more than 2,000 adolescents and adults in a Women's Commission-sponsored project in the Acholi Districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader in northern Uganda from May to July 2001. They reveal that the insecurity of armed conflict, where adolescents are principal targets for murder, abduction, forced recruitment and sexual enslavement, is their top concern. Adolescents say that a combination of war, massive displacement, HIV/AIDS, lack of development and poverty has created a world of unimaginable misery for young people. Without protection from violence and with little support from adults who do not recognize or respect their rapidly chang-

ing role in society, adolescents are shouldering enormous responsibilities for themselves, their families and the community as a whole. Thousands are orphaned and heading households, and few – especially girls – are able to attend school or find sufficient means to support or protect themselves, as humanitarian assistance falls well short of their needs, and they suffer ongoing abduction and increased domestic and sexual violence. Adolescents are struggling to survive against all odds and too often without even recognizing their own strengths and abilities. They are urgently calling on the international community – especially the Governments of Uganda and Sudan – to act swiftly to lift their burdens and for all combatants to commit to peace.

FINDINGS

DIRECT IMPACT OF WAR ON ADOLESCENT PROTECTION

Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents in northern Uganda both suffer the effects of conflicts which span the borders of their countries. They name abduction, murder and insecurity perpetrated by the Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as their principal fear. Stating only general opposition to the Ugandan government as its cause, in the past 15 years, the LRA has abducted over 11,000 Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents primarily from inside Uganda, but also in southern Sudan, forcing them to become soldiers and commit atrocities against other children, their families and communities. Abducted girls have been raped and sexually enslaved as "wives" by LRA commanders.

Sudanese adolescents have faced double jeopardy, enduring LRA abduction and abduction and forced recruitment by the southern Sudanese rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has fought an 18-year civil war and claims to be seeking political autonomy within Sudan. The SPLA abducts young people and adults from inside Sudan and Uganda, where some 200,000 Sudanese refugees live. Some Sudanese adolescents also report Ugandan military support of the SPLA and its forced recruitment of under-18 soldiers. They testify to receiving forced military training at SPLA camps in northern Uganda run by the Ugandan army. Adolescents who manage to survive and escape abduction carry enormous scars – seen and unseen. Many are tormented by the acts of violence they were forced to commit. They return to communities that often fear them and

are themselves in turmoil, ill-equipped to support their recovery or protect them from re-abduction.

Only in recent months has the Government of Sudan taken significant steps to end its support for the LRA and to assist with the repatriation of escaped LRA abductees in Sudan to Uganda. The Government of Uganda has committed more troops to northern Uganda, tightened control along the Uganda-Sudan border and taken steps, albeit exceedingly slowly, to negotiate the surrender of LRA commanders with an offer of amnesty. As a result, the LRA has become increasingly divided, but the lives of young people remain wholly insecure. Adolescents and others report that both rebel groups continue abductions, murderous attacks and thievery in Uganda and Sudan, with an intensification of LRA attacks in southern Sudan. Young people who have recently escaped the LRA in Uganda report that the pattern of abduction has changed and currently often involves forced labor and shorter-term captivity. While these shifts may provide new pathways to peace, none of them has lessened the insecurity of adolescents and their communities, which goes well beyond physical attack.

EDUCATION – FEW GO TO SCHOOL

Young people say that northern Uganda is facing an education crisis, requiring an emergency response to get young people back to school and save their communities from further ruin. A system of free Universal Primary Education (UPE) has provided education opportunities to many young people in the north, but most cannot take advantage of them, and drop-out rates are high, especially for girls and orphans in the later years of primary school. Access to secondary school is nearly impossible for all young people, who cannot pay the required school fees, and university is attained by only a small number. Although refugees face similar barriers to education, higher numbers are enrolled in school than IDPs due to targeted support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Adolescents believe that the effects of physical insecurity bear primary responsibility for preventing them from completing school. Many schools have been destroyed, teachers killed and adolescents abducted directly from schools. Schools are often far from home, dangerous to get to and lacking qualified teachers, classrooms, supplies and equipment. Adolescents also report that, with limited resources, they often have to choose between eating and formal

learning and that parents more often send boys to school than girls. Despite the barriers, young people cling to education as a strong source of hope and stability and go to incredible lengths to preserve their right to education.

LITTLE SKILLS TRAINING OR ACCESS TO LAND

Beyond formal education, most adolescents do not have access to skills training for their livelihood and have few options for meeting the huge economic responsibilities they bear for themselves and their families amid extreme poverty. Acholi society is traditionally agricultural, and all young people said that their communities are suffering economically because they can no longer till their land freely due to insecurity and fear of attack. Crowded into displaced persons camps or in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, adolescents “dig,” or farm, as much as possible, but few can earn what they need to be self-sufficient.

Adolescents’ nutrition level has dropped, and many go hungry regularly, as World Food Program (WFP) humanitarian food assistance does not bridge the gap and is often delivered late because of insecurity. Girls and boys also report that poverty and lack of opportunity have led to increased girls’ prostitution, including with Ugandan soldiers. Adolescents and representatives of humanitarian assistance organizations unanimously agree that their situation will only dramatically improve when they are able to leave the IDP camps permanently and return to their ancestral lands to cultivate safely, and when refugees have improved access to land.

HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

All adolescents cite the spread of disease, including HIV/AIDS, lack of reproductive health services and education, malnutrition and sexual and gender-based violence as their main health problems. Although little data on adolescent health in the north exists, adolescents and health workers say that living conditions, especially in overcrowded, unsanitary displaced persons camps, are breeding grounds for diseases and other pestilence. They also suffer from insufficient medical personnel, facilities and supplies.

Young people’s vulnerability to contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and getting pregnant is increased by the conflict. Girls are especially at risk because they are exposed to sexual violence and increasingly pushed into early marriages. The risk to both boys and girls increases

as social controls break down, and young people have sex with little knowledge about prevention.

Adolescents also underscore the critical health needs of disabled young people, as well as abducted girls and boys, who return home with major health problems. Adolescents say that lasting peace and the dismantling of the IDP camps would dramatically reduce most of their health problems. They also call for additional adolescent-friendly health facilities where their privacy is respected, and for additional doctors, medicines and supplies.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT, INCLUDING INCREASED SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Beyond their physical wounds, adolescents struggle daily to cope with the psychological and social effects of the conflict. Those returning from captivity are frequently haunted and feel deeply ashamed by their experiences, and while most communities are now committed to receiving the formerly abducted young people, many still fear them, making their reintegration very difficult. Former abductees endure constant fear of re-abduction and almost certain death as retribution for escape. Most formerly abducted adolescents ultimately readjust well to their communities with help from family, friends and a number of agencies that reunite them with family and address their medical and psychosocial concerns. Some find relief in traditional spiritual cleansing practices. However, many also “act out” and become engaged in negative and anti-social behavior. Formerly abducted young people say they especially need education, a means to a livelihood and community acceptance. Without these, they live in despair and believe some among them who became particularly “addicted” to violence after years in captivity will return to the bush to continue fighting.

Thousands of adolescents have also become orphans, separated from their families as refugees and heads of households and are especially vulnerable to all rights abuses experienced by adolescents. The breakdown of traditional customs that secure the protection of children and adolescents has given rise to increased domestic violence, including child abuse and sexual and gender-based violence. Young people report that this violence is worsened by a rise in alcoholism among adult males, adolescent boys and others. Ugandan girls, particularly in IDP camps, say that they are being raped, sexually assaulted and exploited principally by UPDF soldiers, but also by other adult males and adolescent boys. Refugees

also report rape of girls by adult males and adolescent boys.

Despite these hardships, young people cope industriously with their circumstances, forming activity, income-generation and support groups and caring for one another. Yet, their initiatives receive little support from adults, and they find few opportunities to develop their talents or share their ideas with the wider community.

ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION

This research revealed the strong desire and capacity of young people to play important roles in making assessments and in decision-making processes concerning issues that affect them and their communities. They can and should play a strong role in advocating on their own behalf, implementing programs, monitoring their protection and providing leadership for constructive societal change.

Most adolescents, however, report rarely, if ever, being asked their opinions let alone being allowed to participate substantively in community decision-making or activities. Few feel they have any real control over their lives. Traditional authority structures that require young people's unquestioned respect for elders have not adapted to the challenges facing young people or embraced the benefits adolescents offer their communities. Adolescents call for increased dialog between adults and youth to create better understanding to improve the situation of young people.

MORE EXPLICIT SUPPORT TO ADOLESCENTS NEEDED IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Although about US\$100 million in international funds were dedicated to northern Uganda between 1996 and 2000, some donor commitments, including for humanitarian food assistance, were not met, and adolescents believe local corruption and insecurity curtails the relief. Young people and adults said that while the Ugandan government has sophisticated youth policies and officers that are knowledgeable about the range of issues facing youth people in the north, there are wide gaps between policy, knowledge and action.

Apart from support for reintegration programs assisting several thousand former abductees, very lit-

tle assistance has explicitly addressed the overall dire situation of adolescents, including hundreds of thousands of orphans, IDPs and refugees. IDPs in particular have suffered without support from an international agency dedicated to intervene comprehensively on their behalf with the Ugandan government, which is failing in its duty to protect and care for this population. At the same time, shrinking resources for refugees is taking a heavy toll on programs to support the protection of refugee children, adolescents and women. Few NGOs, governmental organizations and other groups have incorporated youth issues or participation into their programs, missing out on opportunities to address their problems and develop their talents and leadership. Young people call on the international community and the Government of Uganda to ensure relief assistance reaches them and to create pathways for long-term economic development that involve them directly.

ADOLESCENTS NEED PEACE

The sheer magnitude of adolescents' strength surviving in the bush, finding food and getting to school without adult support is what provides hope for a better future in northern Uganda and a peaceful Uganda as a whole. To make this hope reality, young people's strengths must increasingly be transformed into constructive leadership. Young people themselves must begin to recognize the potential of their survival skills to increase youth-led organizing and activism to address their concerns and to further constructive, democratic aims. Ultimately, however, adolescents say they need peace in northern Uganda and southern Sudan and an end to untenable dependency on humanitarian assistance. Peace and security requires the strong and steadfast political will of the Governments of Uganda and Sudan, and it also requires concrete investments in economic development in the north. The international community must join hands and hearts with the adolescents in the region to rally for peace and end the protracted, devastating suffering of young people and all civilians in the region.

III. MAP

Uganda Affected Populations by District Refugees and Internally Displaced (April 2001)



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

* In 2001, Kitgum District was split into two separate Districts: Kitgum and Pader. The precise division is not marked here.

IV. NORTHERN UGANDA, THE BASICS AND WHO'S FIGHTING WHOM: A GLOSSARY

WHAT IS NORTHERN UGANDA?

The country of Uganda is slightly smaller than Oregon, and the northern Districts of Gulu, Pader and Kitgum,¹ known as “Acholi” or “Acholiland,” comprise an area of 28,000 square kilometers, about the size of New Jersey or Belgium. The majority of the more than 800,000 inhabitants of these Districts of northern Uganda are ethnic Acholi, who make up 4 percent of Uganda’s total population. Ethnic Acholi also live across the border in southern Sudan. The Baganda, the dominant ethnic group of southern Uganda, make up 17 percent of the population. While Uganda’s official language is English, most of the ethnic tribes of southern Uganda speak Luganda, whereas the tribal language spoken in northern Uganda by the Acholi is Luo. Children and adolescents up to age 14 comprise 51 percent of the population, while youth 15-29 years old comprise 29 percent of the population.² More than half of the population of Acholiland has been displaced by a conflict that began in 1986 between the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda.³

Of the millions who have fled their homes during 18 years of civil war in southern Sudan, about 200,000 live as refugees in Uganda. Nearly 27,000 Sudanese refugees are registered in the Achol Pii refugee settlement in Pader District, the only refugee settlement in the three Districts. Almost 9,500 of these refugees are children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 17. The refugees in Achol Pii originate from areas in and around Torit, Nimule, Parajok, Yei, Kaya and Magwe in southern Sudan. Seventy percent of the population are Acholi, twenty percent are Latuka and an additional 13 ethnic groups are represented in the settlement.⁴

WHO'S FIGHTING WHOM: A GLOSSARY

PRINCIPAL VICTIMS:

Adolescents and Other Civilians – More than 11,000 adolescents and children from Acholiland in northern Uganda have been abducted by the LRA. These girls and boys are forced to commit atrocities

against each other and against their communities. Of those who remain, more than half live in displaced persons camps, where there is little access to education, health care and other basic necessities. Girls in particular face rape and sexual exploitation. Sudanese refugee adolescents are at times thrice victimized: as refugees and as forced soldiers and laborers for both the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the LRA.

MILITARY FORCES:

LRA – The Lord’s Resistance Army is a rebel group from the areas of northern Uganda dominated by the Acholi people, known as Acholiland. The LRA opposes the current Ugandan government, led by Yoweri Museveni, and is the principal enemy of the Ugandan army, the UPDF, in the north. The rebel group professes to fight a spiritual war for the Acholi people but has been responsible for countless atrocities committed against civilians in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, including the abduction of thousands of children and adolescents. Until very recently, the LRA has been heavily supported by the Government of Sudan, and has participated in military actions against the rebel group in southern Sudan, the SPLA.

SPLA – The Sudan People’s Liberation Army is the principal rebel group in southern Sudan. The SPLA claims to be fighting for political autonomy in southern Sudan. It professes to represent the interests of the southern black, Christian and traditional religion adherents in its fight against the Arab, Islamic government of the north. The SPLA receives support from the Ugandan government. It is known to have forcibly recruited adolescents and adults into its fighting forces from Sudanese populations in southern Sudan and from Sudanese refugee settlements inside northern Uganda.

UPDF – The Ugandan People’s Defense Forces comprise Uganda’s national army, controlled by the central government of Uganda. The UPDF is responsible for providing security for all civilians in Uganda, and has been fighting a war against the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army for more than 15 years. The UPDF is known to support the principal rebel group from

southern Sudan, the SPLA, thereby engaging in a proxy war with the Government of Sudan. The Ugandan army is also accused of failing to protect civilians in the north and of committing some rights violations against civilians, although to a far lesser extent than the LRA.

Sudanese government forces – Government military forces, controlled by the National Islamic Front government in Khartoum, have waged principally an aerial war against its citizens and the SPLA in the south for over 18 years. The Sudan government requires 17- to 19-year-old males to serve 12 to 18 months in the military in order to receive their official certificate of completion of secondary school. Until mid-2001, government forces also helped to equip and train the LRA.

MILITARY AND POLITICAL LEADERS:

Joseph Kony (pronounced “Kohn” in Acholi) – The leader of the LRA, who directs his commanders and troops, the majority of whom are formerly abducted

children, from base camps in southern Sudan. He is a self-proclaimed spirit medium who became the leader of the LRA in 1987, when he began his campaign of terror in the region.

John Garang – The leader of the southern Sudanese rebel group the SPLA.

Yoweri Museveni – The President of Uganda and leader of the National Resistance Movement, the ruling political party that took power in 1986. Museveni’s government supports the rebel group SPLA from southern Sudan.

Omar Al-Bashir – The President of Sudan and leader of the National Islamic Front, the ruling party of Sudan. Based in the Arab north of Sudan, the Sudanese government has been fighting rebel groups like the SPLA in the natural resource-rich south for over 18 years. From 1994 until mid-2001, Al-Bashir’s government has supported the LRA in the war in northern Uganda in return for the LRA fighting the SPLA.

V. INTRODUCTION

It is just over 200 kilometers from Uganda’s bustling international capital of Kampala to the northern Districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, where this study took place.

Travel from south to north appears not much different from that in many countries in Africa. Crowded city streets with indoor shops turn into long stretches of deteriorating road punctuated by noisy and colorful roadside markets. Traffic jams give way to streams of bicycles laden with harvested grass and sorghum. The dirt road is a walkway where women and girls proceed step by step, erect in the blazing sun, supporting baskets of fruit on their heads and infants on their backs. The landscape is an abundance of brilliant greens and orange, of rich arable land and of seeming tranquility. The only signs of conflict are a few military checkpoints along the way and a soldier here and there, resting under a tree, his rifle across his knees.

But the tranquility is only a mirage, and the road, flanked by tall grass and trees, is a blind burrow through treacherous forest. For 15 years, the region



Tens of thousands of adolescents in northern Uganda have grown up knowing only wartime.

has been the scene of some of the worst violence committed against children and adolescents in the world. Roads, schools, villages and families are falling apart. It is a society in the process of disintegration.

If you are under 20 and living here, you have known virtually nothing else your whole life but what it is like to live in a community enduring armed conflict - conflict in which you are a prime target.

You learn from adults the lessons of traditional social norms, but you have little chance to practice them. Unprotected and left to fend for yourself, you are instead a master at coping with the realities of this world you have inherited, a world with troubles you don't deserve.

Every day, you peer into the tall surrounding brush knowing that the Lord's Resistance Army is out there, somewhere, not too far away, and at any moment may suddenly appear to abduct, rape, torture or murder you. Worse, you think of your friends who have already been taken. Regular news about the LRA's whereabouts and latest atrocities travels outward from its epicenter, and countless stories about being in the wrong place at the wrong time fill your head, making you wonder, "Am I next?" The Ugandan Army, the Ugandan People's Defense Forces, is supposed to make you safe, but the fighting continues, and you wonder sometimes what they are actually doing. "How could it be so hard to round up these small groups of rebels?" Other times you know exactly what they are doing because they are robbing or raping you.

Thousands of you live in extremely crowded, sprawling and unsanitary displaced persons camps, "for your own safety," you are told. But there you regularly go hungry, contract diseases and are not actually very safe. The camps get attacked, too.

You see plenty of rich land before you, but if you choose to plow it and grow crops or swim in the streams, you may be attacked. You are told you have free, universal primary education, but you cannot go to school. It is unsafe; you might be abducted there; your teachers have been killed; there is not enough money for supplies; the school is too far away; boys must go first and you'll just get pregnant there. Secondary school is out of the question, the fees are too high; you must feed your stomachs before your minds.

You would turn to your parents, but they might not be there any more - many parents have died of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) or been

murdered by the LRA. Even if they are there, they cannot protect or take care of you. You must take care of your siblings, but you cannot get a job, a loan or any training. You are pushed into marriage, when you are barely 12 - how else will you eat? All most adults will say is: "You youth don't respect us anymore." You are one of many thousands abducted, or one of far fewer who made it home. You return to a community that's barely surviving, and you are often mistrusted because you were on the other side.

If you are a refugee from southern Sudan, you fled attacks by the Sudanese government forces, abduction by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and deprivation at home. You are supposed to be safe here. But now you must also fear the LRA, and some of the Ugandan nationals, too, who hate you for also needing the land. You are not out of reach of the SPLA, which circles freely around you, attempting to reel you in. And you are hungry, always hungry.

Even your personalities are a contradiction. Shouldn't you be hardened to the world after all this? Don't you hate the ground you walk on? No, you dance traditional and new dances, you laugh with your friends, you care about your communities and you look for solutions. You care for your brothers and sisters, pay for their schooling and try to form livelihood cooperatives with your friends. You hold onto some of the lessons of kindness of generations past. You don't talk of revenge, but of peace - when you can bring yourselves to hope. You worry for those among you who are living on the streets, turning to drugs or prostitution. There are so few to help you. You deserve much better.

The lives of these young people are described in the pages ahead. They are revealed through focus groups, surveys and individual interviews designed and carried out by adolescents. The findings of this research are organized into sections, but the concerns are three-dimensional, overlapping and interconnected in the minds and experiences of the adolescents who own this report. Massive insecurity - physical, psychological, economic, social, spiritual - is the force that binds them together in a rhythm of brutal contradiction for young people.

Both Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents feel - and are - betrayed by virtually everyone involved in this conflict, including families, communities, governments, UPDF soldiers, the rebels and the internation-

al community. Young people realize that they are pawns in a much larger conflict and offer intelligent and constructive solutions for building a better world. At the same time, they don't often recognize their own capacity to bring change or how they can do it.

Young people in northern Uganda desperately need and have a right to support. They call for an end to the conflicts in their countries and a commitment to ending poverty through development and education, including support for the most vulnerable. They want to help, but no one is asking them. Their sentiments are mirrored in this report. The findings of the focus groups and case studies conducted by adoles-

cent researchers with over 2,000 adolescents and adults in their communities, combined with additional Women's Commission research, flesh out the details of the effects of armed conflict on adolescents – on their roles in society and virtually every aspect of their lives. The results of their survey of adolescents' top concerns outline their broad consensus that insecurity is at the root of all other concerns. Lessons learned about adolescent participation, information on international, national and local responses to adolescents' concerns, and prospects for peace are also considered, calling for increased attention to adolescents' concerns and support for their leadership.

VI. ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH: A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

Adolescent researchers asked their peers and adults to discuss the question: "Who are adolescents or youth,⁵ and what is their role in Uganda today?" Strong responses reflected a keen awareness of young people undergoing changes at an accelerated rate and an awareness of a community in crisis, where traditional values and culture are not sufficiently recognizing or responding to the dilemma of young people.

AN AGE AND A STAGE OF LIFE

The new National Youth Policy of Uganda defines youth as "all young persons, female and male, aged 12 to 30 years." The policy also states that youth should not be regarded as a homogenous group fitting into age brackets, but rather as a group involved in a process of change.⁶ Uganda's Principal Youth Officer, Kyateka Mondo, told the Women's Commission that determining the age range for the policy was a "contentious issue" and that "people in the localities define youth with very different scenarios in mind."⁷

Both adolescent and adult responses conveyed the importance of defined roles that supercede chronological ages. They used, for example, a variety of words in their local languages to describe people at different stages of life according to clan traditions. Both Ugandan and Sudanese Acholi adolescents, for



Community actors in Kitgum District dramatize the breakdown of families in the north. Here, an adolescent boy attempts to reason with his drunken father, who only degrades his son.

example, offered a series of words - *latin*, *bulu*, *ladongo*, *luditu* and *rwot* - to correspond with the English for child, adolescent/youth, adult, elder and chief. Sudanese refugees from the Latuka and Didinga ethnic groups provided two other sets of corresponding words in their own languages. They explained that their definitions related to age, level of maturity and an individual's standing within the community. The following are young people's descriptions of what they believe adolescence and youth to be (some of which are contradictory):

Age: Adolescents are between the ages of 10 and 18. Some said that girls are adolescents from ages 13 to 17 but are women as soon as they marry, even at 12 or 13. Youth are considered to be from age 15 to 30 and distinct from adolescents in that they are sexually active. This includes females from age 12 to menopause.

Physical and sexual development: Adolescents are those beginning to reach physical maturity with the development of pubic hair, wet dreams and a deepened voice for boys, and breast development, pubic hair and the start of menstruation for girls. Sexual development can cause problems for girls if they seek to attend school and/or resist early marriage, adolescents said, adding that girls come under other pressures imposed by the physical maturity that marks them for womanhood. They also said that adolescents can be increasingly stubborn and at times overly sensitive.

Becoming an adult: A person becomes an adult upon marriage and only then commands full community respect. George Omono, former Director of Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), agreed. “Before you are married, no one really takes you seriously and you are not consulted on issues of concern to the community,” he said. “Respect means that you can express your opinions in public and that people listen to them. I married late and only got respect after that. It’s not about money or experience.”⁸ Other adolescents longed for the freedom they perceived to come with adulthood. “As a grown up, there must be freedom. I have no freedom. We cannot go outside the gate,” said one adolescent girl whose father was killed by the LRA and who lives in an orphanage.

Relationship to adults: Elders are older people with authority; they carry sticks, as do teachers, and require respect from young people.

Part child/part adult: Youth is fleeting for the young. Betty, 24, from Gulu, said that she feels like a young person when she is out in the world, but that when she gets home she is treated like an adult with adult responsibilities. Betty was orphaned when she was eight years old and took on the care of her sister’s two children when her sister died of AIDS. One of the children also has AIDS.

TRADITIONAL ROLES UNDER SIEGE

In the best of circumstances, adolescence is a difficult period in which physical and emotional changes, intergenerational conflicts, insecurity and rebelliousness can reflect social norms and a healthy developmental process. Uganda’s National Youth Policy recognizes adolescence as a “period of great emotional, physical and psychological changes that require societal support for a safe passage from adolescence to full adulthood.”⁹ In northern Uganda and in the

south of Sudan, there is no such safe passage. The lifespans of most adolescents have been dominated by more than a decade and a half of war, marked by terror, displacement, isolation and poverty. Social structures are unraveling with an accelerated force. Relationships between adults and adolescents are undergoing tremendous upheaval without any corresponding cultural adaptation recognizing the pressures young people are facing and without support for their capacities to cope.

Most adolescents and adults are subject to extreme pressures. They are cramped into refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps with few options for self-sufficiency and little physical or emotional space to develop their skills, capacities and self-confidence. Adolescents are forced to take on adult responsibilities beyond expectations of earlier societal norms and are left to fend for themselves. An increasing number of orphaned adolescents, especially girls, are left to care for themselves and for their families.

The traditional age for marriage has dropped sharply. Girls from an IDP camp in Gulu said that the ideal time to get married would be 21 for girls – and 25 for boys.¹⁰ They reported, however, that girls in the camp were now getting married as young as 12, primarily for economic and security reasons. They are under constant threat of abduction or rape; their parents are unable to take care of them adequately, and girls are denied future opportunities to find gainful work. Boys, on the other hand, struggle under other constraints that have cut short their own adolescence. They are under great pressure to produce a livelihood in a poor economic setting which also undermines their sense of confidence. Should they wish to marry, they are still required to pay a traditional bride price, which few can afford.

Psychosocial pressures of war have also resulted in a decline of “morality” and of traditional respect for the authority of elders, according to both adult and adolescent respondents.¹¹ Many adults complained that adolescents no longer respect their parents or other adults and that they can no longer control young people. Some young people, they said, spend all their time watching videos in video stores, going to discos and traditional dances without permission and engaging in casual sex. There is little social support for the dilemma of adolescents, and many feel abandoned by an adult society that is not responding to their insecurity or to the level of responsibility they are taking on.

Young people are feared as threats to stability, especially those who have fought with the LRA or SPLA forces, even if they were abducted. Deference to authority is still demanded and reinforced through such behaviors as very authoritative teaching methods. “The one with the stick is in charge, as the teacher,” said one adolescent interviewed. The Resident District Commissioner for Gulu, Musa Ecewero, said, “We see these kids as a risk to the future of the country.”¹²

Out of their own fears and pressures from this rapid change, many adults feel out of control and are clinging tightly to traditional values and structures in which adults are providers, commanding authority, while young people are required to follow a strict code of respect. These views and lingering traditional beliefs about roles and responsibilities can blind communities, including adolescents, from recognizing and bolstering the incredible strengths and coping skills of young people.

Many adults also understand and can articulate the deep social crisis and their inability to parent well as a result of unrelenting war, poverty and disease. “Our children are being raised by babysitters,”¹³ said

one Sudanese mother, reflecting on the struggle of many parents who must leave their children with other people for long periods to go to work and make ends meet. “We are really in a dilemma,” said George Omono, formerly of GUSCO. “Our family structure is disrupted and children grow up with little guidance. With the war, the ‘fireplace values’ passed on through storytelling are no longer there.”¹⁴

SOME SOLUTIONS

Overall, adults and young people interviewed articulated the strong need to improve intergenerational understanding and dialog. This means meeting the challenge to better understand and accept how cultural tradition is being forced to recreate itself in new forms. It includes making conscious decisions about values — which to keep and which to change in order to support the healthy development of adolescents. It means adults helping their children by communicating, supporting their capacities and providing them with the opportunity to develop responsible and independent decision-making skills. Any successful outcome must involve the whole community in valuing the opinions of young people and their contributions.

VII. PROTECTION: ABDUCTION AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PLAGUE ADOLESCENTS

In the eyes of children and adolescents, protection is mostly about growing up in a safe and secure environment.¹⁵ In the northern Uganda Districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, young people are anything but safe or secure, and both Ugandan and Sudanese refugee adolescents have identified insecurity as the overarching preoccupation and devastating reality of their lives. On one level, the dire circumstances of war seem “normal” because they are all young people know. On another level, adolescents and youth are acutely aware that it is not normal to be abducted; forced to fight, kill and steal; forced to labor; be sexually enslaved, exploited and abused; go hungry; lose out on educa-



Adolescents demonstrate how they are forced to fight in captivity with rebel Lord's Resistance Army troops.

tion and any hope for a livelihood; and miss the care and love of parents, who are no longer with them as a result of war. Young people in northern Uganda

are calling for an end to the wars in the region, an end to their suffering as principal targets of war and for immediate attention to be paid to the economic development of the north.

Both Uganda and Sudan have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirming their commitment to upholding the rights of children and adolescents, including during armed conflict. They have also signed the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, guaranteeing protection to refugees, including children and adolescents, within their borders.¹⁶ Despite these commitments, the Ugandan and Sudanese governments have failed to adequately protect children and adolescents in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, and young people in these areas remain the targets of extreme brutality.

A common observation of the adolescent researchers when they visited the protected villages in Gulu District with Women's Commission researchers was "Where's the protection?"

Development is stalled in the north, and a cycle of dependency on international humanitarian assistance continues unabated. This is exacerbating violence against adolescents and others. At the same time, international organizations, including the UNHCR, which is charged with the protection and care of refugees in Uganda in collaboration with the Government of Uganda, are severely hampered due to ongoing insecurity and limited resources. The situation is particularly cruel for the hundreds of thousands who are cramped, even trapped, in forced displacement camps and the refugee settlement, which are breeding grounds for further violence. IDPs are particularly disadvantaged, as unlike refugees, there is no international agency designated to ensure their protection and care comprehensively. Still thousands more live in remote villages where there is little access to outside assistance and protection.

Any hope and future for adolescents in northern Uganda depend upon increased security, decongestion of the displaced persons camps and the creation of lasting peace. They also rely on decreased dependency

on humanitarian assistance balanced with substantial development assistance in the north, where support for adolescents' needs and capacities is prioritized.

THE ROLE OF THE UGANDA PEOPLE'S DEFENSE FORCES

It is the role of the UPDF, the government's key security force, to safeguard the lives of its citizens and refugees against the attacks of the LRA. The UPDF has suffered significant casualties engaging the LRA, yet it is also known to have violated international human rights and humanitarian law and the rights of civilians, including adolescents, in northern Uganda.¹⁷

In October 1996, with only three days' notice, the UPDF ordered the rural population of Gulu into "protected villages" with UPDF detachments stationed nearby. The government had a dual purpose in this: to protect civilians while also preventing them from providing information and support to the LRA. But they have largely failed in their role as protectors. Security incidents involving LRA abductions, rape, looting and destruction of property frequently occur in these villages.¹⁸

A common observation of the adolescent researchers when they visited the protected villages in Gulu District with Women's Commission researchers was "Where's the protection?" Indeed, there was little vigilant or even visible presence of the UPDF around the periphery of the camps. Young people reported concerns that soldiers guarding camps often pitched barracks in the center of camps, effectively protected by the people around them instead of the other way around. While adolescents said that the security situation has somewhat improved during the past year, many revealed that they continue to sleep in the bush for fear of abduction.

Instead of protection, what is readily apparent is the deteriorating conditions of the camps, where "crowded conditions and lack of food and sanitation facilities have made the population vulnerable to death from malnutrition and disease."¹⁹ In August 2001, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) asserted that the "appalling" conditions of the camps might violate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.²⁰ Along with the Acholi Parliamentary group (APG), ARLPI called on the government to immediately dismantle the camps.²¹

Apart from its failure to defend civilians against LRA abduction, destruction and murder, the UPDF has detained civilians suspected of rebel activity and committed “serious human rights abuses,”²² including rape. The freedom of movement of civilians living in the camps, especially in Gulu, has at times been restricted by the UPDF, and military-aged males have sometimes been forbidden to return to their farms to cultivate the land.²³ Civilian adolescents have also been caught in the crossfire, injured and killed during skirmishes with the LRA, and boys “of military age” have often been brutally questioned or fired upon by the UPDF.²⁴ In isolated cases, they have been “executed on the spot” when fleeing UPDF units.²⁵ The UPDF has also assisted the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in its efforts to recruit soldiers into its rebel force, including adolescents who are refugees in northern Uganda, as described below.

It has also been reported that the UPDF has recruited and enlisted under-18 soldiers into its own ranks, despite a legal recruitment age for military service of 18 years. Although there are now improvements in this area, in the past, the UPDF has detained LRA child soldiers at Gulu military barracks for several months, relentlessly interrogating them, sometimes without adequate medical care.²⁶ Former abductees in the custody of the UPDF have also been used by the military to locate LRA landmines and arms caches.²⁷ However, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Gulu report a major change in the treatment of the child soldiers in UPDF barracks, largely due to Save the Children Denmark’s rights training to the UPDF Child Protection Unit there.

ABDUCTION: CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS FORCIBLY RECRUITED AND SEXUALLY ENSLAVED BY REBEL GROUPS

Perhaps the most conspicuous and overtly damaging hallmark of the conflict in northern Uganda Districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, has been the abduction of thousands of adolescents. Abductions are most frequently carried out by the LRA, which has abducted more than 11,000 children and adolescents since 1986, but sometimes also by the southern Sudanese SPLA rebel force. Usually accompanied by forced fighting and killing, labor and sexual slavery, abductions have intensified the insecurity of young people, not only those who have directly suffered the consequences, but all those who fear it may happen

to them. All the young people and adults interviewed stated that they live in constant terror of sudden attacks and abduction or re-abduction by the LRA, which lurks unseen in the surrounding bush.

ABDUCTIONS BY THE LRA: SIGNIFICANT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND LONG-TERM PATTERNS

significant recent developments

At the time of this study, LRA abductions continued, but it is important to note that recent political changes have resulted in a significant shift in the pattern of abduction. Many young people who recently returned from LRA captivity reported shorter abduction periods, focused mostly on forced labor, banditry and other violence, as opposed to forced movement across the border to Sudan for training and indoctrination. As with other moments of change in the fighting and abductions in the past, this development may be short-lived and may even lead to further violence in the region. The significance of the change on the immediate security of adolescents is minimal, however, as young people remain in constant danger of attack and abduction, particularly those who are being re-abducted, as they face murder if they are identified as former escapees.



An adolescent described the brutality of LRA abductions with this drawing.

One reason for the temporary shift in the pattern of abduction involves the Government of Sudan’s recent withdrawal of support to the LRA inside Sudan. In addition, the UPDF has tightened control of the Uganda-Sudan border, and the LRA itself appears more and more physically and politically split. Some commanders and groups of the LRA, including Joseph Kony, remain on the Sudan side of

The LRA has abducted more than 11,000 children and adolescents since 1986

The Abducted Children Registration and Information System³⁰ figures
from June 2000 show the following:

District	Returned children	Not returned	Total abducted
Gulu	2,105	3,554	5,659
Kitgum (including Pader)	2,093	2,786	4,879
Lira	344	177	521
Apac	185	89	274
Total:	4,727	6,606	11,333

the border, facing increased pressure from the Sudan government, and others remain on the Uganda side. Both continue to loot villages and abduct adolescents for forced labor, using them to carry looted goods, such as food and medicine, to temporary camps. Reports of Joseph Kony using his forces to wage heated battles against Sudanese government troops and against civilian populations in Sudan are also increasing.²⁸

Long-term patterns of abduction by the LRA

Notwithstanding the very recent, and potentially temporary, shift in the pattern of abduction, many young people testified to the LRA's reign of terror and pattern of abduction that has existed over the past 15 years in northern Uganda. The rebels mainly abduct adolescents, according to some reports between the ages of 14 and 16, though they do abduct younger children and adults as well.²⁹ Abduction and murder remain adolescents' principal fears.

Adolescents who have managed to escape their captors depicted compelling scenarios of their abduction – some lasting six to 10 years. These mostly involve raids by small LRA bands, where children are rounded up in schools, at home or elsewhere and forced to carry heavy loads between 50 and 100 miles to southern Sudan, receiving little food along the way. En route to Sudan, many are forced to commit acts of violence and thievery, including against other children. They are warned that refusal to obey will result in their own deaths. Once in Sudan, they are trained as fighters in LRA encampments and, after training and indoctrination, they are often forced to return to Uganda to commit atrocities against their own communities and the UPDF. Some

young people are even forced to kill members of their own families and communities. As a result, many believe they can never return home because of the terrible acts they have committed. The leaders of the LRA have created a virtual human shield in the form of a young army of forced recruits. Anyone seeking to fight back against the LRA does so knowing that they are fighting against a troop of abducted adolescents.

Abducted girls reported being raped, sexually enslaved and forced into domestic servitude, as described further below, while smaller numbers are forced into armed combat. While most victims are Ugandan, Sudanese refugee adolescents living in settlements in northern Uganda have not been spared LRA attack and abduction.

Sudanese refugee adolescents also abducted by the LRA

At least eight Sudanese refugee adolescents interviewed testified to having been abducted from the Achol Pii refugee settlement in Pader District during LRA attacks.³¹ The most recent attacks on the settlement by the rebels occurred in February 2001.³² Having already fled conflict in southern Sudan, one young refugee described the double jeopardy of his situation. "We fled the Arabs in Sudan, and now we must flee the LRA here," he said.³³ Other accounts by Sudanese refugees convey the effects of LRA abductions on their young lives.

Daniel, a refugee in Achol Pii, was abducted by the LRA in 1996 at the age of 16. "The 'Otang,' which is the Acholi name for the rebels, attacked the block, burnt all the huts and killed nearly 200 people," he reported. "They looted and took our food and

forced me and three girls away with them. We didn't know where we were going until we reached southern Sudan." Kept at a place called Natotopoto training camp, the adolescents were subjected to "relentless indoctrination" and rigid discipline. Basic training consisted of "running around the camps hour after hour, carrying stones on our shoulders. Anyone who spilled stones or collapsed was killed immediately," Daniel said. "Meanwhile, the three girls were forced to have sexual intercourse. After the training, we were forced to go and fight; our target was to kill. We were forced to kill our own people."³⁴

Another Sudanese refugee, Peter, 19, also abducted from Achol Pii said: "Once abducted, you are forced to ferry very heavy luggage, move bare-footed, [suffer] insufficient feeding and forced to have sexual intercourse [in] the case of ladies. If you refuse their commands or are completely tired and cannot move, you are murdered. The rebels are butchers of adolescents."³⁵

Escape: a dangerous prospect

Escaping from the LRA is extremely risky, but also the only way out. No abductees have ever been formally released from the LRA command and those who are caught are usually killed.³⁶ Of the more than

11,000 young people reported abducted, fewer than 5,000 are known to have escaped.³⁷ Although United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) statistics show that 6,606 remain unaccounted for, accurate numbers are elusive, and most estimates put the count of children and adolescents still in captivity at between 1,500 and 3,000. This means that thousands of others have likely perished at the hands of the LRA, in combat and/or attempting to survive in the harsh conditions of the bush. Most adolescents who do escape manage to do so only during the chaos of actual combat.³⁸

Rape and sexual slavery of captive girls

Thousands of girls have been among those abducted by the LRA over the past 15 years. Reports from escapees reveal that most of these young women are forced to become the sexual slaves, or "wives," and domestic servants of commanders or other fighters. They are repeatedly raped, and many bear children in the harsh conditions of the bush or in LRA encampments with barely enough food to survive and no health care. Some reports indicate that the LRA has also sold and traded some children, mostly girls, or provided them as "gifts" to arms dealers in Sudan.³⁹

Escape Brings Danger to Everyone

Joseph, now 18, was abducted at age 14 while he was in primary school. The LRA surrounded his school, and he and his fellow students watched their teachers and school administrators get slaughtered and then were forced to finish the job. Each was forced to take part in cutting up the bodies of the slain adults, boiling their remains and eating them. Within minutes, during a regular afternoon at school, their young lives were irrevocably changed.

Joseph was forced to become a child soldier. After losing a gun and luggage in the bush during a skirmish, Joseph escaped. However, he was captured by another band of LRA, who turned him back over to his original troop. He was beaten on his back with an iron bicycle chain; four years later there are still visible scars on his back from the beating. He was told by a commander who knew him that he would be killed for his mistake. This same commander allowed Joseph to escape and was later severely beaten for it.

Joseph made it back to his parents, who were living in Awer IDP camp in Gulu. But the rebels pursued him. While he slept in the bush, the rebels found his mother, whose screams Joseph heard until they suddenly ceased. She had been killed for her refusal to tell the whereabouts of her son.

Through rehabilitation at the World Vision Center in Gulu, Joseph has reintegrated back into society. While at first he was very depressed, since he has been able to go back to school, with the help of a sponsorship, he has become an activist in his community. Looking back on all this he says, "Education is the key to leading in the future."

Mary, an adolescent girl from Kitgum, told a psychosocial worker about her brutal experience with the LRA. "On May 17, 1996, I was 14 years old, and around midday, I was sitting outside a hut in our compound with my cousins. A man came by and asked us to show him the way to the next village. My cousin didn't like the look of him, but I wasn't scared because our home is by the roadside and many different people pass by to fetch water or take a bath in the stream nearby. Less than five minutes later, five more men came in our compound with guns in their hands! I thought I was dreaming, but reality dawned on me as they ordered us to remain where we were and each one of us was chained together with ropes like goats. I started crying for my grandmother. I couldn't imagine how she was going to react when she finds out I was abducted. I was hit very hard for crying, and we were led to the next village where we found more captives tied up in the same manner. We were then given luggage to carry. We walked the rest of the day until evening, and older female captives cooked. We were given food and we slept, tied up together under heavy rain. On the third day, we reached Palutaka in Sudan, and there were many children there.

"That evening all girls were separated from the boys, and we were divided up among different men. The man I was given to had two wives. That night, he called me to him. I went obediently, expecting him to ask me to do something for him like take some drinking water. Instead, he told me to sit next to him, and he started to feel my breast. I pushed his hand away in disgust. I was so embarrassed I wanted to insult him. He told me to lie down. I refused. He asked me if I have ever seen a dead body. I said no, I hadn't. Then he said, 'You will soon see your own corpse.' He pushed me down and laid on top of me and raped me. I cried out and begged him to stop, but instead, he pushed his hand into my mouth and threatened to kill me if I didn't stop. He raped me three times that night. In the morning, I crawled out of his hut and went to one of his wives. I thought she would console me, but she scolded me and told me that she was not my mother to nurse me! I crawled around, boiled water and nursed myself. My hip joint felt like it was coming out of its socket and my private parts were very painful. I could not urinate without crying out in pain. I could not believe it when two days later he called me again and raped me twice! My life went on like this for months."⁴⁰

Amy, now 18 and living in Padibe IDP camp, described her ordeal becoming sexually enslaved by the LRA when she was 14. She was abducted with two of her sisters and as they were forced to Sudan with many other children she recalls that she was "surrounded by violence, orders to run, hurry and beatings, beatings, beatings!" The worst moment, she says, was when she and four other adolescents were forced to kill an old man who was going too slowly. "I was given a club," she said. "My hands fell to my side and I could not move. Then I felt a sharp pain on my back and heard an order to 'hit!' I closed my eyes and hit until we were ordered to stop." When she got to Palatuka in Sudan, she was given to a man.

"Another girl and I were told to follow one of the wives of the head of the home. We entered a house where a man was sitting on a bed, and the woman spread out a mat for us to sit on. She left without saying anything, and the man asked us our names. I made one up, and he told us that we were now under his care and that we had to obey him. He then told the other girl to leave. I was petrified with fear and knew he was going to kill me or do something very bad. He asked if I had killed anyone on the way to Sudan, and I said yes, and he told me he was going to make the other girls do the same to me. He left the room, and I made up my mind not to give up without a fight, and I ran out. I dashed back to the hut with the other girls and hid under the bed. He didn't find me, and I knew I would pay for this in the morning.

"The next day we were all beaten 80 strokes because of my actions. Six days later I was sent for again. He ordered me to take off my blouse. I refused and then he pointed a pistol at me! Trembling all over, I removed my blouse as he barked at me. I was so scared my knees gave way. He ordered me to lie down; he pulled down his pants and in one swift motion he removed my knickers. I could not breathe because he was lying on top of me and then a very sharp pain tore through me. I thought he was cutting me with a knife. I thought it was circumcision like my teacher taught me about at school. I think I passed out, and later woke up still lying on the mat. I vowed that I would rather die than let him hurt me again.

"The woman who took me to him nursed me and told me my private parts were wounded and that it was painful because it was my first time having sex.

Then it dawned on me that what really happened was that the man had raped me, and that he was going to continue to force me. The women told me I was now his 'wife' and that I will be having sex with my 'husband' whenever he calls me!!

"After a year, I met my sister, who was pregnant. She told me she was given to a man, too, and I started dreading every moment he did it to me because I did not want to get pregnant. I wanted to come back home and go to school.... Over time, I refused my 'husband' more and more. I got used to the beatings, but I preferred them to having sex with my 'husband.'" ⁴¹

After two and a half years in captivity, Amy managed to escape from the LRA in 1998 when she was ordered on a mission to Uganda.

Inside heavily guarded encampments, escape for adolescent girls is even more treacherous than for boys. This is especially true of girls who have borne children in captivity and are torn between attempting to make a dangerous escape requiring at least 10 days journey on foot to Uganda and leaving behind their child or children. Far fewer girls than boys have escaped, even fewer with their children, and an accurate number of how many remain in captivity is unknown. A 1997 United States Department of State report asserts that about 40 percent of the abducted children have been girls, although they make up only 10 percent of those who have escaped. ⁴²

More recent reports assert that girls make up 20 to 30 percent of all children and adolescents abducted by the LRA. ⁴³ The majority have either died amidst the brutal conditions of captivity, been murdered or remain enslaved. As the number of formerly abduct-

ed young people arriving in Uganda increases due to improved cooperation with the Government of Sudan to secure the safe passage of those who have escaped inside Sudan, more girls and young women are arriving pregnant or with their children born in captivity. They and their children require emergency and ongoing medical attention, psychological support, community acceptance and opportunities for education and livelihood for their reintegration, as well as protection from re-abduction.

Short-term abductions and forced labor

While recorded numbers of abducted children and adolescents are estimated at over 11,000, actual numbers may be much higher, as many young people were abducted for shorter periods of a few weeks and made it home without further report. In a group interview with 21 randomly identified adolescent orphaned girls in the Padibe IDP camp in Kitgum, the Women's Commission asked for a show of hands of those who had been abducted. Every hand but one went up.

The principal characteristic of these short-term abductions is forced labor. The girls in Padibe, for example, told stories of being forced to carry loads and do other chores for the rebels before being let go. This labor, along with money and supplies looted by the LRA, help to sustain the LRA's survival and campaign of terror. ⁴⁴ The following accounts by two abducted children give some indication of the conditions of short-term abductions.

Mary, from Padibe IDP camp in Kitgum, said: "They came to our hut and took me. First they took us to a warehouse where there were bags of rice that they made us carry. They were so heavy, but if you



The cycle of violence. Young people in Kitgum depict LRA rebels abducting children (left) and UPDF soldiers fighting against the LRA (right).

couldn't carry it, they might kill you. I walked for days until they suddenly said, 'you can go,' and several of us ran as fast as we could to get away."⁴⁵

Chris, a 19-year-old Sudanese refugee living in Achol Pii refugee settlement, said: "I was recruited on the 9th of October, 2000 at Block 6 at midnight. The rebels took me, and they beat me and tortured me. I was forced to carry a load of sugar, and we were moving day and night without rest."⁴⁶

ABDUCTIONS BY THE SPLA, ABETTED BY THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT

Many of the adolescents who fled Sudan fled forced recruitment into the SPLA. But the risk did not end once in Uganda. Significant support to the SPLA by the Government of Uganda has made it relatively easy for the SPLA to come and go in and out of northern Uganda, where their presence is commonplace. Although less visible in recent months, perhaps due to a tightening of control of the Uganda-Sudan border by the UPDF, young people said that the SPLA are still very much present, and they are identified by their dress as well as their use of Arabic. Family members of some SPLA commanders and soldiers even reside in the Achol Pii settlement.

Adolescents recounted stories of abduction from inside both Sudan and Uganda into SPLA training camps in northern Uganda. They reported that an SPLA training camp run by the UPDF was operational in Gulu as recently as the year 2000, which according to additional testimony may be the Lagore Prison in Gulu. Some adolescents and adults claim that Lagore Prison has been and may still be being used as a training camp for the SPLA.⁴⁷

Young people said that SPLA spokespersons also give talks to the refugee community in Achol Pii, attempting to inspire them to join the movement and fight with the SPLA. Adolescent boys described how they are also approached by members of the SPLA while in Kitgum Town Council or other nearby villages to trade goods in the markets. Attempts to forcibly recruit adult and adolescent fighters from Sudanese refugee settlements in Uganda are continuing, according to an August 16, 2001 report in the Ugandan newspaper "New Vision," which quotes a report from the Refugee Law Project from Makerere University in Uganda. According to the report, the SPLA is targeting many of the 50,000 Sudanese refugees living in settlements in Adjumani District, which borders Gulu to the west. Among other

things, the report says that communities assert they are being pressured by the SPLA to give up one child per family to go into military service with the SPLA.⁴⁸

Apart from the 3,200 child soldiers the SPLA turned over to UNICEF for demobilization in early 2001, it has stated that there are 7,000 more in its ranks that need to be demobilized. While the accuracy of these numbers is unknown, refugees from northern Uganda are certainly among their ranks. Unlike the LRA, the SPLA does not have a history of extensively abducting or recruiting girls.

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Stephen was abducted in southern Sudan, taken to Uganda for SPLA training, forced to fight with the SPLA in Sudan and then managed to escape to Uganda, where he is now a refugee in Achol Pii. He described the journey.

"The SPLA came to our school to abduct pupils in 1994. They ordered us to sit down, and while they registered our names, they tied our hands and feet, and put us [against] a fence. We didn't eat for two days, and on the third day, a vehicle came to take us to Uganda. On the way, we stopped at Mia Mugali Lumule and Bibiya barracks, where we were fed and slept. The next morning, we were taken to Gulu, in northern Uganda, for military training as John Garang's soldiers.

"We trained for five months in the training fields and were later taken to a place known as 'Acholi' for further military training. As I was forced into the military [back in Sudan, I coped with] whatever I was facing, but then I gave up hope and lost confidence in myself. [One night] I pretended to go to the latrine to defecate, and instead, I went directly into the bush. Some bodyguards fired at me, and I fell down and began rolling. They tried to confirm whether I was dead, but they didn't find me. When I got up, I managed to cross the road, and I moved

and moved. The journey took me ten days, and on the way, I ate like an animal.

“Reaching Uganda’s border, I was assisted by a church leader, who gave me food and directed me to the UNHCR office. I told them how I managed to escape and about what happened to me on the way. Finally, I was taken from Palabek to my uncle in Achol Pii Camp.”⁴⁹

Others told of similar experiences. Peter, now a refugee from southern Sudan, told how he had been abducted and forced to fight in the SPLA inside Sudan. He was then abducted again after escaping to Uganda. “After I fled the SPLA in Sudan, I ended up near the border in the west of Uganda, where I was taken to join the SPLA. They took me to a training camp, also run by the UPDF, where they told us there were 1,009 of us. I stayed there for three months, but managed to escape.”⁵⁰

Other adolescents and young men volunteer to fight for the SPLA. Adults in the refugee settlement described how adolescent Sudanese boys periodically return to southern Sudan during relaxed security to visit family and to fight with the SPLA. At the time of this research, however, security concerns and the tightening of controls at the border made the crossing more difficult, and there were no current reports of adolescent boys traveling back and forth.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Adolescent girls have been and are prime targets for rape, sexual assault and sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery and prostitution.⁵¹ In nearly every interview, adolescent girls described personal knowledge of “rape and defilement”⁵² either against themselves or their peers. Adolescent girls and boys told researchers that girls are raped, or “defiled,” in IDP camps, the Achol Pii refugee settlement and in non-camp settings. The perpetrators and their tactics vary by location and include the LRA, UPDF soldiers, Ugandan nationals, IDP camp and refugee settlement residents, neighbors, family members and adolescent males.

Girls surveyed in Gulu, including those living in six IDP protected villages, named “rape and defilement” as their third most important concern behind “insecurity, abduction and murder” and “displacement,” and both boys and girls in the village of Omiya Anyima ranked “rape and defilement” as among their top five concerns. This unrelenting violence

causes girls to endure terrible psychological and physical harm, including increased teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other health concerns. Girls who have not been raped also suffer the constant fear that it will happen to them.

The following section deals with rape and defilement in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, IDP camps and towns and villages.

“Many of the defilement cases come as a result of girls refusing to have sex with a boy after she has committed to a relationship with him. They can go together, and he will do things for her with the expectation that at a certain point they will have sex. If she ultimately refuses, he gets angry and will force her.”

— Robert, teenager, Achol Pii refugee settlement

IN THE ACHOL PII REFUGEE SETTLEMENT: RAPE BY OTHER REFUGEES AND UGANDAN NATIONALS

Sexual attacks in Achol Pii reportedly are committed mainly by other refugees; Ugandan nationals, who live near the settlement; LRA soldiers; and occasionally the UPDF. Refugee girls said their freedom of movement is severely restricted, as they fear sexual attack by Ugandan males if they wander away from the main areas of the settlement to collect firewood or attempt to journey into town. Women report that rape is common, including within marriage, and is often accompanied by other forms of domestic violence, including physical and psychological abuse. Adolescent males are, by their own acknowledgment, frequent perpetrators of rape.

Robert, a teenager from Achol Pii refugee settlement, stated that “many of the defilement cases come as a result of girls refusing to have sex with a boy after she has committed to a relationship with him. They can go together, and he will do things for her with the expectation that at a certain point they will have sex. If she ultimately refuses, he gets angry and will force her.”⁵³

Sudanese refugees in Achol Pii also risk rape from marauding LRA troops. Betty, age 19, described her experience during an LRA raid. “They just came in

from the garden,” she said. “And as they entered the house, a well-armed soldier came to the door calling, ‘Everybody out!’ They picked me, and took me away in the bush where I was forced to become a ‘wife’ to one of the rebels. Being new in the field, on the first night, I refused, but the second night, they said ‘either you give in or death.’ I still tried to refuse, and then the man got serious and knifed me on the head. I became helpless and started bleeding terribly, and that was how I got involved in sex at the age of 14 because death was near.”⁵⁴

“They will just suddenly jump you and defile you. They are supposed to be protecting us, and instead, they are raping us.”

— Sylvia, 15, Padibe IDP camp, commenting on the UPDF

While refugees cited past cases of adolescent girls raped at primary school by teachers and by a UPDF soldier stationed in the settlement, they do not believe such cases are occurring now. Young people believe this may be due in part to swift action by the police and the camp commandant, who represents the authority of Ugandan Prime Minister’s office in the settlement. The teachers were fired, the soldier was removed from the settlement, and those remaining were warned.

IN THE IDP CAMPS: UPDF SOLDIERS ARE THE MAIN PERPETRATORS

Internally displaced Ugandan girls and young women living in camps said that they, too, live in fear of rape, but in their case it is committed mostly by UPDF soldiers, who are supposed to be responsible for providing security. Girls stated that sometimes the UPDF will lie in wait for them along roads at night, ambush them and rape them, or even go straight to their huts and rape them. They also explained that girls who refuse sex in exchange for gifts or other goods or services are often forced to comply.

Rose, 14, who lives in Awer IDP camp in Gulu, told researchers: “The soldiers ask girls to spend time with them, and they give them gifts. They expect them to have sex with them, and if they don’t, they

just defile them anyway. Sometimes they don’t even ask about anything, they just ambush you and attack you while you are in your hut or while you are walking in the bush.”⁵⁵

Sylvia, 15, from Padibe IDP camp in Kitgum, stated that girls are particularly afraid of being raped by UPDF soldiers at night as they are walking along roads. “They will just suddenly jump you and defile you. They are supposed to be protecting us, and instead, they are raping us.”⁵⁶

When asked what they wanted to do when they grow up, several girls said be teachers and nurses but one girl said, “Be a Policewoman.” When asked why, she said simply, “for security.”⁵⁷ She felt so unprotected that she was determined to join the police for her own safety and to improve the safety of the community.

Many young people stated that teen sex, pregnancy and rape are increased by the cramped living quarters of the camps, which has diminished the privacy of families living there, and by sexual violence committed by the UPDF. Girls in IDP camps described the rape by neighbors after they have been pushed to sleep in their neighbors’ huts by their parents who want more privacy. While it is not precisely clear why sending young people to neighbors’ huts does not intrude upon the neighbors’ privacy, these reports were widespread among adolescents throughout the IDP camps involved in the study. Alice, 14, said, “They go to the huts and everything is OK at first, but after a while, the men force themselves on the girls. Where else will the girl have to go?”⁵⁸

IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Researchers also heard testimony from adolescent girls living in towns and villages, who described similar sexual and gender-based violence as that reported in the IDP camps and refugee settlement. The perpetrators varied, from family members, neighbors and teachers to UPDF soldiers and street criminals. Betty, who is 19 years old and lives in Gulu town, said that she sometimes sleeps at her workplace instead of walking home late at night, for fear of being raped by the UPDF or street thugs. Another adolescent girl, Alice, who is still in primary school, said: “Big men rape children, especially girls. A big man raped his daughter. The mother of the girls was already dead. That is the biggest problem that we girls face.”⁵⁹

ELUSIVE JUSTICE FOR GIRLS

Justice is elusive in both the refugee settlement and IDP camps, where few see clear avenues for preventing or stopping sexual violence. In Sudanese societies and in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, justice through the Ugandan legal system is not the preferred method for dealing with rape cases. In IDP camps and elsewhere, not only is speaking about the experience extremely difficult under any circumstances, young people also simply do not believe the police will listen to their claims, and most rape cases go unreported.

In the Acholi and some Sudanese cultures, justice and compensation must be borne by the entire community, not just by individuals. "Compensation" for defilement cases are decided by clan elders and may even involve the victim being married off to the rapist and a hefty bride price being paid to her community to compensate for the crime. While the clan may then feel the case is resolved, the young woman is left to deal with her circumstances in her new family, and thus she is twice violated.

Young people said that enforcing Ugandan law would go a long way toward helping to prevent sexual violence in their camps and communities. They all agreed that communities should also become more sensitized about sexual violence.

Community services and health workers in the refugee settlement, most of whom are Ugandan, reported that preventing and responding to sexual violence occurring between refugees is extremely difficult because the societies within the settlement do not readily expose these problems to outsiders. However, tensions between the refugee community and the surrounding Ugandan community make it far more likely that cases of rape against refugees by Ugandan nationals are brought to the attention of Ugandan police and the camp commander for resolution.

Girls in IDP camps also described limited avenues for bringing their cases to justice. In Padibe, one

young girl said, "You can take it to the police, but they will not believe you."⁶⁰ According to AFROL (an Internet site for information on Africa), throughout Uganda few incidents of defilement are reported, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, neighbor or teacher. "Increasing numbers of accusations reach the courts, although neither conviction nor punishment is common. Cases are reported frequently in newspapers, but a payment to the girls' parents often ends the matter."⁶¹ Thus, girls see few benefits in taking their cases to legal authorities.

SOME SOLUTIONS, INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

Young people said that enforcing Ugandan law would go a long way toward helping to prevent sexual violence in their camps and communities. They all agreed that communities should also become more sensitized about sexual violence to promote prevention and that the practice should end. However, the reality is that sexual and other violence against girls and women is centuries old and exacerbated by the current environment of violence and instability. Thus, girls also believe the violence would diminish if the war ended, and particularly if the IDPs could return to their home villages, where there would be more space for privacy, and families and neighbors would not be living as in such a cramped and pressured environment.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), which manages the Achol Pii refugee settlement on behalf of UNHCR, in 2000 had a budget of only \$16,500 to carry out all Community Services activities, which among other things involves targeted interventions addressing the protection situation of women, children and adolescents. This budget covered two full-time staff persons living in the camp and all program work⁶² for a settlement of approximately 26,000, with nearly 1,500 "extremely vulnerable individuals," including about 450 separated children and unaccompanied minors. This Community Services work, which is part of a multi-sectoral approach to addressing gender-based violence, is clearly underfunded. In an era of dramatically shrinking budgets, UNHCR, as the agency responsible for the care and protection of refugees, must give higher priority to responding to the urgent protection concerns of women, children and adolescents, including sexual violence. In order to accomplish this, there must also be increased resources from governments supporting the work of UNHCR.

The situation is even worse for the roughly 600,000 IDPs in all of Uganda,⁶³ who lack full-scale recognition and attention from the Ugandan government. They are also without any designated international agency responsible for their care and protection. In both the refugee and IDP camps, as well as in the wider communities, district officials and international organizations must pro-actively address sexual violence through increased support for women's, youth and other community-based organizations. At the same time, community members, including young people, need to take action to discuss and address the issue of gender-based violence, including sexual and domestic violence. In so doing, they must openly acknowledge and reflect upon the experiences of both adolescent girls and women.

TENSION AND VIOLENCE BETWEEN THE HOST COMMUNITY AND REFUGEES

In addition to numerous forms of violence committed by the LRA, UPDF or other refugees, young people from the refugee settlement expressed fears about attacks from Ugandan nationals. As mentioned, girls said they fear rape and defilement on journeys for firewood and other chores. Boys also fear attack and even murder should they venture far afield from their settlement, which is contiguous with land owned by Ugandans. Recent murders of refugees by nationals have deepened these fears and intensified tension between the local and refugee communities.

During a series of interviews conducted by the Women's Commission in Achol Pii refugee settlement, a large crowd carrying a wounded man rushed into the medical dispensary yelling that he had been bathing in the bush when suddenly attacked by three nationals who attempted to cut off his penis. Although the story was later disputed, the conflict-induced hysteria exemplifies the serious tension between the communities.

Important steps have been taken to alleviate these tensions. These include integrating the schools and providing access to settlement health services for both refugees and Ugandan nationals. The problem is likely to persist, however, as long as the refugees cannot safely cultivate more land, and as long as poverty and insecurity dominate the lives of both refugees and local people. Some among the communities have begun initiatives to build bridges and to strengthen cooperative relationships between

refugees and the host community for livelihood development. In some instances, refugees have been allowed to graze cattle on host community land in exchange for other labor and/or profit sharing. But these initiatives require unyielding commitment.

LANDMINES AND THE USE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Young people and others continue to fall victim to a smattering of landmines laid by fighting forces in northern Uganda.

Although large minefields do not exist in northern Uganda, the population is seriously threatened by a smattering of mines left by rebel forces in the wake of hit and run attacks. The LRA is also known to have laid mines on the doorsteps of homes and around shops to terrorize local communities. Although their prevalence is not fully known, scattered landmines are likely to remain, undetonated and ready to harm passersby for years to come. And as long as the fighting persists, others will be laid. The Ugandan army is also widely believed to have mined areas along the Uganda-Sudan border.

In the spring of 2001, Mine Advisory Group (MAG)⁶⁴ investigated the mine threat in northern Uganda and reported to the Women's Commission that no centralized data exists on deaths or injury due to landmines. Moreover, given the unpredictable nature of their placement, the breadth of the problem and precise locations are difficult to determine. Available figures do show that landmine use may have decreased recently because the UPDF has tightened security along the border with Sudan. In Gulu in 1996, before the creation of "protected camps," there were 77 landmine victim survivors, mainly children. Since then, approximately 22 to 37

people have fallen victim to mine strikes annually, mainly military personnel, and there were 22 in 2000.⁶⁵

Adolescents also expressed the need to build a culture of tolerance and reconciliation among the Acholi people and all of the people of Uganda through civic education and community and government action to support the amnesty process.

With the possibility of large numbers of IDPs or refugees returning to their homes at some point, mine accidents could become an increasing problem. Adolescents and others who spend significant amounts of time farming, gathering wood and water or journeying to schools or markets may be particularly at risk. But communities lack knowledge about providing first aid to mine victims, and resources available to help protect communities through awareness-raising and prevention efforts have not effectively reached rural communities, IDPs or Sudanese refugee settlements.

MAG suggests that more interactive, participatory education about landmines is needed, not only to provide people with information about the types of landmines, but to help them think proactively about what behaviors they need to change in order to stay safe. For example, posters should not only say “This is what landmines look like,” they should say, “Stay away from rebel escape routes after a rebel attack.” The Ugandan Ministry of Health runs a campaign to end the use of landmines, and the NGO Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) supports an orthopedic program in Gulu that assists landmine victims. Resources are also needed for coordinated landmine data collection and education at the district, county and sub-county levels, including the establishment of a mechanism to coordinate Kitgum and Gulu data and systematically reach local communities.

Much of the warfare conducted in northern Uganda involves the use of small arms and light weapons that are portable and easy to use. They can be swung over a shoulder and take only one or two people to operate. These weapons are particularly easy for adolescents and even younger children to

carry and operate. Young people interviewed complained that the presence of these weapons in their communities not only contributes to war-related violence, but makes it easier for civilians to commit crimes. Although their presence among civilian teenagers does not appear to be widespread, some young people reported that many adolescents have access to these weapons. Research participants called for a “strict ban on the usage of small arms, including landmines and other bombs.”⁶⁶

ENDING INSECURITY MUST GO BEYOND RESTORING PHYSICAL SECURITY

Young people recommended a wide range of insightful and cogent solutions to end the abductions and to bring peace. These include talks between the Governments of Uganda and Sudan and between the Government of Uganda and the LRA, as well as between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA. Such efforts, they said, should be accompanied by a cease-fire and followed by a rehabilitation program that addresses social and economic differences within society, emphasizing food, health, education and security. Special attention must be given to orphans and unaccompanied minors, including internally displaced and refugee young people.

Adolescents also expressed the need to build a culture of tolerance and reconciliation among the Acholi people and all of the people of Uganda through civic education and community and government action to support the amnesty process. They said that Acholi leaders must continue to put aside any differences between them and unite for peace. Believing that LRA leader Joseph Kony will not negotiate with President Museveni and that Museveni’s government has not yet acted in the full interests of protecting children and adolescents in the north, the young people also expressed concerns about a real possibility for peace while Museveni remains president. It is clear that Museveni has much work to do to win the confidence of young people in the north, whose hopes for peace have been dashed repeatedly throughout their lives.

At the same time, despite complaints that the UPDF has not adequately protected young people, and even that their increased presence has been destabilizing and often abusive, the adolescent respondents call for improved living conditions for the soldiers. In so doing, they believe the army will become more pro-

fessional and better able and willing to protect the people in the north.

Young people propose deployment of international monitors in the north to observe efforts to create peace, as well as a UN peacekeeping force to help halt the abduction of youth. They feel that these efforts should be matched with monitoring of international assistance so that government corruption

cannot deplete resources meant for the citizens. They also believe that the international community has a role in collecting guns from the rebels. In addition, young people specifically call on the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to increasingly intervene wherever possible on their behalf.⁶⁷

VIII. EDUCATION: A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT DENIED

“We want to go to school!
Please help us!”

Cries for education from the adolescent girls and boys in Acholiland are strong. Virtually every adolescent interviewed said getting an education is very important to them and identified it as a key solution to the range of problems they face. As young people in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader struggle to cope with the insecurity and adversity in their lives, their dedication to education is remarkable. Despite countless barriers, especially for girls, they are desperate not to lose their opportunity to learn – they know it is central to maintaining a level of stability in their lives and their hope for the future.

The dream of education, however, has become nearly impossible for most adolescent boys and girls. For over a decade and a half, war in northern Uganda and southern Sudan has caused the destruction of schools and the abduction and killing of students, teachers and school administrators. Thousands of adolescents, especially orphans, displaced persons and refugees, face enormous barriers to getting an education and have no access to school. Those who do manage to attend school find massively overcrowded classes and poor facilities, ill-equipped for learning. Few young people see any clear paths to a steady job or income, and they feel their right to an education has become a luxury overshadowed by a constant preoccupation with meeting basic survival needs.



Students in class at Agago Primary School in Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, where there are more than 5,000 students and most classes are held under trees.

Without education, adolescents are losing hope and confidence in themselves and in the future. They blame a lack of education for what they see as an increase in “immorality” among young people and society as a whole, including an increase in early marriage, forced prostitution of girls, drug and alcohol abuse and the number of street children. Ugandan young people are frustrated by the knowledge that when they become adults, their communities will lack the full range of skills needed to recover from war, create lasting peace and get a foothold on development. Sudanese refugee adolescents similarly will lack many of the skills they need to build new lives in Sudan or to successfully integrate into Ugandan society.

Programs in place to help young people attend or remain in school are a drop in the ocean of need for education. In addition to the immediate and long-range need to end the war and decongest the displaced persons camps, a full-scale emergency education plan must be immediately implemented for young people in the north to restore their right to education. Education efforts must be closely linked to development assistance and livelihood initiatives. Issues surrounding formal education are addressed in this section, and those concerning non-formal education and vocational and life skills training are addressed primarily in the Livelihood section.

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION FLOUNDERS IN THE NORTH

A system of Universal Primary Education (UPE) instituted by the Ugandan government in 1996 has created great opportunities for Uganda's children to attend primary school by offering free, although not compulsory, education for up to two girls and two boys in each family. UPE has given many young people in northern Uganda the opportunity to attend primary school. But this opportunity is short-lived for most, especially for girls, as they don't get beyond the early years of primary school. The insecurity of the war has hindered the full implementation of UPE, and has created enormous barriers for young people to gain access to and complete quality primary education.

At least half of the Ugandan population in the conflict areas of northern Uganda are internally displaced. According to the World Food Program (WFP), 26.4 percent of the IDPs living in camps are children aged 5 to 14 years old. The majority of these children have been out of school since the conflict escalated in July 1996, ironically just as UPE was instituted. Currently, less than 30 percent of school-age children in IDP camps are enrolled on a full-time basis, with young girls affected disproportionately.⁶⁸ According to the UPDF Fourth Division Commander in Gulu, over 300,000 children in northern Uganda are unable to go to school because of LRA activity.⁶⁹ In the Achol Pii refugee settlement, the situation is somewhat better. Approximately 77 percent of the refugee student population are registered in school, although many do not attend regularly.⁷⁰ In contrast to this, in Uganda as a whole, 93 percent of primary school age children are enrolled in school.

The rather large disparity between the attendance rate in the Sudanese refugee settlement and in the IDP camps is noteworthy. Some believe that education is a "pull factor" for adolescent refugees, who cannot get an education in southern Sudan, where conditions are even worse. Moreover, UNHCR/IRC are charged with assisting the protection and care of refugees in collaboration with the Ugandan government. Although still very limited, UNHCR resources help supplement education costs for refugees, which assists both refugees and Ugandan nationals around the refugee settlement who attend schools with the refugees.⁷¹ In contrast, the IDP camps have no agency designated to support them. Unless the government of Uganda prioritizes education for IDPs, efforts by individual agencies to support education improvements will have minimum impact. Although other efforts are making a difference, such as providing supplementary food to children in schools to target their nutritional needs and provide an education incentive, they are only a stopgap measure.

MANY BARRIERS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

In the districts covered by this research, a number of barriers have made sporadic attendance, late arrival and dropouts in primary school seem the norm. Primary school levels run from P1 through P7, beginning usually at age five. Dropouts occur mostly in the later years of primary school when young people are entering adolescence. Adolescents and school officials report that many young children are starting P1 at seven, eight or even nine years old, and others try to complete their primary studies when they are older and have missed some years. Huge numbers of young people are unable to attend school at all because of other responsibilities and barriers. These include child-care, long travel distances, security problems and an inability to pay school fees. Many adolescents told the Women's Commission that they had completed a number of primary school years but simply could not continue. Gender discrimination, which will be discussed later, is also a huge factor in the lower enrollment and higher dropout rate of girls.

SCHOOLS ARE TOO FAR AND TOO INSECURE

Many young people show up late or do not make it to school at all. The distant location of schools and insecurity both in school and on the way to school puts them under the constant threat of attack and abduction. The LRA targets schools, abducting stu-

dents and killing teachers. As one boy from Gulu recounted: "When the LRA took me, I was in school. They said, 'we are going to celebrate this day because we are destroying this school.'" ⁷² One adolescent in the village of Omiya Anyima said that the nearest primary school is 17 kilometers from his home, and that the journey takes a long time and can be very dangerous. As a result, he is frequently late or misses school and has trouble keeping up. Adolescents who do attend frequently spend less than half a day in school because of insecurity and the need to travel back and forth. Distances to secondary school can be much greater.

COSTS REMAIN PROHIBITIVE

Lack of money for school supplies, clothes, exams and tuition not covered by the UPE also result in low attendance and high dropout rates. Although free UPE makes education more accessible financially, parents must still pay for supplies and some school costs, including examinations. Tuition for a term of primary school costs about 5,000 Ugandan Shillings (US\$3.00) per term, with three terms a year, a fee that many families simply cannot afford. Moreover, the UPE only covers four children per household, imposing greater prohibitive costs on households with more children. Many young people have only one set of clothes to wear and may be embarrassed to go to school. This is a particular problem for girls, who worry about having a set of clean clothes during their menstrual periods. In addition, orphans and many others cannot afford these expenses.

FOOD SHORTAGES LEAVE YOUNG PEOPLE DISTRACTED AND WEAK

IDPs and refugees especially are often malnourished and weak. Coping with the physical effects of hunger is often a higher priority than school. These young people may be registered in school and attend sporadically. Preoccupied by hunger and listlessness, they lose their interest. "I'm in school," said Frances, who is 13 and lives in Achol Pii, "but there is not enough food. That's why others and I are not putting so much interest in education. We also don't have enough money to buy our school supplies or even clothes to wear. But the truth is, I'd like to be a doctor one day." ⁷³

ADOLESCENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BASIC SURVIVAL SUPERCEDE EDUCATION

While all children are affected, adolescents have even greater difficulties getting an education. They have been targeted for human rights violations, heightening their security concerns, and they generally have more responsibilities than younger children that pull them away from school. Going to school is especially hard for the thousands of adolescents heading households in which the adults have been killed by the LRA or died of HIV/AIDS or other causes. Adolescent heads of household are responsible for themselves, younger children and other family members. But their desire for education remains strong. Jean, a 14-year-old girl from Padibe IDP camp, said simply: "I'm not in school because I'm taking care of five children. Otherwise, I'd love to study every day." ⁷⁴

Little Time to Study

When she is not in school, Jennifer, an orphan from Kitgum Town Council, has little time to study. She spends most of her day working. "In the morning before school, I go and purchase the cassava root. Then I go to school and when I come home I spend all night preparing the cassava in my hut. The next morning I go to sell it in the market before school." ⁷⁵ Jennifer has no stove to cook on, only a small coal fire and a pot inside her hut, which she rents. She must also walk some distance to collect the cassava, water and wood needed to prepare the family's meals. Jennifer can make money doing this, but barely enough to pay for their daily expenses. It also leaves her little time for study or homework. Jennifer worries about her siblings while she is in school, and she is very worried that they will not have enough to pay the rent for their hut. She also worries that she will not be able to continue with school for long.



Many adolescent boys in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, particularly those who are unaccompanied minors, are also late to school because of their responsibility for communal cooking. Each must take turns performing the task of preparing meals for others in the mornings, making them frequently late for school. Sometimes they have to leave school during the day to run home to cook meals.

In some of the strongest illustrations of young people's acceptance of taking responsibility for their predicaments, many are also making enormous sacrifices to help one another find ways to get through school. In some adolescent-headed households, siblings take turns working to pay for one another's tuition until they both manage to complete school. John, who is 15, from Kitgum Town Council, established a kiosk with help from IRC, where he sells candy and other goods to pay for his older brother's school fees and to care for his much younger brother. When his older brother finishes school, John plans to take his turn, finishing his own education while his older brother works.

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AN EVEN GREATER STRUGGLE

"I'm happy with the UPE program because my studies are going on well. I think the problem will be when I go on to join the secondary level since my family depends on local brewing, and that will not earn enough to pay for my fees."⁷⁶ – *Joseph, 15, from Kitgum Town Council*

"I am a school dropout. The death of my father was effectively the end of my studies. I also ended up in an unplanned marriage at only 17. After my father died, I tried to be self-reliant and to pay for myself at school, but it was terribly difficult since my major income-generating activity was based on cultivation." —*John, 19, from Achol Pii refugee settlement*

While dropout rates are high in the latter years of primary school, access to secondary school becomes even more limited. The huge fees and small number of schools make secondary education out of reach for most adolescents. At present, 509 sub-counties in Uganda have at least one secondary school. The remaining 347 sub-counties without a secondary school are located predominantly in rural areas like northern Uganda. Fees for secondary school range roughly from 50,000-150,000 Ugandan Shillings (about US\$28–\$83) per term, with three terms per school year and four years of secondary school S1-

S4.⁷⁷ Exam and other fees are additional. Putting that against an average income of perhaps 70,000 Ugandan Shillings (US\$39) per month needed for all other expenses, paying for even one child to attend is nearly impossible for most.

"If you want to go to school, you will have to wait until my last born is up to university and I've bought myself a coffin. Then you can go."

— A step-mother's response to her daughter's request to go to secondary school.

The IDP camps in Gulu have no secondary schools. If IDP adolescents from Gulu, for example, can pay the fees or gain sponsorship, they must be boarded in or near Gulu town, where several secondary schools are located, adding yet another cost. Dropouts increase in secondary school, because the financial burdens are astronomical by comparison to primary school.

The few families that can afford it send their children to secondary school in Kampala, where the schools are generally better equipped, more secure and offer more opportunities for acceptance into university. An even smaller number of students continue on to university. With no university in the north, youth must travel to the south, and many believe that the poor school conditions in the north make their acceptance in a southern university highly unlikely.

While there are some sponsorship programs to support students through secondary school, they reach a very small number. Much of this support goes to orphans and formerly abducted young people, who need great assistance reintegrating into their communities.

Ensuring the completion of primary school for children and adolescents is an urgent priority, but increasing secondary school opportunities is also critical. The possibility of attending secondary school provides a strong incentive for young people to stay in primary school. If children and adolescents want to finish secondary school, they should be supported in their efforts to do so. The north must have more young people completing secondary school and moving onto university if it is going to be able to achieve development and meet the professional skills needs of its communities.

GIRLS FACE MAJOR BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

“...after I passed my Primary Leaving Examination, I was admitted to S1. But when I asked for school fees, my step-mother said, ‘If you want to go to school, you will have to wait until my last born is up to university and I’ve bought myself a coffin. Then you can go.’”⁷⁸ – *Rachel, 16, from Kitgum Town Council*

Girls and boys theoretically have equal access to education. Gender disparities in the lower grades of primary school are small, but the gap widens greatly in the later years of primary school and in higher education where the tradition of favoring boys in education remains constant. Boys are more likely to finish primary school and perform better on the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE). For example, at Parabongo primary school in Gulu, the average number of girls in the upper grades is 27 compared to 120 boys.⁷⁹ To address this gap the Ugandan government launched a national plan in June 2001 to promote the education of girls. But this government effort faces huge challenges in the north, where traditional and war-related barriers to girls’ education are extremely strong.

Adolescent girls, particularly orphans and those in IDP camps, complained that families and communities prioritize boys’ education over girls’, and said that if a family can only send one child to school it is always a boy. They also said that girls’ education is valued less by parents because girls are traditionally expected to marry, leave the family and live in their husband’s household. Many parents view an investment in the education of their daughters as a waste of money or as enriching the households of others, rather than their own.



Girls expressed worry that they will be forced to leave school and marry young, as described further in the Livelihood section of this report. They also said that parents refuse to send girls to school because they believe they will get pregnant as a result of their interactions with boys in school. Indeed, some do, and adolescents report that they receive little information about reproductive health or family planning at school.

Girls also reported that they are responsible for much more housework than boys, making it more difficult for them to get to school, perform well and do homework. The girls said their parents make them perform household tasks early in the morning, such as “dig” the fields, pump and carry water, prepare food, clean the house, do laundry and care for other children. These tasks leave them exhausted and late to school, whereas boys “just have to go to school,” many girls said. These responsibilities also take their toll on girls’ examination scores. While girls and boys perform roughly evenly in the lower primary levels, as they get older and girls’ outside responsibilities increase, their test scores drop noticeably.

A lack of separate toilet facilities and sanitary supplies are additional barriers to girls attending school. IDP orphan girls in Padibe, for example, told the Women’s Commission that they “sit at home” when they have their period instead of attending school because they worry that they will soil their one set of clothes and be laughed at by others. Once their period is over, they have missed so many days that it is hard to keep catching up with the class. They said that a change of clothing would help them to go to school more regularly.

Refugee girls in Achol Pii refugee settlement reported similar problems. They added that physical maturity, such as the development of breasts, can be an even stronger barrier. “Big girls,” they said, “have a particularly hard time continuing school.”⁸⁰ This is because some traditional clan cultures in Sudan dictate that they should be setting their sights on marriage and having babies. If an adolescent girl did not enter primary school at the appropriate age or has missed time for other reasons, it is much more difficult for her to make up the lost years as she gets older.

Adolescents say girls are less likely to go to school than boys because their parents view them mainly as a source of wealth and expect them to do most household work, including fetching water.

Formerly abducted girls may have particular difficulties gaining access to school. Some have missed a lot of schooling and must join classes with much younger children. One formerly abducted girl told researchers that she was less interested in school because she had “grown up” and should not have to study in the same class with very young children. People in general also called her a “rebel,” which made her afraid to attend school.⁸¹

Teachers said that teaching is nearly impossible in an environment where children have so many other basic concerns and where young people are returning from their experiences with the LRA and SPLA.

POOR CONDITIONS BREED POOR EDUCATION STANDARDS

“I am at Wigweng Primary School, but because of the poor standard of education, I cannot read and write. It is the same for my brothers and sisters. They have studied, but they cannot read and write.”
– Robert, 15, from the village of Omiya Anyima

Even when young people manage to get to school, conditions are often abysmal. The teaching and learning environment is extremely difficult. Many schools have been destroyed by the conflict or closed because of displacement. Many teachers have been killed, and some schools have closed because remaining teachers are unable to stay and work amid the insecurity.

Overcrowding and poor infrastructure

Students are crowded into schools that must accommodate large populations from IDP camps and the refugee settlement. The Agago primary school in Achol Pii refugee settlement, for example, has perhaps the largest primary school population in all of Uganda, with more than 5,000 Ugandan and Sudanese students. At Agago the student-teacher ratio is over 100 to one, similar to other primary schools throughout the war-affected region, particularly in internally displaced camps. Indoor classrooms are few, and lessons are conducted under thatched roofs with no barriers to wind, noise or other interruptions. Classes are also held under trees, which provide some shade, but are open to passing

goats, human onlookers and other distractions. Trees also provide no shelter from rain, which regularly disrupts classes. Few students have desks and chairs and most sit diligently, bunched closely together on rocks or recycled U.S. humanitarian assistance food cans. The lucky classrooms may boast one slate blackboard but few other teaching supplies.

Preoccupation with other concerns

Preoccupied with the threat of LRA attack and abduction as well as work and other hardships, both teachers and young people find concentrating very difficult. Teachers said that teaching is nearly impossible in an environment where children have so many other basic concerns and where young people are returning from their experiences with the LRA and SPLA. In Achol Pii refugee settlement, one teacher said that young people’s direct exposure to conflict often makes it more difficult for them to adjust to the classroom setting. Another teacher pointed out that some young refugees had previously fought with the SPLA and were used to having a certain degree of responsibility. Consequently they had trouble getting used to the authority of the teacher and classroom codes of conduct, the teacher said. It may take a good deal of time for these adolescents to readjust to life in school not only because of their constant fear of re-abduction, but because they must begin to relate to other children who have not had the same experiences. Young people who return to Sudan to fight with the SPLA voluntarily and then return to school must go through the process of readjustment multiple times.

Inadequate teachers and inadequate support for teachers

Adolescents reported that the education system has not adapted to their learning needs, and that teachers are failing to live up to their responsibilities. They also acknowledge, however, that teachers get poor support, little training, low or no salaries and have to teach a huge number of students without adequate materials. Some teachers are filling the gaps left by others who were killed or who left the region. In many cases they are not qualified or certified to teach.

Young people complained about the severe authoritarian teaching methods, including corporal punishment and the excessive memorizing of information handed down by the teachers. They also said that teachers are lax in their teaching responsibilities, arriving at school drunk or late.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the local education authorities and the Teacher Training Colleges in Gulu District, is working to address these issues by training teachers in Gulu in participatory methodology, psychosocial issues, gender issues and peace education. As part of this program, NRC is working to engage youth and mothers in supportive, extra-curricular activities, including involving youth in setting up activities for young children. NRC is also working with other groups to provide non-formal education to youth, emphasizing a participatory methodology, as well as locally relevant and practical activities and skills.⁸² More of these types of non-formal learning activities for youth and trainings for teachers are needed throughout Acholiland.

[Adolescents] ask the Ugandan government to adopt and implement an affirmative action education program for children and adolescents living in the conflict areas. Young people suggest that a special fund be established to pay for the secondary education of students in northern Uganda.

Teachers and school administrators admitted that school conditions are far from ideal. However, most felt there is little more they can do to improve the situation without additional support. In fact, when the Women's Commission visited District Education Offices and reviewed official Ugandan governmental policies on education, they found a strong policy base and administrative structure in place to address education priorities, particularly those at the primary school level.⁸³ Decision-makers know most of the problems young people are facing, and many plans exist for resolving a portion of the priority concerns. Despite these efforts the situation is not improving, largely due to the barriers described earlier but also due to a lack of governmental leadership in addressing the education crisis in northern Uganda.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION

Despite these overwhelming barriers, adolescents and other community members place enormous hope in the education system to solve many of the problems

of the community. Without help from inside and outside of the community, the system will not even begin to deliver on some of these hopes.

Young people reiterate their deep conviction that an end to their insecurity and increased livelihood opportunities would result from improved opportunities for education. They call on the Ugandan government and international donors to work together to improve the education system and increase opportunities for children and young people to attend school. Boys and girls agree that girls' education must be prioritized and that all education efforts should be linked to livelihood opportunities.

To increase their financial support for school, young people propose some concrete steps. These include a combination of grants, loans and education incentives. They ask the Ugandan government to adopt and implement an affirmative action education program for children and adolescents living in the conflict areas. Young people suggest that a special fund be established to pay for the secondary education of students in northern Uganda. They also call for the expansion of sponsorship programs by the government and NGOs, particularly for orphans, formerly abducted children and children from the poorest families.

Young people believe there is widespread administrative corruption in which education funds are siphoned off for personal gain. They feel that the Ugandan government must take strong action to zealously investigate and eliminate corruption to ensure that the funds reach their designated targets – the schools and other education programs.

Young people feel that improving education programs for youth must also be supported by efforts to sensitize adults about the value of education for their children. They say that parents need to change their attitudes about viewing girls only as a source of income and instead recognize their right to be educated and the importance of educating them. Young people say that parents also need to learn how to budget for their children's education.

They ask that their curriculum be expanded to include reproductive health education, conflict resolution, hygiene, peace education and civics. Girls and boys agree that reproductive health education should inform them about the dangers of early pregnancy, early marriage and STIs, including HIV/AIDS, as well as family planning and birth control. They also call for more flexible scheduling and for practical

training, with schools that are better equipped and more able to focus on vocational skills training. School schedules that accommodate their other responsibilities should also offer some adolescents better opportunities for completing their education. They say that teacher training colleges and better conditions for teachers are especially urgent in order to secure the necessary number of qualified and committed teachers.

In general, young people also believe that teaching styles should become less authoritarian and more participatory and that the education system should focus more on practical training and less on theory and rote academic learning. These improvements will all require teacher training, improved facilities and better equipment. They believe that an improved school system would attract higher attendance and win the full support of parents.

Young people also suggest that travel programs should be established to allow young people from northern Uganda to study education systems in other countries, so that they can bring new ideas to their communities and suggest practical examples for making changes.

In addition to these suggestions, adolescents call for increased investment in regional development that will lead to employment opportunities for school-leavers and graduates. Without opportunities for young people to get through all levels of school and other training that they can put to use in their communities, they are convinced that the most skilled people will leave the region, and for the rest, it will be a continual struggle to survive.

IX. LIVELIHOOD: OPTIONS ARE LIMITED AND DEPENDENCY DEEPENS

ADOLESCENTS BEAR THE HEAVIEST ECONOMIC BURDENS

After consolidating power in one of the poorest countries in the world in 1986, the Museveni government embarked upon an economic recovery program that succeeded in decreasing Uganda's poverty rate by over 20 percent between 1992 and 1997.⁸⁴

However, as President Museveni recently acknowledged and as confirmed by the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), northern Uganda is not participating in this growth, and poverty has actually increased in the region over the past three years.⁸⁵ He attributed the failure of development in the north to rebel activities and banditry, which had "left dysfunctional family units and an eroding infrastructure."⁸⁶ The 1999 World Bank Uganda Poverty Report acknowledges that northern Uganda records the worst pover-



Like most adolescents, these young cabbage sellers in Gulu must find work in order to survive.

ty indicators within Uganda in health services, education, water supply, transport and communications and that the adverse effects of 15 years of war are for the most part to blame for this situation.

In the face of terrible war-induced poverty, adolescents are trying desperately to find basic sustenance for themselves and their families. But they are also left carrying the heaviest burdens. Inadequate protection and safety conditions prevent young people

from cultivating arable land. They have precious few opportunities to learn, use viable skills or find support for self-generated livelihood initiatives. Instead, they are learning to become dependent on outside humanitarian aid. Many young people are unable to attend school because of added responsibilities. They find survival in prostitution or are pushed into criminal activities. Other out-of-school adolescents struggle to make enough to pay the school fees of their brothers and sisters, sacrificing opportunities of their own for the well being of their siblings.

Some adolescents are leaving their homes in IDP camps to find jobs in towns, but with little success. Adults believe that this migration is decreasing Acholi ties to ancestral lands, and they fear that without parental guidance, adolescents living on their own in towns are led to “bad behavior,” which is undermining family structures and culture. Some rural and urban adolescents faced with no opportunities to earn a livelihood have turned to crime and prostitution, both of which have greatly increased in recent years, adolescents assert. Some of these adolescents end up as street children, a phenomenon that was previously unknown in Acholiland. Adults told researchers that criminals are looting at night and participating in ambushes and robbery, and that many of them are young people without jobs but with basic needs to meet.

INACCESSIBLE LAND LEAVES ADOLESCENTS DEPENDENT ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Refugee and IDP adolescents say, “If we had land to dig, we wouldn’t have any problem with poverty.” But poor security restricts their access and opportunity to farm. The situation is worse for adolescents living in IDP camps, especially the “protected camps” in Gulu and in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, where they have little other means to earn a living.

Farming land and moving outside the “protected camps” has been discouraged and even forbidden at times by the UPDF, particularly in Gulu. It is dangerous for anyone who tries, as they risk abduction, rape and murder when they venture out. But the protectors – the UPDF – offer little protection. Camp inhabitants are therefore restricted to farming a very small amount of land in and around their camps, which does not come close to sustaining the entire camp population.

Unlike other refugee settlements in other districts of northern Uganda, Achol Pii has not been able to

take advantage of the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) developed by UNHCR in cooperation with the Ugandan government to provide refugees with opportunities to become self-sufficient through the provision of land to farm and other measures. Refugees in Achol Pii must therefore receive a “100 percent humanitarian food ration” from the WFP, recognizing that the refugees are not expected to be able to supply any food for themselves. Demonstration projects ranging from raising rabbits and ducks for protein to bee keeping for income generation have been undertaken, but to limited effect so far. Refugees, for example, have not yet taken to eating duck or rabbit.

Although refugees registered in the Achol Pii settlement receive monthly humanitarian rations of 1,900 kcal/day from the WFP, the rations are simply not enough to sustain them without supplemental income or access to fruits, vegetables, milk and meat outside the settlements – all of which are extremely hard to come by. Food deliveries to Achol Pii by WFP are often late due to insecurity along the roads leading to the settlement. During the Women’s Commission’s visit to the settlement in November 2000, the monthly food delivery was more than a week late. Joseph, an 11-year-old unaccompanied minor at the settlement, told the Women’s Commission that he had not eaten in 10 days and that he was not likely to have any food for another five days. Joseph was covered with scabies. When asked if there is anything he liked to do for fun in the settlement, he simply said, “Eat.”⁸⁷ When the Women’s Commission returned to the settlement in June 2001, the food delivery to the camp was also nearly a week late.

TENSION BETWEEN UGANDAN NATIONALS AND SUDANESE REFUGEES

Adolescents said that the meager land for refugees in the Achol Pii settlement has led to increased tensions with surrounding communities of Ugandan nationals who are unhappy when the refugees seek firewood or grow crops on land outside the refugee settlement. Surplus production by refugees increases supply in local markets, which pushes food prices downwards. Ugandans also argue that refugees receive more food through humanitarian food distributions and that consequently refugees should be restricted in their use of land. Some of this tension has resulted in violence, adding to the insecurity experienced by adolescent refugees. Girls fear rape

by nationals as they collect firewood, and boys are worried about being killed on sight when they venture outside the settlement.

The Ugandan camp commander, the refugee community and IRC, which manages the settlement, have worked to increase cooperation between the refugee community and the Ugandan nationals. These initiatives are helping to overcome some of the problems. Young people described how they sometimes work in fields belonging to nationals in exchange for a section of the land to produce food for their personal consumption. One agricultural program undertaken in the settlement is growing seedlings to replace firewood deforested from land belonging to nationals. Other solutions like these need to be found. They are essential to prevent and reduce violence between the communities and to improve the situation of the war-affected youth populations.

DESTRUCTION OF LIVESTOCK DECIMATES TRADITIONAL WEALTH

Raising livestock is a critical means of livelihood for the Acholi people. Many adolescents pointed out that the killing and theft of livestock has virtually decimated this traditional savings mechanism. Nearly 300,000 cattle, oxen, goats and sheep have been stolen by the Karamojong, a tribe that resides to the east of Acholiland, and by government soldiers and the LRA.⁸⁸ Cattle were traditionally the symbol of wealth and security among Acholi communities. Without cattle, families and clans have even less food to eat or sell, especially milk, and less wealth to pay for bride prices or to settle disputes. The situation has thoroughly destabilized Acholi socioeconomic and cultural structures. Cattle are the repository of history for the Acholi and the Sudanese since marriages and family agreements can be traced through them. Destroying the family herd of cattle is like destroying the family genealogical record. In addition, the cattle rustling has compounded the problems faced by farmers, who depend upon oxen to plow and harvest fields.⁸⁹

Other factors also increase cattle rustling. According to some cultural traditions, Sudanese refugee boys must produce cattle for marriage or other family or clan purposes. Many of these boys face increased insecurity as they must venture outside their communities to rustle cattle. This in turn breeds further tension between the refugee boys and the communities suffering the losses.

This warfare must be stopped, and young people must be integrated as full participants into efforts to finding lasting solutions for peace. Efforts have been made recently to bring elders from each tribe together to resolve differences, but tensions are still running high. In July 2001, as additional grass was needed for grazing cattle, Karamojong moved into eastern Kitgum, creating much tension among the local population and increasing the possibility for violence.

SKILLS TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS LEADS TO FEW JOBS OR VIABLE MARKETS

There are few skills training and income-generating programs, leaving the vast majority of war-affected adolescents without opportunities. Those that do exist are largely focused on the important reintegration needs of formerly abducted adolescents.⁹⁰ Young people said that even if they do successfully harvest enough to eat and sell or if they manage to learn a skill or trade, local markets are not viable. Getting to



Taking great pride in their emerging trade, these young people benefit from a World Vision skills training program in Gulu for former abductees.

the markets is often logistically difficult and can be dangerous. Sale prices are low, and buyers are few.

Even if young people are able to learn a practical skill, finding a job is almost impossible, particularly in the IDP camps. The absence of industry, commerce or an employment market compounds the problem. For instance, many formerly abducted girls and some boys may learn tailoring and sewing, but few living in IDP camps have money for new clothes. Most of the tailoring, therefore, involves low-profit repairs and alterations to second-hand clothes. Adolescents have too little start-up capital to buy new material for making and displaying clothing for sale. In another example, those who are able to farm said that their “digging” is less productive because they lack decent tools and seeds. “Even if there is land to cultivate, we [don’t have] shovels and hoes,” said one adolescent in Achol Pii.⁹¹

“After escaping from the Lord’s Resistance Army, I was trained as a carpenter . . . I hoped to save enough money from digging to rent a place in town, but the digging makes barely enough money to feed and clothe my family, and often I trade onions for other goods instead of money. Now I don’t believe I’ll ever get to live in town and sell my chairs.”

— Moses, 17, Gulu

Family obligations, such as caring for sick family members or performing household duties, often limit the time adolescents have available for livelihood training. Insecurity also prevents trainees from returning to their home villages, where there would be less competition for tailoring services.⁹² Adolescent girls bear a disproportionate burden of the household chores. Many said that they often have to “dig” in the fields or brew alcohol all day while their brothers are sent to school.

Given the inability of most adolescents to afford secondary school, let alone college, many spoke of the desire for training opportunities for a wide range of skills, from traditional farming, raising livestock and carpentry to teacher training and nursing schools. Apart from the necessity to earn money for basic needs, livelihood opportunities also help strengthen

the psychosocial well being of adolescents, giving them a sense of independence and purpose within their community.

SAVINGS AND REINVESTMENT ARE OUT OF REACH

Given the dire economic situation, livelihood efforts in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader are responding to the needs of daily subsistence living. Adolescents farm whenever they can, before and after school, eating or selling what they can in local markets to have money for day-to-day living. There is rarely anything left to save. This is by necessity, not desire, adolescents said. Boys in the Padibe IDP camp in Kitgum, for example, take turns “digging” one another’s fields or raise goats together. But after the small profits are distributed, the money is used up quickly and there is nothing left to save or to reinvest in future work and gains. Without savings, they must start every project from scratch with little to tide them over.

The banking and credit structure in the region is very weak and provides young people with little support. Many adolescents interviewed who had been able to begin cooperative income-generation projects on their own were focused very narrowly on short-term gain. They had no access to support or information from banks. Young people need to learn basic business skills, including the value of savings and reinvestment. Banks must support this learning and make savings accounts and credit opportunities available to them. Schools and other education programs should also provide basic business skills to young people. The following testimony from Moses, a 17-year-old boy living in the Awer IDP camp in Gulu, speaks eloquently to the dilemma.

“After escaping from the Lord’s Resistance Army, I was trained as a carpenter. But I don’t have enough tools or money to buy the wood to be successful. And not many people in the camp where I live can buy the stools and chairs that I make. It would be better if I could live in town and sell my chairs and stools there, but it is too expensive to stay there. So I farm every day during the week to earn money for my mum and my brothers and sisters to live and eat, and on weekends I work on building things when I can. I hoped to save enough money from digging to rent a place in town, but the digging makes barely enough money to feed and clothe my family, and often I trade onions for other goods instead of money. Now I don’t believe I’ll ever get to live in town and sell my chairs.”⁹³

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR GIRLS

Like boys, girls struggle to make a productive living. They suffer the same problems. However, their safety is even more at risk and their future even more confined. Girls are more likely than boys to be sold and bartered. They are more likely to suffer from sexual violence and become trapped in even more limited roles *because* they are girls. The death toll due to the conflict and HIV/AIDS is turning more and more adolescents, especially girls, into heads of households. Unable to go to school, they are often the sole breadwinners in their families and bear daily, stressful responsibilities that include “parenting” their younger siblings.

GIRLS MARRIED OFF FOR PROFIT

Traditionally in the Acholi and other local Ugandan and Sudanese cultures, marriage is a celebration that comes at a time in a girl’s life when she is ready. In the Sudanese Latuka tradition, for example, a family carefully considers whom a daughter will marry and views the marriage as a joining of the two families. Much ceremony is involved with the wedding and the transfer of the daughter to the new household, and a certain number of cattle are given to the family of the bride by the groom’s family.⁹⁴

Today, most of this tradition has been lost, residents of the Achol Pii refugee settlement said in interviews. The marriage of daughters amounts to a financial transaction in which girls are essentially sold off by parents for money. Girls are being married as young as 12 to satisfy their family’s desire for the bride price. Traditionally, the bride’s family would keep the cattle, but whatever they receive today quickly disappears to meet other financial needs. This includes assisting their sons who themselves must find the means to marry. Thus, there is often nothing left to buy the girl back if the marriage is a failure, leaving few options for the young girl in her new position.

Both Sudanese and Ugandan adolescent girls, as well as many adults, pointed to early marriage as a “solution” to economic deprivation and insecurity, because “they need money,” as one girl from Gulu explained.⁹⁵ With little freedom and few options for self-sufficiency, many girls are compelled into marriages at young ages, before they are ready. In these dire circumstances they may also marry “old men,” or adolescent boys, who, they believe, are better off financially and who will bring them a better stan-

dard of living, increased security or simply enable them to get out of their own crowded homes in the camps. Adult counselors also told the Kitgum/Pader research team that “some [Sudanese refugee] parents force their daughters to marry so that they can use the money for liquor.”⁹⁶

Unprepared for the household duties of being a wife, some young wives are criticized by matrons and others in their new families and are beaten by their husbands or other relatives. Some are also sent back to their original families in disgrace with a demand for the return of the bride price.

The marriage of daughters amounts to a financial transaction in which girls are essentially sold off by parents for money. Girls are being married as young as 12 to satisfy their family’s desire for the bride price.

A district youth official told researchers that parents can be very insensitive to the situation of young girls who do not wish to marry yet. He pointed out the paradox in which parents treat their adolescent daughters as children, yet respond to their physical maturation with pressure to marry as soon as possible. “Parents will not admit their children have become adults. At the same time, they see daughters have breasts, and say, ‘Why are you here?’”⁹⁷ he said, referring to parents who wonder why their daughters are not yet married and still live at home. “Forced marriages [occur] because some parents believe that school makes children become prostitutes and they will not get a bride price,” out-of-school adolescents in Achol Pii told the Kitgum/Pader research team.⁹⁸

PROSTITUTION

Interviews with adolescent girls and boys revealed that the sexual exploitation of adolescent girls for economic survival is a major problem, especially for orphans, displaced girls and refugees. Desperate for economic security, adolescent girls described how they and other girls see no other option than to turn to men and adolescent boys for food, clothing and other assistance in exchange for sex. This places them at increased risk of pregnancy and of contracting STIs, including HIV/AIDS. In general, girls’ edu-

cation and livelihood are seen as of secondary importance to that of boys. Families believe that education encourages girls to be prostitutes, an attitude which deprives them of an education and which forces girls to turn to prostitution in order to survive, the very outcome which parents most fear. Elizabeth, 15, in the Awer protected village in Gulu described how girls approach boys to ask them for help: "They see boys who have clothes and food, and they go to them and ask to stay with them."⁹⁹

Young women and some adolescent girls also take up with UPDF soldiers stationed inside or near displaced persons camps who will provide them with clothing or small gifts in exchange for sex. "If you take the gift and don't give the sex, they will rape you and sometimes they will just rape you anyway," one girl said. Many have children with the soldiers, and some marry and relocate with their husbands as they get transferred. Others, however, are left behind, and for lack of alternatives, may simply wait to get involved with newly transferred soldiers. Researchers also heard reports that some young women frequent bars in towns to work in prostitution and/or to find relationships with UPDF and SPLA soldiers as they take their "rest and relaxation" time.

ADOLESCENT-LED LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVES

The research identified many youth-led livelihood initiatives and revealed an urgent need for livelihood and income-generating opportunities, including skills training and micro-credit. As described above, many Sudanese young people are working together and cooperating with Ugandan nationals outside the camps to form cooperatives and associations in which a small group of young people jointly undertake projects. These include helping each other raise pigs or goats and then sharing profits. They have found some support for these activities from a few organizations, but much more is needed.

Any adolescent or youth, boy or girl, when asked if they want to learn or undertake a profitable trade or profession, will respond with overwhelming enthusiasm and energy. They are eager to learn, act and achieve and have already generated many ideas. These ideas, however, do not often come to fruition for lack of markets, poor security, logistics and inexperience in running fisheries, rearing pigs and other projects.

Many young people expressed their strong desire for livelihood opportunities that will provide the opportunity to pay for school fees and allow them to attend school. Although a few such income-generating programs are linked to education, they are largely restricted to formerly abducted adolescents. The Ugandan government, international donors and NGOs need to fund and work with local NGOs like the Concerned Parents Association (CPA)¹⁰⁰ to develop more of these programs for the general adolescent population. Adolescents in all three districts called on the government to give grants and loans to the most vulnerable adolescents, especially school dropouts, orphans and those living in IDP camps, and to offer micro-finance schemes to youth and the wider community to improve livelihood and reduce poverty.



Adolescents raise goats together in Padibe, one of several youth-led income-generating projects supported by the International Rescue Committee in Kitgum.

In order for such opportunities to be successful, adolescents need sustainable development for employment. However, few donors are willing to fund programs that may be destroyed by conflict. The government of Uganda must act immediately to better protect the population from attacks by the LRA and disband the "protected camps." International donors must also commit more resources to providing adolescents hope for the future through the development of sustainable livelihood options.

Adolescents are frustrated, suffering and anxious to help themselves. They need support to help build their capacity for self-sufficiency, to build their self-esteem and to provide some hope for the future. Their energies must be grounded by real development opportunities.

X. HEALTH: CHRONIC CAMP CONGESTION AND VIOLENCE UNDERMINE ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Among the myriad of problems facing adolescents affected by the war in northern Uganda, adolescents and adults identified the difficulty of meeting basic needs, such as food, water, health care services and medicine as a major concern. Virtually all adolescents cited the spread of disease, lack of reproductive health services and education, sexual and gender-based violence against girls and the HIV/AIDS epidemic as the leading problems created and compounded by conflict and insecurity. Adolescents maintain that a lasting peace and the dismantling of the camps would dramatically reduce most of northern Uganda's health problems. According to the Gulu research team report, adolescents believe that "if peace predominates and the soldiers return home, then the culture of dignity, love, respect and hospitality would be revived through family communication at the 'fireplace.'" ¹⁰¹

MALNUTRITION AND BASIC NEEDS

Food insecurity is rampant. Poor security, lack of protection, abduction, displacement and the disability and death of able-bodied adolescents stop young people from cultivating the fields for food. As reported in the Gulu research team report: "Malnutrition was unheard of in Acholiland before the insurgency because the land would produce all the food needed for healthy growth and development. The insurgency led to a concentration of people in camps with restricted movement and the destruction of property, including entire households and agricultural products. This has completely prevented us from cultivating the land and has created malnutrition, starvation and anemia." ¹⁰²

Dr. Shirazi, Medical Officer for the Achol Pii refugee settlement, stated that "Under-fives have a particularly tough time with malaria and iron deficiency



Massively congested IDP camps, including Awer pictured here, are breeding grounds for disease. Pigs graze and children defecate on piles of garbage disposed of randomly.

anemia, and their mothers are just as badly off." He cited poor diet, lacking especially in proteins and vegetables, as contributing to the problem of anemia among women, including young mothers. ¹⁰³ Clinical Officer Alfred Okidi and Community Services worker Aneno Maria Palma also stated that some young mothers are reportedly getting pregnant in order to qualify for additional food rations. However, this strategy is short-sighted, they say, as the additional amount received is needed by the new child in order to survive. ¹⁰⁴

Although very young children are the most vulnerable to malnutrition, and there is evidence of anemia among women and adolescent girls, there is limited information about the overall nutritional status of adolescents in Gulu and Kitgum. However, given the very limited supply of food that is nutrient-rich, especially for those who are abducted, orphaned or internally displaced, it is certain that many adolescents are malnourished. Adolescents who are most vulnerable to malnutrition are also suffering from a lack of basic supplies, including clothing and bedding. "They sleep without using any bedding clothes or blankets," revealed one 12-year-old, referring to internally displaced orphans and adolescent-headed households in the Omiya Anyima village in Kitgum.

SANITATION AND DISEASE

Adolescents living in crowded towns and particularly those in the over-congested internally displaced camps and Achol Pii refugee settlement say that their minimum needs for water and sanitation are not being met. “People are drinking dirty water from the rivers because there is no clean water, which makes them sick,” said one Sudanese boy in Arum Primary School in Achol Pii. Many adolescents echoed these concerns, one IDP adolescent saying, “For us, the war means that there aren’t enough places to go to the bathroom.”

There is an insufficient number of functional latrines, and sanitation is extremely poor in many camps. Children relieve themselves throughout the settlement, and garbage is thrown anywhere and everywhere. In 1998, latrine coverage was at 48 percent in Gulu and 42 percent in Kitgum, with much lower coverage in the IDP camps.¹⁰⁵ Primary schools in the camps also have inadequate sanitation facilities. Because boys and girls often share facilities, the latter tend to leave school because of lack of privacy, further increasing the rate of dropouts among girls.¹⁰⁶

Adolescents said that living in camps without adequate latrines or safe water leads to the quick spread of diseases, such as cholera, diarrhea, measles, malaria and tuberculosis. It also leads to high morbidity and mortality rates. A survey conducted by the NGO African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) found that over 50 percent of Gulu households indicated chronic ill-health.¹⁰⁷ In response to the health problems caused by poor conditions within the camps, adolescents called for the dismantling of the camps as a critical component of any improvement. In the meantime, they urged the construction of latrines in camps and towns, the protection of water springs, the improvement of the drainage system and increased health education in all camps as well as in primary and secondary schools to prevent diseases.

THE EBOLA VIRUS

Many adolescents spoke with great fear about Ebola fever, a highly contagious and deadly disease, which broke out in Gulu in mid-September 2000, killing 161 people¹⁰⁸ and for which there is no known cure. The symptoms are manifested in massive hemorrhaging with uncontrolled bleeding from all body orifices, with a fatality rate between 50 and 70 percent

for the general population and 80 percent for adolescents and children under the age of 18.¹⁰⁹

Despite the relatively small number of victims, the speed and intensity of Ebola has added a new level of fear to the lives of the Acholis. Many adolescents said that the fear of Ebola had affected them “more than the war,” adding that they still suffer trauma from the outbreak.¹¹⁰ Adolescents’ lives were altered during the outbreak, as many schools closed, at least 150 children were orphaned, and funerals were banned to prevent the ritual cleansing of the dead, which is believed to have contributed to the spread of the disease.¹¹¹ In addition, some organizations providing aid pulled their staff out of Gulu, halting support on which local populations depended.¹¹² Some Ebola survivors returned home to find their property destroyed. Most were rejected and shunned by their families and communities for fear they could spread the virus.¹¹³

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND MEDICINE

Both Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents complained about inadequate medicine supplies, poor medical facilities, high hospital fees, the poor performance and corruption of some health workers and unevenly distributed hospitals. “The only existing health unit is 17 kilometers away from our home, and we lack trained personnel and have poor medical equipment,” said a 16-year-old boy who lives in Omiya Anyima village in Kitgum.¹¹⁴ The Achol Pii refugee settlement, which stretches approximately 21 kilometers, has two health facilities and one doctor, which must serve up to 26,000 refugees registered in the settlement and an additional 10,000 Ugandans living in the vicinity.

Most health infrastructure has been damaged if not destroyed by the conflict, and many health units have closed down due to lack of safety. Many people living in the camps have extremely limited access to the remaining hospitals and even to local health dispensaries in or near Gulu and Kitgum towns.¹¹⁵ Only 29 percent of people in Gulu live within a five kilometer radius of health services. The national average is 45 percent.¹¹⁶ A shortage of qualified doctors and health-care staff in IDP camps is particularly acute and has put additional pressure on outreach services and over-stretched health facilities.

Former abductees identified additional health prob-

lems specific to those living in the bush without any access to health care whatsoever. These include swollen legs and stomach, abdominal problems from the dirty water, scabies, chest pains, fractures and disabilities. Adolescents with disabilities have particular problems gaining access to adequate health care. This powerful statement from Morris, 15, Kitgum, reflects the condition of young people with disabilities: “Disability is my biggest problem. My two legs are completely paralyzed, so my movement depends on crawling or using a wheelchair. Whenever I want to visit relatives or friends, I have to go with somebody who can help push the wheelchair. My health is poor because I am exposed to the risk of many diseases, mostly during the rainy season when I have to crawl on the ground through the mud. Insecurity is also a main problem, because at night people may run when the rebels are there, but me, I cannot run.”

Adolescents called for the development of health infrastructure in all sub-counties to better dispense medical supplies and doctors within the community, including internally displaced camps and villages. They also called on the church, NGOs and the government to help minimize corruption and maximize efficiency.

ALCOHOLISM

Adolescents stated that the trauma of the war, the lack of education, the paucity of livelihood opportunities and confinement in camps has led to an increase in idleness and alcoholism, especially among men and adolescents boys.¹¹⁷ Many said that alcoholism and drug abuse have exacerbated sexual and domestic violence against girls, including rape and defilement. They also expressed concern that drinking too much alcohol is reducing the mental ability of adolescents and increasing their “mental disturbance.” Adolescents recommended sensitization to discourage the abuse of alcohol and drugs.



Onlookers chuckle in recognition as young actors give them a sobering picture of their communities, which are rife with alcohol abuse.



Adolescents say early marriages, rape and increased casual sex among adolescents have led to high levels of teen pregnancy.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Reproductive health services, rare enough due to cultural restraints, are even more limited by the conflict. Acholi cultural practices, norms and attitudes prohibit open discussion about sex, leaving many adolescents, especially girls, uninformed about the consequences of sex and other reproductive health issues. In addition, the majority of operational health units are church-run and offer very limited reproductive health services and education for adolescents. Nevertheless, many adolescents are engaging in sex, including by force, from ages as young as 12 or 13. A large number of girls said they could not say “no” to unprotected sex, and some boys said that they didn’t like condoms and would not wear them during sex. Others reported having no access to condoms, especially in the IDP camps. Girls also reported that they lack sanitary supplies during their periods.

The majority of adolescents viewed many of the reproductive health problems facing adolescents as resulting from “a decline in moral values” due to the conflict. This morality gap, they say, has led to early

sexual activity between adolescents, prostitution and an increase in domestic and community violence involving rape and sexual assault. LRA rebels, UPDF soldiers and other males are raping girls, especially those who live in displacement camps or who were formerly abducted. In order to reduce the incidence of rape and resulting early pregnancy, adolescents suggested that soldiers' barracks be relocated farther away from the population and that communities be sensitized about the ill-effects of drinking alcohol, which they believe contributes to violence against girls and women. In addition, they urged that contraceptives and family planning be encouraged at all levels of society in order to reduce the number of child mothers and unwanted children.

In addition to spreading disease, including HIV/AIDS, adolescents said that prostitution, rape, sexual slavery and decreased social controls on adolescent sexuality have increased the number of unwanted pregnancies, unwanted children and child mothers, who sometimes die in childbirth. Some adolescents cited child mothers as the largest problem affecting girls, and pointed out that it is especially common among abducted girls, who are also frequently treated as outcasts by the community if they manage to escape captivity.¹¹⁸ Girls also cited a lack of pre-natal care for pregnant girls and related health care as a major problem. The infant mortality ratio for Gulu is estimated at 172 in 1,000, compared to an estimated 85 in 1,000 nationwide and the maternal mortality ratio is believed to be higher than the ratio for infant mortality.¹¹⁹ In the Achol Pii refugee settlement, health workers report high numbers of teen pregnancies. While there are not yet comprehensive statistics, Achol Pii's Clinical Officer Alfred Okidi told the Women's Commission that it is "very common for 15-year-olds to be having sex," for "18-year-old girls to have three children" and that "neonatal death for young mothers is common."¹²⁰ Dr. Shirazi, the Medical Officer in Achol Pii concurred, stating that "30-year-old women may have given birth 15 times, with two or three of their children surviving. They say, 'We don't have a choice. Our husbands say we must.' But the women also tell me they are interested in family planning, but cannot tell the men because they are afraid they will become hostile. The women agree it is high time to do something about this. They want to do things with their lives. Many say, for example, they want to become nurses' aides."¹²¹

HIV/AIDS

AIDS has killed as many as 500,000 people in Uganda, where 1.8 million people are infected with HIV, 400,000 children are born with HIV/AIDS every year and 1.7 million are orphaned by the disease.¹²² Despite these figures, Uganda is one of the few African countries to successfully reduce the countrywide prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which fell from 35 percent in the 1980s to 9.5 percent in the early 1990s.¹²³

It is difficult to get a comprehensive picture of the impact of HIV/AIDS on Acholiland because of the ongoing conflict. Although the prevalence rates now appear to be on a downward trend, the rate in Acholiland has not decreased on the scale of the national average. Although there appears to be a significant decline as recorded in Gulu's Lacor Hospital, the number of people infected is still unacceptably high.¹²⁴ Moreover, available statistics are from the hospital, which the majority of adolescents in camps, remote villages and refugee settlements cannot afford or gain access to, and they do not provide a clear indication of the rate of new infections. Adolescents may in fact be contracting HIV/AIDS in high numbers given their exposure to sexual violence and their engaging in sexual activity largely without measures to prevent STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and as of now, there is no way to fully tell. As described below, many young people and adults in the community believe that adolescence is a prime time for contracting the disease.

Almost all adolescents interviewed named HIV/AIDS as a major problem. The feeling among adolescents is that the prevalence is widespread among their peers. One young man said, "the majority of adolescents and youth [who are dying] between the ages of 20 and 24 are dying of HIV/AIDS."¹²⁵ Adolescents blame the conflict for the number of HIV/AIDS deaths. They say that the enduring insurgency has resulted in an increase in the number of government and rebel soldiers who they believe carry HIV/AIDS and STIs such as syphilis and gonorrhea. They believe the soldiers then spread these diseases by raping girls. In addition, lack of parental guidance as well as lack of livelihood opportunities push girls into trading sex for money with older men and UPDF soldiers, who young people believe are spreading STIs, including HIV/AIDS.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the cramped camp conditions and increased alcoholism have led to sexual violence against girls, increasing their exposure to the risk of contracting STIs. In

these conditions, many adolescent boys and girls are also driven out of their parents' huts to those of neighbors, where there is very little parental control over their sexual behavior and adolescents are left open to sexual abuse and to contracting STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

Staff at the local NGO Meeting Point offices in Kitgum and Padibe IDP camp, where members of the community seek support as they cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS (see International, National and Local Responses), state that most diagnosis of HIV/AIDS is clinical. That is, people only know they have it when they become symptomatic. Health staff in the Achol Pii refugee settlement concurred.

Meeting Point Chairperson and co-founder Ketty Opoka in Kitgum said: "No statistics on adolescents and HIV/AIDS exist. But we do know, for example, that here in town, we have many cases of people 25-45 with the disease, and few from 10-12 have it. Young people from one to seven with the disease are mostly known to have gotten it at birth, but we see very few cases of people between 13 and 24."¹²⁷ She and a colleague in Padibe IDP camp, who cited the very same scenario, explained that the lack of cases among adolescents and young adults may be because young people are contracting the virus in their teens and do not become symptomatic until they are in their twenties.¹²⁸

Even if adolescents suspect that they are HIV-positive, there is little opportunity for them to be tested. Testing is only available in hospitals near towns, to which most internally displaced adolescents have no access. For the great majority of people in northern Uganda, there is no treatment available for HIV/AIDS, just preventive education. For example, while formerly abducted adolescents are tested for HIV/AIDS at GUSCO and World Vision Children of War Center, if they test positive they receive counseling, material support and family help, but no treatment.¹²⁹

Ms. Opoka also stated that testing is possible for adolescents through Meeting Point, which operates in collaboration with District health officials, but most are too afraid to undergo it. "It's easy to get counseling and a test here [through Meeting Point], but the young ones fear it," she said. "When we

used to do outreach to schools to sensitize them about HIV/AIDS, more got tested, but very few do now." Ms. Opoka said that more real treatments and consistent AIDS and reproductive health awareness outreach are needed for adolescents in schools and out. "We are not very successful telling young people not to have sex," she said. "But we do tell them that if you do have sex, go for true love, stick to one person, and if you love that person, use a condom so as not to infect that person. In particular, we promote condom use among people who know they are infected."¹³⁰

Although some education and prevention efforts are underway, much more is needed to reach adolescents. Many young people, particularly those in primary school and those who live in IDP camps, do not know how HIV/AIDS is spread.¹³¹ As one adolescent reported, "If there was no ignorance and illiteracy among the community, many adolescents would not be dying of STIs and AIDS. AIDS would not be in our society if people were sensitized on how to prevent it."¹³² Some of those who know about how HIV/AIDS is spread do not use this information; some boys reported that they will only use condoms for a girl that they "love." In addition, a Gulu District official working with youth noted a shortage of condom availability and that those available often break during use.

The need to increase reproductive health education throughout Acholiland, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention is urgent. More accurate research is needed on the prevalence of

HIV/AIDS in northern Uganda, particularly in the IDP camps. Contraception, preventive education and treatment must also be made available to adolescents. Young people call especially for concrete actions to ensure that HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention education reach adolescents in the IDP camps and the refugee settlement, as well as orphans and out-of-school adolescents and those in primary and secondary schools. They also recommend that HIV/AIDS counseling centers be established to counsel and educate all youth, not just those already affected, and that young people can and should play a strong role in this process, doing, for instance, peer-to-peer outreach.



Young people love to read about health and other issues in Straight Talk, a newspaper for youth. But more need access to the publication and other health information in the north.

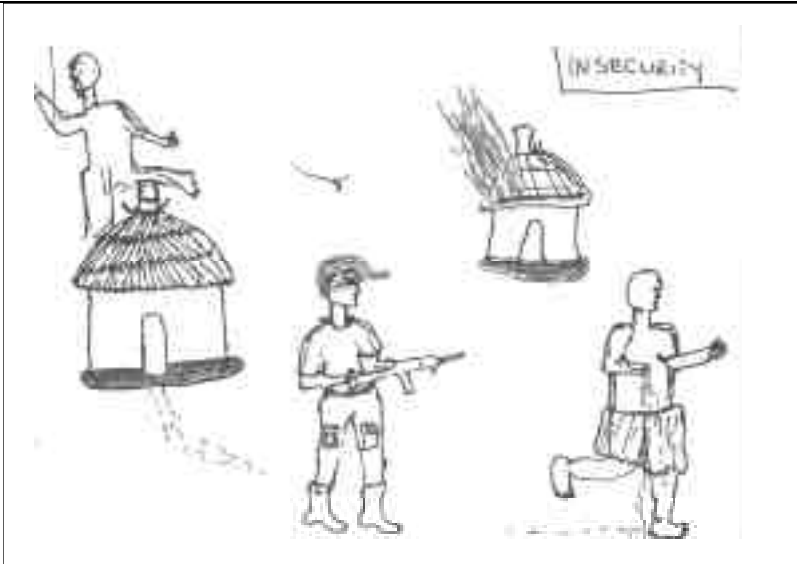
XI. PSYCHOSOCIAL: REINTEGRATION IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF DISINTEGRATION

“Coming back from the bush I thought of committing suicide because I was so embarrassed to live with people who knew me after doing these shameful practices...I thought I might have contracted STDs, including AIDS, so life was useless since I had a short life expectancy. People my age laughed at me and called me abusive names, and I could not stay with them. I have lost friends and company. I am lonely.” —*Betty, 19, from Achol Pii refugee settlement*

The psychological and social, or psychosocial¹³³ consequences of war on the lives of adolescents last long beyond its end, and as long as war persists they involve an ongoing and simultaneous process of disintegration and reintegration. As young people bear and cope with physical and emotional upheaval, they are continually coping in an ongoing process of recovery.

As the principal targets of war in northern Uganda, adolescents are under constant attack; their spirits depleted and their healthy development short-circuited by violence and insecurity. Surviving adolescents face drastically altered social relationships that often include physical and emotional abuse from families and communities. Violence has spread from warring parties to families and neighbors, where domestic violence and sexual abuse are on the rise. Adolescents named child abuse as one of their top five concerns.

Feeling hopeless and alone, young people are desperate for support and protection. They also protect themselves against their own vulnerability with defensive, aggressive or detached, often anti-social, behaviors. Yet they are proactively surviving and continually strive to improve their lives in many creative and constructive ways.



An adolescent boy in Gulu drew this picture to describe the "biggest problem facing adolescents in the north." Young people live daily with Rebel captivity, family loss and other war horrors .

Young people are both hindered and helped along their path to recovery by a community that views them with alternating and simultaneous suspicion and sympathy. The conflict has altered young people's lives and their roles in the community at an accelerated rate. (See *Adolescence and Youth: A Community in Crisis*.) They are seen increasingly as "immoral" and disrespectful, and their role as perpetrators as well as victims in the conflict has invoked confusion and fear in the hearts and minds of their families and communities.

A huge gulf is emerging between the generations as local traditions and war-related stresses discourage young people from open discussions with adults, including public officials and teachers, about their situation and changing roles. Some adults and several local organizations are, however, working to support the needs and strengths of adolescents, although most of them address the urgent and immediate needs of those returning from captivity. (See *International, National and Local Responses*.) Support for the countless other adolescents living in dire circumstances is also urgent, but less forthcoming. Psychosocial and reintegration interventions should maximize young people's direct involvement in decision-making and implementation, and there should be continuous follow-up on their circumstances and progress

RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION OF FORMER LRA ABDUCTEES

RETURNING HOME WITH MYRIAD PSYCHOSOCIAL BURDENS

Former abductees carry to freedom the memories and emotions of agonizing experiences, symbolic reminders of the heavy burdens they were forced to carry during captivity. Many remain haunted by the acts of violence they have suffered and have been forced to commit. Some experience nightmares, emotional disconnections, acting out and other symptoms of what in Western medicine is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). To many young people, these dreams and experiences reflect spiritual distress, where they are troubled by the spirits of those they have harmed, and they feel wracked with guilt.¹³⁴ Formerly abducted young people also know that they are among the most vulnerable to LRA attack. If re-abducted and recognized, they are likely to be killed immediately. Many escapees have been pursued by rebels and killed. Relatives and friends of those who escape may also pay a similar price. (See Protection.)

Many formerly abducted young people stated that they are so afraid of re-abduction by the LRA, that each night they sleep in the bush instead of in their huts, believing they are less likely to be found there should the LRA attack their homes and villages. Like dozens of others, one former abductee from Omiya Anyima told the Women's Commission: "We don't sleep at home. We are very vulnerable to re-abduction, and our huts are dangerous to stay in at night."¹³⁵

Formerly abducted young people are haunted by many other worries: that they will not find or then be accepted by their families and peers; that they will be stigmatized as killers and thieves, or in the case of sexually abused girls, especially those with children, tainted and shamed; that they are infected with HIV/AIDS and will not live long. Will they be able to catch up or even return to school? Will they find employment? In addition to these weighty emotional burdens, formerly abducted young people have lost much trust in a world that has failed to protect them, and even betrayed them.

Adolescents said that these fears and anxieties are further reinforced by LRA indoctrination. The rebels warn them repeatedly that despite promises of amnesty, the UPDF will punish, torture and kill them rather than allow them to return home. The rape and sexual enslavement of girls, many of whom have borne children, has been used as a deliberate attempt to tarnish their virtue in the eyes of their community and make it more difficult for them to return. This in turn can undermine the value of formerly abducted girls to society and make them the potential objects of ridicule, humiliation or further sexual violence. Sexual violence also serves to stigmatize girls returning to their communities as potentially diseased, including with HIV/AIDS.

Such mistrust and rejection can turn into self-fulfilling prophecies, where young people become more rebellious, violent, uncaring or anti-social, pushing away the adults whose support and love they most need but which they are not getting. At the same time, the majority of adolescents are constructively coping with their circumstances.

Following Escape, Fears Remain

After four grueling months in captivity, Donald, 15, managed to escape LRA captivity. He had been captured during the night in May 2000 while he slept, along with six other boys. "We all dreamed of escaping, and when I went, I ran, ran, ran. I was alone for days in the bush, weak and exhausted. Finally, I found a village. Eventually, a village priest helped me and took me to the Ugandan army barracks. They interviewed me, gave me food and took me to an IDP camp. A local organization contacted my family so I could return home." Donald began school a week after his return, but he is worried that he will not be able to catch up on the classes he has missed and says he is plagued by nightmares. "I dream about what happened to me, that they are killing me," he says. Donald walks two kilometers every night to a hut near an army barracks where he sleeps with other formerly abducted boys who feel safer there. He is concerned about the long-term effects of violence on all of the young people in northern Uganda. He still wants to fulfill his dream of becoming a doctor and wants to help all young people begin new lives with peace in the north.

YOUTH AND VIOLENCE

CONFLICTING REPORTS

Little data exists on increased violence committed by returned and other youth within their communities, but it is much discussed. Many adolescents stated that desperate poverty is driving orphans and other young people to steal and that some former abductees are turning to crime out of difficulty in readjusting to civilian life and finding jobs. Others blame the pervasive culture of violence within the LRA from which it is hard to break free.

Unconfirmed reports from juvenile justice experts in recent months have included reports of violent acts of banditry committed by bands of youth, sometimes pretending to be LRA or UPDF soldiers. In IDP camp settings and in the Achol Pii refugee settlement adolescent boys are raping adolescent girls, as discussed earlier in this report.

While anecdotal evidence indicates an increase in such adolescent crimes, there is no supporting information or statistics. In fact, reports from people working to help reintegrate formally abducted children and young adults observe the opposite – that few to no formerly abducted young people commit crimes after their return home. A telling and complex twist on youth violence has been reported by the Kitgum Concerned Women’s Association (KICWA), a center for returning abductees in Kitgum District. KICWA reports that it has received cases of adolescent boys who claimed to be formerly abducted and who have committed crimes. After being turned over to the center for rehabilitation, KICWA found out eventually, however, that these youths were adolescents from the community pretending to be escapees out of desperation for help.

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Additional research is needed on the extent to which young people are turning to violence and crime, and the social, economic, political, psychological and cultural factors that surround these activities.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES

Challenges to overcome

Young people who manage to escape the LRA return to communities that are in turmoil and which bear the weight of insecurity, displacement and poverty. The LRA is well aware that the atrocities to which it has subjected adolescents are likely to demonize them in the eyes of their communities. Creating an image of youth as irrevocably corrupted has further blurred the lines for their communities in distinguishing them as perpetrators or victims, or both.

Often preoccupied with their own concerns and unsupported themselves, families and communities have limited energy or patience to give to the returning adolescents. Young people reported that many adults face the return of young abductees with confusion and ambivalence that range from anger to compassion, fear to protection. Moreover, families and communities often expect the returning adolescents to behave like adults while still having the authority to treat them like children.

Despite the numerous obstacles in the way of healing and reintegration, communities have worked hard to welcome and accept the young people. They struggle to face many difficult conflicts. For example, parents of abducted girls wonder what they might do if their daughters return home pregnant or with a child. While they would rejoice in seeing their daughter, they question how they would feel about a child whose father is a rebel and how that child would be treated by the community.

In general, communities are willing to offer forgiveness and support amnesty for the LRA. Adults said that they try to remember that the young people abducted by the LRA were not there by choice, but under the threat of death.

Community groups also recognize that reintegration is about far more than curing medical ills. They understand that healing is a long process for young people and their families, which requires determined and ongoing follow-up, even in the face of frustration, discouragement and other setbacks.

Communities also understand that education and livelihood activities are particularly important to

young people, giving them some hope for the future and helping to provide for the whole family. They know that the authority and responsibility their children may have had while in the LRA is hard to let go once they are back to civilian life, especially if there is nothing else to occupy or make them feel good about themselves. They believe that if young people know they can begin to lead productive lives post-abduction, they will be less likely to return to the LRA should they be overwhelmed or disappointed by life outside captivity.

Community groups aid reintegration

A number of community groups have formed to help these young people and their families. Most notable is the CPA (see International, National and Local Responses), which supports families of abducted children, helps to reintegrate the former abductees and prepares them and the wider community for their return home. CPA helps parents and other community members confront fears about their children's transformation and develop the support they need to give to the young people upon their return.

Programs by KICWA, GUSCO and the World Vision Children of War Center in Gulu help adolescents find their families and reintegrate into their communities. (See International, National and Local Responses.) They believe that music, drawing and other creative and sports activities have a powerful healing impact. Young people in all the centers are engaged in chores that serve the whole group, such as helping to prepare meals or cleaning up. These organizations also work with the young people afterwards to follow up on their integration, and provide skills training and other educational opportunities that the former abductees overwhelmingly want and need. They also work to minimize the time young people spend in the custody of the UPDF following their escape¹³⁶ and ensure that while in custody they are treated with full care and protection. Each center also does its best to create a safe and secure environment for the young people, and to this end, each center is placed in the relatively safe town centers of Gulu and Kitgum.

Debate over approaches to reintegration

There is debate among organizations over the best approach to reintegration. Some argue that the process should avoid institutionalization, which is believed to contribute to the further stigmatization of young people. They also believe that young people should return home as swiftly as possible, where

the most critical part of the healing and recovery process takes place. These organizations provide shelter in traditional structures known as "ot lums," or grass houses, which are familiar to the former abductees and to which they will be returning. They build the capacity and skills of local community members, including parents, to work with the returnees, rather than leaving the challenge of reintegration to outsiders or those with formal education.

None of the rehabilitation programs make sufficient use of the capabilities of young people who have already been successfully reintegrated, who should be made an integral part of helping new arrivals.

A different approach assumes that successful transition to community life requires more extended rehabilitation time in a center, including longer periods of exposure to Western-oriented individual counseling. This approach also involves a more dormitory-like atmosphere for the young people. Despite these differences, the majority of former abductees interviewed reported having had good, helpful experiences under each set of circumstances.

However, none of the rehabilitation programs make sufficient use of the capabilities of young people who have already been successfully reintegrated, who should be made an integral part of helping new arrivals. With further training and by involving them in decision-making, these young people could work with and inspire confidence in the new arrivals and would likely create ways to further improve the process of return and reintegration. It would also offer all formerly abducted young people opportunities to continue to build networks of solidarity and support and expand the reach of the organizations to conduct follow-up.

Religion and ritual

Many young people find solace in traditional rituals and by attending the Christian churches that flourish in the north. Churches provide spaces for prayer and an offer of forgiveness from God and the community. Many young people rely on churches and their belief in God for strength and to create a bridge to full community acceptance.

In the case of KICWA, support is also provided to families who choose to perform traditional Acholi rituals to cleanse and renew the young person who has returned. Often until such a ritual is performed, neither the community nor the young person will be at rest. In such a poor region, however, the necessary materials to perform these rituals are often out of reach without assistance. In most cases, such activities provide enormous relief to all involved and help the healing and community acceptance process of the young person.

COOPERATION WITH THE UGANDA AND SUDAN GOVERNMENTS

Coordination has improved in recent months between local and international reintegration organizations and the UPDF's Fourth Division, responsible for the war-affected region and often the first to come in contact with escapees. Together, NGOs and the UPDF have decreased the amount of time former abductees spend in UPDF custody. Improved communication and cooperation have increased the speed at which young people can return to their communities. Save the Children Denmark has assisted the UPDF in this process with children's rights training for soldiers in the Fourth Division's Child Protection Unit. These improvements help to strengthen the climate for peace-building and bolster work being done by community-based organizations to prepare families and communities to welcome the returnees.

IOM, UNICEF and the governments of Sudan and Uganda have also increased cooperation to secure the safe repatriation of former abductees who managed to escape the LRA within Sudan and wished to return home to Uganda. In September 2000, a Joint Communiqué on Immediate Action on Abducted Children was signed by the governments of Uganda and Sudan. The Sudanese government in Khartoum subsequently established a center in Juba, in southern Sudan to receive and process young people who have escaped the LRA inside Sudan. These young people had been abducted by the LRA in northern Uganda between 1990 and 1999.¹³⁷ While the three reintegration centers in Gulu and Kitgum are poised and eager to assist all new returnees, should the number of returns accelerate rapidly, they will require immediate increased resources to be sure to adequately assist each person.

Cooperation among international organizations and community groups in northern Uganda could be fur-

ther improved in order to minimize unnecessary problems for the young people and their families. For example, the Women's Commission encountered former abductees who had been transferred from one site to another without warning and without notifying their families. Better communication and coordination among agencies is needed, as is consistent vigilance in each case in order to avoid stressful delays.

RECOGNIZING THE COUNTLESS OTHER ADOLESCENTS

Several thousand formerly abducted adolescents in northern Uganda are coping with enormous assaults on their psychosocial well being; they are also the recipients of most of the support for adolescents in the region. But they are still a small percentage of the countless tens of thousands, who have not been abducted but are living with the same insecurity and deprivation. All adolescents are suffering from hunger and poverty, fear of abduction and the destruction of traditional values that used to protect children. They are also victimized by an increase in domestic violence and child abuse, as the adult community fails to cope well with the effects of the conflict. Thousands are orphaned heads of household or refugees who are unaccompanied or separated from their families and who are fending for themselves. All of these young people are actively coping with their situation in ways that require increased support from within and outside their communities.

ORPHANS AND REFUGEE UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED ADOLESCENTS

Some of the adolescents hardest hit by the conflict are the many thousands who have lost one or both parents due to war, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, including Ebola, and those who are refugees, separated and unaccompanied minors.¹³⁸ Left to fend for themselves, they are especially vulnerable to all of the violations of protection previously described. (See Protection.) At the same time, forced to take on enormous responsibilities, they are among the most resourceful young people.

Orphans

Estimates place the number of orphaned¹³⁹ children in Uganda at up to 1.8 million.¹⁴⁰ One NGO report has estimated that nearly one in six children in northern Uganda has been orphaned by HIV/AIDS and another government report asserts that 16 per-



One of thousands of adolescent-headed households in the north.

cent of children up to the age of 17 are orphans in Acholiland.¹⁴¹ Once orphaned, adolescents are left without parental guidance and are vulnerable to extreme poverty. There are increased numbers of child- and adolescent-headed households, most of which lack access to education, livelihood sources, healthcare services, psychosocial support and protection. The growing number

of orphans and lack of services that respond to their needs are also viewed as among the primary reasons behind a rising number of street children and the purported increase in adolescent crime.

Focus groups conducted at an orphanage with adolescent girls revealed their primary concerns to be psychological and physical abuse of the girls by teaching and supervisory staff. "We don't have any sanitary napkins," said some. Others reported being beaten by teachers and were very concerned that if they don't do well enough in school to go on to secondary school, they will not be allowed to stay in the orphanage. When asked where they would go, many started crying, as they had nowhere to go.¹⁴²

Most adolescents expressed special empathy for AIDS and war orphans, and recommended that the Ugandan government provide free schooling for orphans. Others suggested that the Ugandan government, NGOs, religious groups and international donors provide educational sponsorships to orphans, help pay for their school fees and construct more schools. Furthermore, adolescents suggested that these same groups ensure a stable place for orphans to live with adult supervision, and that they provide food, clothing and other basic necessities to enhance their living conditions.

Refugee unaccompanied minors and separated adolescents

In the Achol Pii refugee settlement, as of March 2001, some 197 unaccompanied minors and 251 separated children were registered. Many of them live in Block 14, which is located in a section of the

settlement that is relatively far from UPDF installations, schools and the market center. These young people stated that they are faced with the constant fear of attack. Their section of the settlement had been the site of a particularly gruesome, lethal attack by the LRA and continues to be used sporadically as a transit point for LRA groups.

Although not sinister, the atmosphere in Block 14 is reminiscent of that in the book *Lord of the Flies*, where young people are left mostly to their own devices and have established their own system of group protection. Some of these young people have relocated to other, more central sections of the settlement, but many remain situated there. With limited adult support, they must take full responsibility for all aspects of their lives, including collecting, preparing and rationing out their monthly food supply, pumping water from bore holes and getting themselves to school and to medical facilities as needed.

With extremely limited possibilities for cultivation and frequently late food distributions, these young people complained of severe hunger. Even when the food supplies are not late and food is available, rationing is very difficult, and young people said they find it hard to save the food for a later date.

The issue of non-food items was also of great concern to the young people. All refugees, including unaccompanied minors and separated children, are given a supply of household materials, such as a pot for cooking, soap and a blanket. If they are lost, stolen or destroyed in the harsh conditions of the camp, the only way to get more is to purchase them from local shops in the settlement, which few refugees can afford. One 11-year-old unaccompanied minor told the Women's Commission that even if he had food he would not be able to prepare or cook it because he had no pot and would have trouble making the fire with limited fuel. He said, "I sold my pot to an adult. He told me it was a good idea to sell it so I could buy food. I was very hungry."¹⁴³

The young people deal with many of these problems by helping each other in small groups. They guard each others' belongings, take turns preparing food and share the remaining non-food items. At times they feel very alone, and some told the Women's Commission that they miss their families and struggle over decisions about whether or not they should try to go back to Sudan and find family members. Many stay because they feel there are more educational opportunities in the settlement, and they would like to finish their schooling. At the same



Sudanese unaccompanied minors in Achol Pii refugee settlement fight disease, hunger and insecurity largely on their own.

time, adolescents said few make it to school regularly and those that do find it hard to concentrate because of their persistent hunger. While Community Services staff and volunteers work closely with the unaccompanied minors and separated children in the settlement, limited resources prohibit comprehensive assistance for their needs. Their protection must be monitored, to prevent forced recruitment into the SPLA, sexual violence against girls and other abuse.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE

Young people named “child abuse” their number five concern overall in the survey. According to the focus group discussions and case study interviews, this category appears to be a “catch-all” phrase for a number of abuses they suffer. It includes physical abuse in school and in domestic settings. It also includes psychological abuse, where young people feel they are demeaned and demoralized, devalued and ignored.

No full statistics are available on the nature and prevalence of domestic violence, including sexual violence. However, testimonies from young people and health professionals depict it as very widespread and perpetrated mainly by adult males against women, children and adolescents. On one occasion when the Women’s Commission was conducting interviews in the Achol Pii refugee settlement, a woman who had been beaten by her husband was carried to the medical dispensary. Medical and other staff said such cases are common.

Young people reported widespread alcoholism among adults and smaller numbers of adolescents,

particularly boys. They said that mostly women and girls make the “local brew,” which is alcohol distilled from local plants and vegetables. The men, whose traditional roles as farmers and providers have been undermined by the conflict and who feel they have little else to do, sit together in small communal drinking areas and get drunk regularly. Young people said that when men get drunk, they often return home and become violent against women, girls and boys, beating them, threatening them and at times raping the women and girls.

IDP and refugee adolescents also said that violence in their homes and among community residents is on the rise

because of the restricted living quarters in the camps, which have increased tension. Sexual violence has resulted in an increase in unwanted pregnancies and the loss of education for girls, who are then forced to drop out of school. Fights are not uncommon among adult and adolescent males, and some boys described conflict with their fathers, who were being abusive, dictatorial and unsupportive, mostly due to alcoholism.

Sexual violence has resulted in an increase in unwanted pregnancies and the loss of education for girls, who are then forced to drop out of school.

Adolescents also reported the use of corporal punishment in schools and orphanages. They said that it was extremely painful to be hit with sticks, for example, as a punishment for not following the rules or getting answers incorrect in school.

Apart from stating that drinking alcohol should be discouraged, the young people were not fully sure how domestic violence and child abuse should be stopped. The authority of adult males is highly traditional in the culture, as is the permission for these males to abuse their wives and children. The concept of rape within marriage is discussed little and given little credence. Nevertheless, young people’s ability to name the symptoms and discuss the issues of domestic violence, not knowing the terms themselves, was impressive.

TRADITIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS HANGING BY A THREAD

According to many adults interviewed, the decimation of Acholi culture has resulted in the loss of traditional practices and beliefs that served to protect children, adolescents and other people considered vulnerable within the society. Under the code of beliefs known as “Lapir,” for example, clan elders must carefully consider the reasons for going to war with another clan and must be satisfied that there is a just cause for such a conflict. To go to war without such a just cause would be to call evil upon the community. In this setting, children and women were exempted as targets of war, which was conducted entirely by males.

Today, this traditional practice has been turned on its head as the LRA wages war on the Acholi people with children and adolescents as direct targets. In a culture where compensation and guilt are borne by the whole community, the compounding evil accrued by the misdoings of those fighting in this war affects everyone. Other traditional practices, such as parents providing their children a piece of land to farm themselves, have been undermined so that young people have lost a level of financial independence and an opportunity for learning and achievement.

Adolescents and adults say that the disappearance of parental mentoring and guidance has led some to turn to violence or prostitution because they cannot fend for, or support themselves. Despite this, the Acholi tradition of storytelling has survived through organized drama and music groups, and some sing about the troubles facing their communities. Women’s Commission staff watched performances by young people for their community in Padibe IDP camp. Through song, dance and theater, the performers dramatized the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government and enacted the government’s lack of attention to the problems of the Acholi people. Often with humor, they described family problems such as drunkenness, abuse and neglect. Some stories told of the spiritual causes behind tribal conflicts that they believe have led to the war.

These traditional processes should be supported as resources by the local, national and international communities and should be incorporated into peace-building activities. In addition, the Acholi people must continue to create spaces for community dis-

ussion about the destruction of values that protect children and adolescents with an eye to considering courses of action for constructive change.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES

Unlike the situation for formerly abducted adolescents, there are few NGOs or community groups focused on addressing the wide range of problems facing young people and their communities in northern Uganda. The international NGO AVSI, with support from UNICEF and in collaboration with the Kitgum District Community Development Office, has taken action to fill this gap through psychosocial programs in the Kitgum District. Their efforts have aimed to address the many social stresses that are tearing families and communities apart, including excessive drinking, family violence, sexual abuse and increasing school dropouts.

Adolescents and adults say that the disappearance of parental mentoring and guidance has led some to turn to violence or prostitution because they cannot fend for or support themselves.

AVSI’s approach has involved recruiting and training a corps of 300 Community Volunteer Counselors (CVCs), who, based on their own understanding and experience, came together around their own trauma and coping to reach out to others in their community. CVCs facilitate and support communities in a variety of ways, from helping people to identify small loans to identifying disabled children and adolescents among the population and assisting them with access to services. The District also helps to support and coordinate their work, which includes awareness-raising in schools with students, teachers and parents about welcoming formerly abducted young people back to their communities.¹⁴⁴

While their efforts have not wholly focused on adolescents and youth alone, their issues have been incorporated into their work and provide a basis for further community organizing around youth concerns. A strong model moving forward involves training equivalent adolescent and youth CVCs, who can help to reach out to their peers and find constructive solutions to their concerns.

ADOLESCENT COPING AND RESILIENCE

Adolescents in northern Uganda and southern Sudan have shown enormous strength in coping with situations of crisis. Some of the skills they have developed have helped them survive armed combat, extreme poverty and deprivation. They are incredibly resilient and have attempted to weather each new crisis as it has arisen. Some of the coping mechanisms they employ are highly constructive, while others are more destructive. Each, however, serves a purpose in getting them through a process of recovery.

Adolescents are called to continually adjust and recreate their coping skills, but despite all they have done to keep their lives together, most adolescents hardly even recognize that they have strengths and capacities, and their abilities go largely unsupported.

Adolescents must recognize the skills they have developed in the process of surviving the conflict as extremely impressive and valuable. In so doing, they need international and local support during the long process of changing their knowledge and their attitudes about themselves, so that they can identify and gain confidence in their abilities. At the same time, they must also find ways to transform destructive coping strategies into more constructive outlets for promoting their ongoing recovery. Young people can and should begin to pool their resources and talents to improve their lives and their communities as leaders, not just survivors. Given the magnitude of what they are up against, however, they can only be fully successful if they are involved in serious, collaborative efforts by government and other community members to end insecurity and reduce poverty and the spread of disease.

DESTRUCTIVE COPING SKILLS SERVE A PURPOSE

Surviving adolescence is difficult in the best of times, let alone during the assaults of armed conflict, when adolescents are the deliberate targets of war. (See “Adolescence” and “Youth” in northern Uganda.) Research participants identified concerns about what they perceive as an increase in bad behavior among adolescents, calling some of their activities “immoral” or unhealthy. What community members are not necessarily seeing, however, is that these behaviors are really about young people’s process of surviving the conflict.

By their own acknowledgement, young people have stated that they often “act out,” as known in

Western terms. They are at times rebellious, refusing to follow the instructions of authority figures. Some go to traditional dances or discos against the will of their parents. Some engage in casual sex, which is frowned upon by society and which may expose them to STIs, including HIV/AIDS, or lead to pregnancy. Many are considered to be disrespectful and stubborn. Some steal in order to get money for drink, food or other reasons. Others have been drawn into prostitution, as a means of survival. Some have learned to be manipulative and to lie in order to get what they need. They might pretend to be a former abductee in order to get care in a rehabilitation center or they might lie to refugee settlement officials so they can receive an extra set of non-food items and sell them for a profit. And while it would not be considered particularly good for their health under other circumstances, many young people also continue to sleep in the bush at night to avoid LRA attacks on their huts.

While these behaviors may seem highly negative, they serve a purpose for adolescents, as means to an end. In some cases, acting out helps them avoid difficult emotions they may be feeling about their experiences or current circumstances. Casual sex may bring them the connection or affection they feel they need; it may provide an element of risk-taking that allows adolescents to feel as if they are free from the constraints of their world; and it may reflect a loss of self-esteem. Manipulation and lying sometimes lead to concrete solutions for getting help. Prostitution may seem like the only option for many girls, who need to make ends meet, have few other avenues of support and feel a low level of self-worth. These behaviors are condemned within the community, but they should be recognized as part of a process of coping, recovery and survival so that they can be discussed and dealt with openly with young people.

CONSTRUCTIVE COPING SKILLS OFFER THE RESOURCES FOR A STABLE FUTURE

Despite the enormous responsibilities and stresses that the conflict has placed on their shoulders, many young people are engaged in very constructive actions and have developed many skills for their survival and recovery. These skills range from those developed in the process of trying to stay alive in the bush, foraging for food, lighting fires and building shelters, to attempting to simultaneously find work, stay in school and care for siblings. All of the skills and activities described below provide a huge reservoir of

hope for the future of northern Uganda and southern Sudan. These adolescents are resilient and dedicated, not just to their own survival but also to a better future for all. Their ideas, strengths and abilities will form the basis for continued community recovery.

Toward their recovery, adolescents:

Ask for help – It is a sign that a community is in the process of healing when its members make demands for assistance. While young people in northern Uganda may have few opportunities to influence community decision-making, many are actively asking for help from the adults around them, despite frequently being turned away or disappointed. In perhaps one of the most stirring examples of desperation and tenacity facing adolescents in asking for help, a 15-year-old boy saw Women’s Commission researchers on the street in Gulu and randomly said hello. Not even knowing their names, he later traveled over 80 kilometers along a dangerous road to Kitgum to find them again and ask for help. Like countless others, he was an orphan with many brothers and sisters to care for, with no one to help pay for his schooling or other needs.

Attempt to learn new things, including by staying in school – Young people’s commitment to education, in school and elsewhere, is overwhelming. They cling to the possibility of an education with great hope, and do whatever they can to be able to finish their schooling. If they cannot go to school, adolescents still desire to, and do, participate in non-formal education and learning activities. All of these provide

enormous stability to their lives and a sense of purpose and self-esteem.

Care for others and themselves and take responsibility – Young people go to great lengths to support themselves and others, particularly orphaned adolescent heads of household. Very young teenagers frequently make enormous personal sacrifices in order to work to support their siblings. Girls especially work very long, exhausting days, accomplishing many tasks. Keeping busy with this work provides a needed sense of structure and regularity for some, and while the tasks are exhausting and often create barriers to doing other things, many young people say that they enjoy them and enjoy the responsibility.

Form clubs, associations and organizations – Many young people have initiated and joined dozens of activity and recreational groups, which provide them with constructive and creative activities. Such involvement increases their self-esteem and their sense of accomplishment, gives them hope and is a source of fun. Refugee young people have formed a peace club in Achol Pii, for example, and countless other young people are involved in recreational and creative groups that play sports and engage in artistic activities. (See International, National and Local Responses.)

Go to church, practice religion – Many young people turn to a belief in God or the spirit world for strength. The process of prayer, community acceptance, forgiveness and serenity that comes from religious practice assists many young people.

Traditional cleansing rituals also help formerly abducted adolescents recover from their experiences in captivity.

Undertake group income-generation activities – In order to find a solution to the poverty



Young people keep the Acholi story telling tradition alive through drama and song. Here a troop in Padibe IDP camp sends a message to their community about treating orphans with kindness at an AVSI- and Kitgum District-sponsored youth event (left). Dancing the bola! Traditional dance keeps young people’s spirits up (right).



they are facing, many young people have formed cooperative income-generation projects. These creative activities provide young people with opportunities to earn money, teach them about working with others and give them a sense of purpose and accomplishment even if they do not produce enormous profit. They also provide opportunities for young people to come together to talk and find support and companionship.

Raise adolescent and community concerns through art, music and drama – Many young people are engaged in creative groups. At times, these groups perform for their communities and even enter competitions with one another. In so doing, they provide entertainment and relaxation for others, but they also use the opportunities to address important community issues. In Padibe IDP camp, for example, Kitgum District and AVSI sponsored a competition for youth drama, music and dance groups around the theme “Living Happily Amid Difficulties.” The young people revived the storytelling tradition through depictions of the problem of alcoholism in families and its effects on youth, as well as the problems of orphans and Ebola.

Socialize – Many young people cope with their circumstances by spending time with their peers, talking, laughing and having fun when possible. For example, girls stated that although the work is hard, they enjoy talking to others at the bore-holes when they go for water and when they “dig” together. Peer support and opportunities for recreation are important ways that young people take their minds off their worries and find care.

Form support groups for the formerly abducted – Some former abductees, including boys in the village of Omiya Animya and Awer IDP camp, have formed their own support groups. They said that sometimes a group of former abductees will get together to plan a project, or they will just sit together, talk and pass the time. These meetings help them to feel supported and give them confidence. While former abductees do very much interact with other young people, they tend to look to one another for solace and support. As fewer girls have escaped than boys, it is not clear that they have opportunities for mutual support to a similar extent.

Help other refugees who are more “vulnerable” – One way that young people cope with their own problems is to help others. In Achol Pii unaccompanied minors are helping others who are even more “vulnerable” than they are. One group is building

new huts for other “vulnerables” in the camp in exchange for an allotment of blankets, which they will then decide how to distribute to others in need. This project allows them to feel good as they help others and focus less on their own problems.

TURNING SURVIVAL SKILLS INTO LEADERSHIP

Few of the young people interviewed appear to recognize their strengths and abilities or see themselves as valuable to their communities. Few expressed any sense of personal agency or ability to make positive changes in their situation or community. The reliance on humanitarian assistance and the inability of the governments of Uganda and Sudan and the international community to end the war have contributed to a growing sense of dependency among young people, and almost every single solution put forth by the young people for the concerns they raised was something that had to come from outside their world to help them.

The level of need facing them daily has moved many young people beyond any level of realistic expectation, to a point where they are hoping for miracles to change their circumstances. Young people cling to religious beliefs as if they hope their problems may suddenly be solved through a dramatic *deus ex machina* ending.

Young people may not recognize their own abilities in part because they are so preoccupied with survival and feel so vulnerable to attack that they feel completely powerless. They also lack encouragement and support from adults, who in general do not affirm their abilities or provide them with opportunities to share their opinions or participate in community decision-making. Yet the sheer magnitude of the strength involved in surviving in the bush or finding food and getting to school without adult support, is what is going to make a better future and provide hope for northern Uganda and a peaceful Uganda as a whole.

Young people’s strengths and coping must increasingly be transformed into leadership. Young people must find ways to recognize how their survival skills can be built upon to increase youth-led organizing and activism in ways that constructively and democratically address key adolescent and community issues. Support for young people’s capacities and involvement in decision-making is urgent, and it must be balanced with protection, humanitarian and development assistance that addresses their immediate needs for security, food, education and health care.

XII. SURVEY RESULTS: DEVASTATION ON ALL SIDES – INSECURITY IS AT THE ROOT

Resoundingly, adolescents told researchers that the world they are living in is one of seemingly endless devastation, where insecurity and violence, poverty, HIV/AIDS, lack of development and wholesale deprivation work together to form an ongoing cycle of destruction. Their rights have been continuously violated for virtually their entire lives during 15 years of armed conflict. These include the right to life, education, health, freedom of movement and the right to protection and recovery from conflict, sexual abuse and forced recruitment, among many others. They feel little or no power to change their circumstances significantly. Regardless of location, ethnic background, refugee status, age, level of education or gender, adolescents told similar stories of struggle, and they were quick to articulate the principal cause of their problems – insecurity, or war. They identified political and spiritual causes at the root of this insecurity, but ultimately adolescents viewed the war as the responsibility of adults. For them, war makes all of their other problems worse.

Research teams organized 51 focus group sessions in Gulu and more than 140 in Kitgum and Pader and met with 2,030 individuals, who completed and returned surveys to the research teams. Included in



Adolescent researchers developed their own survey of top concerns and got over 2,000 of their peers and adults to respond, including these young orphans in Gulu.

this total are 1,638 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19, averaging 14.7 years of age. Of the adolescent responses, 218 are not included in survey findings due to irregularities such as incomplete or indecipherable responses. In addition, gender data are not available for 21 of the responses. Thus, survey findings for adolescents are based on 1,420 responses (87 percent of total adolescent responses) and gender data are reported for 99 percent of these observations.¹⁴⁵ Findings by gender for adolescents are based on responses from 642 females and 757 males (see Table 1).¹⁴⁶

Adult and adolescent focus group participants in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts were asked to “rank your top ten concerns” from a list of 19 choices that was devised by the adolescent research teams. (See Appendix.) Participants were asked to mark their top concern with the number 10, their next highest concern with a number 9, down to number 1. Survey results reported here are the average scores across all respondents, excluding those responses that had to be eliminated due to irregularities. In order to calculate averages, any item that was not ranked by a respondent (i.e., was lower than the concern ranked Number 1) was given a value of zero.

Table 1: Adolescent Survey Observations (10-19 Years Old)

Team	Female	Male	Gender Not Available	Total
Gulu	158	160	1	319
Kitgum/Pader	484	597	20	1,101
Total	642	757	21	1,420

Among adolescents, “insecurity, abductions and murder” is overall the top concern, earning the highest average ranking in Gulu and in three of the four sub-groups in Kitgum and Pader. The average ranking score is higher in Kitgum and Pader, at 8.16, compared to 6.76 in Gulu. When the responses are broken down by gender the same results are observed, with similar average ranking scores for “insecurity, abductions and murder” among females and males in all groups and sub-groups.

The next highest concerns among adolescents in Gulu are “displacement,” “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care,” “poverty” and “lack of shelter/food/water/clothing.” “Rape and defilement,” “child abuse,” “getting an education” and “HIV/AIDS” also rank high on the list of concerns of adolescents in Gulu, with average scores above 3.0.

CONCERNS SURVEYED

Adolescents were asked to rank their top ten concerns from among the following 19 categories identified by the adolescent research teams:

- Insecurity, abductions and murder
- Displacement
- Child abuse
- Rape and defilement
- Prostitution
- Adolescent violence and crime
- Being orphaned and lack of parental/family care
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Disability
- HIV/AIDS
- Adolescent and/or forced marriage
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Unemployment
- Poverty
- Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing
- Getting an education
- Lack of communication and understanding between youth and parents/elders/community
- Government neglect of youth concerns
- Cultural breakdown and immorality

In Kitgum and Pader, “insecurity, abductions and murder” is followed by “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care,” “getting an education,” “poverty” and “child abuse” as the top concerns among adolescents surveyed. “Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing,” “displacement” and “rape and defilement” complete the list of concerns scoring near or above 3.0 in the average rankings in Kitgum and Pader. Within the Kitgum and Pader sub-groups there are also some notable differences. Three of the Kitgum and Pader sub-groups ranked “insecurity, abductions, murder” as their top concern, but the Kitgum Town Council sub-group ranked it second behind “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care,” giving it a score of 5.81 as opposed to between 8.0 and 9.0 as the other team sub-groups did. This is likely because the town center may be considered far safer than other areas in the district. While “insecurity, abductions and murder” and “getting an education” rank in the top five concerns for all four sub-groups, “displacement” is ranked as the number three concern among adolescents in Padibe, an internally displaced persons camp, and does not rank in the top five in any of the other three sub-groups. “Rape and defilement” is ranked in the top five in Omiya Anyima, with an average score of 4.0, but does not score higher than 2.64 in the other three sub-groups, while “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care” scores, on average, at least 5.5 in every sub-group except Omiya Anyima, where its average score is only 2.64.

Differences in ranking occur between male and female respondents. In Gulu, while “insecurity, abductions and murder,” “displacement” and “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care” are the top three concerns for both males and females, females rank “rape and defilement” and “child abuse” as their next largest concerns, while males are on average more concerned with “poverty” and “lack of shelter/food/water/clothing.” In Kitgum and Pader the top five concerns for males and females are the same, but the ranking within those five is different, with females on average ranking “being orphaned and lack of parental/family care” and “child abuse” higher than males and males ranking “getting an education” and “poverty” higher than females. In the Achol Pii sub-group, “prostitution” has a relatively high average score of 3.09 in female responses but only 1.21 in responses from males. In Omiya Anyima both males and females rank “rape and defilement” on average in their top five concerns. (Refer to Figures 1 through 7 and Table 2.)

XIII.

ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS IN CHARGE: METHODOLOGY AND LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION



Central to the approach of this study is a belief in the need and right of adolescents to participate in the decisions that concern them. Adolescent participation in this study and adult support for this participation took several principal forms, which are reviewed here in the context of the approach to the research.

Adolescents were: lead researchers; advocates; and research participants, who were interviewed by the research teams.

Adults were: advisors to the adolescent researchers; research coordinators; advocates; supporters; and research participants, who were interviewed by the research teams.

Once they got going, adolescents were eager to share their views with one another in focus groups, individual interviews and through a survey of top concerns.

Like the first of the Women's Commission's participatory studies with adolescents in Kosovo, this study provides important lessons about adolescent participation in decision-making processes that affect them. (See box below.)

Adolescent Participation: Some Lessons Learned

- Adolescents are sources of enormous and invaluable ability, creativity, energy and enthusiasm, and their ideas are important and valuable.
- Adolescent participation is necessary, achievable and may take many forms.
- Adolescents enjoy and learn from being engaged in constructive activities, especially those where they are making decisions, providing leadership and taking action, and their participation builds their capacity in ways that are useful to their lives beyond the tasks at hand.
- While participatory processes can empower young people, they can also further manipulate them, depending on the level to which adolescents are consulted and able to make choices within them – full participation goes beyond consultation to opportunities for leadership.
- Involving young people in research and assessment work places them in a position to advocate on their own behalf and enter community discussions using information and knowledge gained, adding legitimacy to their contributions.
- Adults can and should support adolescents' participation in a variety of important ways, requiring them to suspend authority structures that privilege their opinions and contributions.
- The variations in experience, skills and perceptions, including about themselves, that young people bring to their activities influence the quality and nature of young people's participation.

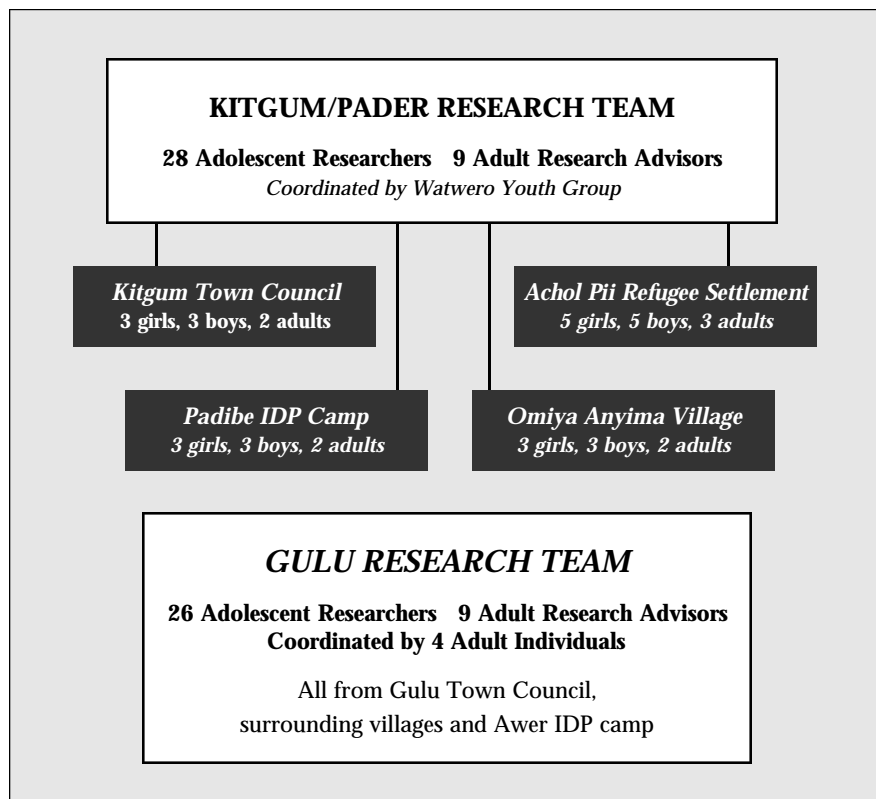
THE RESEARCH TEAMS

Fifty-four Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents living in the Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts of northern Uganda participated as “adolescent researchers” in this study. They were the principal researchers, in collaboration with the Women’s Commission. They designed and shaped their methodology, organized and conducted the research, and analyzed and reported their findings.

The young people worked on two separate teams, one in Gulu, known as the Gulu team, and one in Kitgum and Pader, known as the Kitgum/Pader team, with 26 and 28 adolescent researchers respectively. Eighteen adults serving as “research advisors” assisted them in their responsibilities, nine on each team. A local, Kitgum-based youth NGO, the Watwero Youth Group, served as a “youth coordination group” for the Kitgum/Pader team, and a group of four adult individuals acted as a “youth coordination group” for the Gulu team. Many of the adults involved also worked with NGOs in the region¹⁴⁷ and were respected members of the community, including parents and teachers.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) Uganda’s Psychosocial Program in Kitgum and World Vision Uganda’s Children and War Center in Gulu provided invaluable support to both of the teams, encouraging and facilitating their work from start to finish.

The objective of the teams’ work was to identify and investigate key issues facing adolescents in their communities and to identify solutions for these concerns. The results of their work will be used for advocacy purposes, to bring international, national and local attention to adolescent and youth concerns in northern Uganda and the surrounding region. Their recommendations will inform decisions made about programs and policies implemented in northern Uganda, including strengthening current efforts and implementing new pilot projects for young people that *involve* young people. It is also hoped that the process will inspire young people and provide them with ideas about ways they can take action on their own behalf, with or without help from adults.



SELECTING THE ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS

The Women’s Commission laid out basic guidelines and developed criteria for selecting adolescent researchers, adult research advisors and the youth coordination groups according to a Terms of Reference for each. Diversity was a key criterion to ensure the representation of the range of experiences and perspectives of young people in the community and to ensure the maximum opportunity for the researchers to learn from one another.

As a result of consultations with adolescents and local and international NGOs in the districts, the research teams were chosen in a variety of ways – from a process of democratic, community self-selection to interviews with the Women’s Commission, as discussed further below. Team participants were of both sexes, aged from 10 to 20 years and included returned abductees, internally displaced Ugandans, Sudanese refugees, adolescents living in and out of camps, those orphaned by war and by HIV/AIDS, students and out-of-school youth, working youth, adolescents with disabilities, youth activists (e.g., for peace) and adolescent heads of household. They also included adults with a commitment to and/or experience working with young people.

In Kitgum and Pader, adolescents also represented four distinct settings: a Sudanese refugee settlement (Achol Pii, Pader); an IDP camp (Padibe, Kitgum); an isolated and particularly war-torn village (Omiya Anyima, Kitgum) and a town center (Kitgum Town Council, Kitgum). The Gulu team had representatives from Gulu town, the Awer displaced persons camp and rural villages outside Gulu town.

DESIGNING, ORGANIZING AND IMPLEMENTING THE RESEARCH

Each team participated in a three-day training, where Women's Commission researchers and local professionals guided them through a process of identifying their purpose as a team, learning about research and developing and practicing their methodology. The Women's Commission provided a framework for the researchers, including the following general questions: "What are the main problems of adolescents/youth in northern Uganda, and what are some solutions?" and "Who are 'adolescents' and 'youth' in northern Uganda today?" A combination of focus groups, case studies of individual interviews and a survey for ranking adolescents' top concerns were also suggested.¹⁴⁸ After the training, the research teams conducted their research for roughly three weeks, followed by a week of analysis and two weeks of drafting a team report.

Beyond this framework, which the adolescents affirmed, the adolescent researchers themselves identified topics and sample questions to be covered in focus group discussions and individual case study interviews. They also designed their own surveys, containing a list of concerns, of which research participants were asked to rank their own top ten. Although each team worked separately, they devel-



Adolescent researchers and adult research advisors worked together during their training to develop and test their focus group questions.

oped very similar questions, and their survey categories were virtually identical. Consequently the same survey was used for each. (See Appendix for methodological materials.) The case studies conducted by the adolescents covered a range of issues and experiences they identified in their work, providing a more in-depth look at typical adolescent experiences.



One on one: adolescent researchers conducted case studies of typical problems facing the young people they met.

In both teams, security and logistical restrictions played a role. While the full Kitgum/Pader team was trained together and did their final analysis together, four subgroups of the team conducted their research in each of the four sites where researchers were from. Security constraints prevented each of these subgroupings of young people from traveling outside of their area to conduct research. In Gulu, security problems restricted the team to the town limits and nearby villages and "protected camps," which are home to thousands of IDPs. All of the Gulu researchers had the opportunity to work together in all locations. Of the IDP camps included in the research, a total of seven were involved – Anaka, Awer, Lugore, Pabbo, Pagak and Parabongo, in Gulu District, and Padibe in Kitgum District.

Focus groups and surveys were carried out by smaller groups of the larger research team, including two to four adolescent researchers, accompanied by one adult research advisor. The adolescent researchers in these small groups took the lead explaining the project to participants, posing questions, generating dialog, taking notes and administering the survey. Following the sessions, the adolescents also wrote up summaries of the overall findings of the sessions. Adults acted as guides, helped the young people to organize themselves and endeavored to intervene only when needed. Adolescent researchers acted individually to invite research participants to be interviewed separately for case studies. These interviews

at times lasted several hours, following which the adolescent researchers wrote written reports of their case studies.

Each focus group/survey session aimed to involve no more than eight to ten people to provide ample opportunities for individuals to speak.¹⁴⁹ Sessions were conducted in the language of choice of the participants, mainly Luo, also known as “Acholi,” the native language of the Acholi people. Although the length of the sessions varied, in general the groups spent an hour and a half talking in the focus groups and then half an hour filling out the surveys.

Who was interviewed?

Adolescent researchers conducted focus groups with the following groups of young people:

- females
- males
- males and females together
- orphans
- the disabled
- refugees
- internally displaced persons
- primary and secondary students
- those out of school
- former child soldiers
- heads of household
- working young people
- prisoners
- formerly abducted

They also interviewed the following adults:

- mothers/fathers/guardians
- teachers
- religious leaders
- widows
- elders
- women vendors
- refugees
- internally displaced persons
- the disabled

The Women’s Commission also interviewed NGO, government, military and United Nations (UN) representatives in the three districts and in Kampala.

Attendance at the sessions was voluntary for participants, and they were informed that their testimony might be used in printed reports, but that their identities would be kept confidential for their protection. The taking and publication of photos was only permitted with the verbal agreement of the research participants.

EXPERIENCE, MOTIVES AND IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION

THE ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS

The experience was undoubtedly the most interesting and meaningful to the adolescent members of the research teams, who were exposed to the hundreds of research participants they interviewed and to the issues they uncovered. The research team members worked together for many weeks, developed enormous enthusiasm for their work and felt a huge sense of accomplishment. Some joined the team to make “a little bit of money” or “to pay school fees,” others joined to learn new skills and to better understand youth issues. Despite the scores of youth associations and clubs focused on income-generation, sports, drama or music, relatively few young people have been involved in community decision-making or program development. None of the research team members had previous experience in such an action-oriented, adolescent-led study, and few had ever been asked to express their views about how to improve their society.

Most had some understanding of “peer-to-peer outreach” models, which in their experience involved young people being taught something by adults and then “sensitizing” other young people in their communities. It was very difficult for them to understand that they were *not* going to be sensitizing anyone about anything. Instead, they were going to develop and ask questions about topics they would identify themselves and attempt to do a lot of unbiased listening. Thus, for the adolescent researchers, the challenges of participation included developing critical thinking, listening and analytical skills, ultimately deciding for themselves what young people need and what young people’s role in community decision-making and programming for youth should be.

Overall, the researchers on both teams enjoyed getting to know one other and the adolescents they interviewed. They confronted their fears of leading discussions and speaking in front of others and met new challenges with growing confidence and excite-

ment. They also worked through disagreements and dissent about the process and supported each others' progress. While having received no promises that their efforts would produce desired outcomes, the process instead showed the young people the potential value of research and advocacy, of hope and of confidence in themselves and others.¹⁵⁰ All these skills and experience are useful to other areas of their lives.

"I've joined this research team so that youth can better understand their rights and needs, for better protection for youth and to sensitize the community about youth problems. Understanding youth problems can bring more understanding and cooperation within the community and create peace in the community."

—Kinyera Richard, 17,
adolescent researcher, upon joining
the Gulu research team.

Knowing that the research would be followed by advocacy activities involving adolescent members of their teams in the United States and in Uganda, including making presentations to governmental, nongovernmental and UN decision-makers, such as at the UN Special Session on Children in September 2001, the adolescent researchers were doubly motivated to do their best and faithfully report the concerns of their communities. Given their excitement for the project and the skills and confidence they developed, the participating youth are likely to undertake more activities with adults, each other and/or individually. In effect, they form energetic, knowledgeable nuclei for further youth-led community-based action. The Watwero Youth Group in particular has the potential to immediately build on the capacity and experience gained in the process of coordinating the study and to provide leadership in developing new opportunities for young people to take on additional youth-led projects.

ADOLESCENT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The hundreds of adolescents who participated in the research had a very different participatory experience in the research process from the adolescent

researchers. The collective impact of their participation is potentially large, but its immediate impact on their individual lives is small.

As respondents, they had opportunities to express their thoughts and opinions for roughly one to five hours through the survey, group discussions and individual interviews. They also received a commitment that their views would be included among the findings of the study. Beyond this, the researchers basically came and went, and the participants will receive no other feedback until the teams return with reports of their findings some months later. They may hear radio shows and participate in future community discussions that focus on the issues they raised. Together, their contributions form a useful, powerful voice representing the experiences of thousands that can be used by decision-makers to target programming and policies for young people. However, unless these young people become animated and supported to act as a result of this work within their local communities, their individual participation will remain limited.

For broader adolescent participation to occur and for additional support to come to young people already engaged in meaningful activities for youth, strong efforts are needed to spread the words and ideas of these participants and generate concrete interventions that involve and impact many more young people. The same holds true for the adults involved in work with young people, and a challenge remains for all – locally and internationally – to keep young people's active input and leadership at the center, not the at periphery, of efforts on their behalf. When merely consulted, young people must continue to be informed of the outcomes of their efforts and as much as possible re-engaged more substantively.

"There's just one thing I want to know. Are you going to pay our school fees or not?"

—Jackie, an adolescent from Kitgum,
questioning the adolescent researchers
on the motives of the research study.

ADULTS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Adults involved in the project needed to come to terms with their relatively limited role as guides and facilitators in the service of the young people's lead-

ership. Their role was to keep the young people generally on track and help them to organize themselves. They would intervene in their conversations and decision-making only when necessary or requested.

At first it was difficult for the adults to put aside traditional authority structures that give precedence to their opinions or ways of doing things. By their own admission, they had trouble resisting impulses to fill gaps of silence with their own thoughts or to jump in with help rather than letting the adolescent researchers work through their tasks. Ultimately, most adults managed to assist the young people well, offering them only helpful suggestions and limiting their control.

“I’m here because of the problems that people in the north are experiencing and because it has caused a break between the old and the young. Adolescents have lost their status because of the conflict, and it is important that the old discuss problems with the young. We need to create love and peace for all and friendship in local and international relationships, irrespective of age or sex.”

Wokos Martin, adult research advisor, upon joining the Gulu research team.

Adults interviewed by adolescents were also largely welcoming of the young people’s research activities, and responded to them openly as long as the questioners showed them the proper respect. Younger adolescents were especially in need of guidance from adults and older adolescents in undertaking their research responsibilities. All the adults were impressed by the enormous dedication of the adolescent researchers and their ability to accomplish their work so successfully.

COMPARING THE YOUTH COORDINATION FUNCTION IN THE TWO DISTRICTS

The central role of youth coordinators in Kitgum and Pader in contrast to the Gulu Team demonstrated perhaps the most significant differences

between the teams’ functioning in the two Districts, affecting the quality of adolescent participation. In Kitgum and Pader, for example, the Watwero Youth Group took responsibility for coordinating all of the team’s training, research, analysis and reporting activities, facilitating the young people’s initiative in undertaking these activities. In Gulu, because no established youth entity could be identified, a group of four adult individuals acted as a coordination group and directed the organization of the research process in a more centralized way. Under the leadership of the Watwero Youth Group, with help from IRC, the team selection process in Kitgum and Pader was well organized with essay competitions and an election by peers. With the Gulu team, in the absence of a youth coordination group, the team selection took place before the formation of a coordinating body of adults. Young people were nominated by their community, with the help of World Vision and other NGOs in Gulu, and then interviewed and chosen by the Women’s Commission. The survey design and results were nearly identical, and both teams did a thorough and exceptionally thoughtful job, but in many respects it was ultimately easier for the youth group to support the activities of the adolescent researchers than the group of adults.

Watwero Youth Group, for example, found it relatively easier to coordinate and motivate the adolescent researchers than did the adult-led coordination body of the Gulu team. Notwithstanding their dedicated and hard work, it was much harder for the Gulu coordinators as a group of adult individuals randomly brought together to depart from a relatively stratified approach to project implementation and to create a non-traditional atmosphere of youth-led teamwork. The budgeting and management functions of the study were also less in the hands of young people in Gulu, who at times felt stunted in their activities and argued that “adolescents should be coordinating this work.” This may have led, in part, to fewer opportunities for the adolescent researchers on the Gulu team to hold focus group sessions. A total of over 1,400 respondents were interviewed in Kitgum/Pader compared to more than 500 in Gulu – still, both amazing accomplishments.

The Watwero Youth Group, in contrast, was used to regularly convening young people, garnering their opinions and energy and knowing how to combine work and fun. They had an easier time encouraging and supporting the natural energies

and inspirations of the adolescent researchers. At the same time, the youth group had other issues to contend with, struggling to reach consensus on the management of finances and on planning the future direction of the organization. In general, those who were more active and involved in the project were more interested in deepening the scope and expertise of the organization. Those less involved were more concerned about short-term gain and opportunities.

While it is perfectly possible and very important for adults and adolescents to work together to create successful participatory experiences for adolescents, where adolescents play strong leadership roles, the adults involved must be able to create a balance between young people's need for autonomy and support. Individuals with youth organizing experience, including young activists, are likely to be particularly familiar with the dynamics of youth leadership and better equipped to support it.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

The research process also demonstrated that adolescents' ability to be proactive decision-makers decreases the risk of their becoming merely passive observers, or worse, being manipulated by adults, even those with their best interests at heart. If the adolescent researchers had not been able to shape the questioning of their peers, to review the budget and make decisions about its implementation, they would have essentially been following the direction of adults. Moreover, the adolescents showed a healthy skepticism during their work, which helped them to question and shape the process in ways that made sense and which seemed fair to them. Without these variables, adolescents risk being co-opted into processes that may simply use them, as opposed to help them develop their skills or empower them. A key challenge for communities and organizations in northern Uganda is to support adolescents' participation in ways that are not merely tokenistic or solely about following adult leaders, but that build their confidence and skills and that foster real leadership and hope among them.

XIV. INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESPONSES TO ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH CONCERNS

NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS: STRONG STRUCTURAL AND POLICY BASE BUT LIMITED RESULTS

A strong opportunity for improving the situation of adolescents and youth in the north lies in the institutional and policy bases of the Ugandan government, which have clear structures and mandates for addressing children and youth concerns. At the national level, there is a Department of Youth and Children's Affairs,¹⁵¹ which falls under the Directorate of Gender and Community Involvement, within the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development. It has corresponding structures at the district, county, sub-county, parish and village levels¹⁵² and functions within a policy framework guided by the Ugandan Constitution, the 1996 Children's Statute and most recently a National Youth Policy adopted this year. As previously mentioned, Uganda has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).



Youth center space like this in Achol Pii refugee settlement is hard to come by in northern Uganda. More support for adolescent-led initiatives is urgently needed.

Following the World Summit for Children in 1990, the Ugandan government adopted the Uganda National Program of Action for Children (UNPAC) and created the National Council for Children (NCC) to help make its objectives operational. In 1993, the Government of Uganda also deepened its commitment to promoting unity among youth, as well as youth capacity and protection, by passing the

National Youth Council Statute. This statute establishes a National Youth Council (NYC), which has branches throughout Uganda at district and sub-levels that parallel those of the government.¹⁵³

According to its guidelines, the NYC is intended to provide “a voice for youth...[to] ensure that government and other decision- and policy makers are kept informed of the views and aspirations of the youth...” and “point out the gaps in various youth programs and other relevant programs.”¹⁵⁴

Taken together, these policy frameworks contain comprehensive commitments and strategies for ensuring the protection and care of children, adolescents and young adults. The establishment of the NYC underlines Uganda’s commitment to strengthening youth leadership and activism from the community to the national level, including the participation of young women. In addition, according to Principal Youth Officer Kayateka Mondo, the creation of the National Youth Policy is a deliberate attempt to improve upon “uncoordinated and unguided planning” and to meet the challenge of “mainstreaming youth elements into all programs and policies.”¹⁵⁵

Despite the strong policy background and its extremely knowledgeable youth officers, NYC members and NCC staff, there continues to be a staggering gap between words and action. When asked about the situation of adolescents in the north, Mr. Mondo said: “Adolescents are disadvantaged already, and it’s worse in war and worse still in camps. Their access to basic necessities and to school is very difficult, and they live in fear of attack.” At the same time, he acknowledged limited institutional responses to ongoing problems for young people in the north, which he attributed in part to limited resources and the lack of coordination between ministerial sectors. However, the Ugandan government has been successful at facilitating internationally funded programs for adolescents focused, for example, on reproductive health. Few, however, reach young people in the north. In general, there is no sense that the government is responding to the real state of emergency facing children, adolescents and youth in the north.

The NYC has indeed provided much opportunity for many young adults to learn leadership skills, and it has been used as a springboard for many young people to enter civil society positions. However, the NYC’s structure is almost non-functional at the parish and village levels, and it has not lived up to

its potential to reach many young people in or out of schools. While it has consulted with young people at many levels of society, it tends to privilege the opinions and activism of a relatively small group at the expense of the majority of rural, displaced and refugee adolescent and youth populations. In addition, while the NYC is not technically beholden to all governmental policies, it lacks a level of enthusiasm for open, grassroots activism and capacity-building for all young people.

Adolescents interviewed about the national youth structures stated that in general, the NYC and government youth structures are largely meaningless to their lives. In one instance, a young person said: “The local Council has not listened to youth ideas and does not have a vision for youth that relates to our needs. The national youth structure is like a skeleton without flesh.”¹⁵⁶

The Ugandan government, the NYC and all other national structures must act swiftly to improve the facilitation of child, adolescent and youth leadership at all levels of society. Young people have developed survival and life skills to cope with the effects of conflict. Along with their efforts to self-organize into income-generation, support or creative groups, these skills hold the seeds to further youth-led, community-based action to improve adolescent protection and care. Such support would go a long way to building much-needed bridges between young people and governmental structures. It would also begin to tap the potential of young people to play constructive evaluative and monitoring roles in their communities, particularly where child- and youth-specific programs and policies are concerned. These activities must also be undertaken with comprehensive efforts to mainstream teaching about tolerance, peace-building, conflict resolution and democracy in and out of schools.

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Although adolescent and youth organizations exist, young people agreed that they have little support or influence on community decision-making. They believe that this is in part due to the lack of resources and adult support and adverse working conditions caused by the conflict. They also believe that adults do not value their opinions. Many adults confirmed this perspective, explaining that Uganda has no tradition of adolescent or youth participation. Consequently, few community initiatives seek their input and collaboration.

Many of the youth groups that do exist focus on a single activity, such as sports, drama, dancing, livelihood skills or income-generation. Others are linked to churches or schools. But few groups incorporate these activities into, or directly address, larger issues of protection or peace and reconciliation within the community. These groups demonstrate skills and the enormous potential for further action to improve their lives and communities. Most express a strong desire for assistance in developing organizational, leadership and other skills to help them promote the protection of their rights, peace within their community and their involvement in civil society decision-making. Adolescents say that such initiatives will help to “heal the wounds of hopelessness, fear and frustration, and will open new gates of hope for the adolescents of northern Uganda.”¹⁵⁷

Youth groups are involved in a broad spectrum of issues and activities. They include:

- **WATWERO**, which means roughly “We can do it” or “We are able,” is one of the few youth-led NGOs in the north. Based in Kitgum, it was started in 1998 by educated, unemployed youth, whose first several dozen members set out to keep busy and attempt to generate some income for themselves. Watwero has since received funding and/or other support from a variety of organizations, including Africa Network 2000, UNDP, AVSI and ASSET, Meeting Point, Kitgum District, the Women’s Commission, IRC and others. Today Watwero has several branches and seeks to empower young people economically and socially. They have undertaken a variety of income-generation projects, including farming, poultry, fishery, pig and rabbit rearing and brick-laying. They maintain an engineering and carpentry workshop to utilize the skills of many of their members, a little less than 30 percent of whom are female. Many of their members, who mostly range in age from 17 to 30, have been trained in HIV/AIDS sensitization with children and adolescents, and have conducted awareness-raising activities in schools. They have also been engaged in peace education, peace club and child rights activities. With this research

study, Watwero is also increasing its capacity as an organization that advocates for the rights of young people in all of the areas described. Watwero continues to remain in strong need of support and encouragement to build its organizational and management capacity, as well as for each of the sectors it is engaged in.

- **The Uganda Red Cross Society Youth Program** trains youth volunteers to reduce the vulnerability of young people and to increase their capacity to respond to their own and community needs. In Gulu, for instance, over 700 Red Cross youth volunteers play a role in relief and emergency response through distributing food in IDP camps, educating communities on health and sanitation issues, tracing abducted children to their families in camps and organizing sports activities.
- **World Vision Student Association (WOVSA)** is active in secondary schools in Gulu town. Members debate and take part in charity work, including income-generating and building homes for sick community members.
- Countless **Young People’s Associations** have been formed by adolescents and youth throughout Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, particularly in rural areas. For mostly economic and social reasons, young people have formed groups focused on music, drama, dance, “digging,” brick-laying, pig raising, fish farming and more. These groups bring young people together ranging in age from under 10 to 30 for fun and income-generation. While their efforts are not always successful, they represent enormous initiative on the part of youth, show their great potential for strong youth organizing and provide them with psychosocial support.



Many young people’s associations focus on music, such as this troop in Kitgum, which gives its community the priceless gift of song.

NGO PROGRAMMING FOR WAR-AFFECTED ADOLESCENTS IS PRINCIPALLY FOCUSED ON FORMERLY ABDUCTED

The majority of local and international NGOs working in northern Uganda are not addressing adolescents, young people said. According to the Kitgum/Pader team report, “Humanitarian organizations and the government have failed to protect and address the needs of adolescents and youth in northern Uganda.” Furthermore, the same report concludes that “programs designed to help young people directly do not exist, and adolescents in Kitgum are helpless.”¹⁵⁸

There are some notable exceptions in centers and programs focused on the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of formerly abducted children, which are described below. However, these programs only minimally incorporate adolescent leadership into their work.

Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), a local NGO, works with formerly abducted adolescents in a rehabilitation center in Gulu, providing them with basic essentials such as food, clothing and medical care; psychosocial support through culturally-appropriate counseling that incorporates Acholi traditions, such as dance and music; skills training and basic and formal education. The center, run with support from **Save the Children, Denmark**, has successfully resettled nearly 3,000 children between its inception in 1994 and March 2001.¹⁵⁹ After living at the center for about six weeks, the adolescents are reunited with their families and reintegrated in the community. GUSCO monitors their transition to community life and works with community members, teachers and other professionals to ease the process of adjustment.¹⁶⁰

The Kitgum Concerned Women’s Association (KICWA), a local NGO, works with support from the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** to care for and assist formerly abducted adolescents in a Reception and Reintegration Center in Kitgum. Upon arrival at the center, adolescents receive medical attention, basic care and counseling and participate in psychosocial activities to assist in the recovery from their traumatic experiences. KICWA staff work to trace and reunify families and follow-up with community-based psychosocial support. The majority of adolescents, 473 of whom have gone through the center since 1998, are usually reunited with their families within two weeks of arriving at the center.



The middle son (left) in this adolescent-headed household got international NGO help with start-up costs and ongoing management advice to run a kiosk to support himself, his older brother’s schooling and his younger brother’s care.

IRC also sponsors community-based psychosocial activities for formerly abducted adolescents and their families, including community sensitization; family and peer group discussions; parent support groups; formation of sports teams; and the promotion of traditional dance, drama, play therapy and cultural rituals. It also supports adolescent health education and life skills training, vocational skills training and income-generation schemes that assist with the reintegration of the abducted adolescents.¹⁶¹

Since March 1995, **World Vision Uganda’s** Children of War Center in Gulu has been working to rehabilitate and reintegrate formerly abducted adolescents. Between March 1995 and August 2000, 5,420 children and adolescents had gone through the program. Nearly 90 percent of them were boys. Adolescents generally stay in the center for six to nine months, during which time they receive medical treatment, therapeutic feeding, psychosocial support, vocational skills training and family tracing. Once they are resettled within their community, staff members will follow up on them, working to strengthen community capacity to accept the adolescents. Once adolescents leave the center, they can gain more in-depth skills in World Vision training centers in both Gulu and Kitgum.¹⁶²

The Concerned Parents Association (CPA), a local NGO created by the families of formerly abducted adolescents, has a membership of over 5,000 parents and their extended families. It has established a network of support for the parents of abducted children and assists the reintegration and healing of formerly abducted children and their communities. CPA also helps formerly abducted children return to school. In addition, CPA works within communities to create an awareness of the plight of children and adolescents in conflict and advocates at the local, national and international levels for the release of the abducted children and a peaceful end to the conflict. The **Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD)** is also working to reconcile returned abductees with their communities.

The three-year-old non-profit association **Sponsoring Children Uganda** raises money to pay for school fees for formerly abducted children in northern Uganda with the help of GUSCO, World Vision and CPA. In the past year, the association has raised some US\$110,000 and paid for 150 formerly abducted children and adolescents to school to attend school for three years.¹⁶³

Other programs that support adolescents and youth are focused on reproductive health. For example, the **Program for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Health Life (PEARL)** promotes adolescent reproductive health by providing young people between the ages of 10 and 24 with appropriate reproductive health counseling and services and helping to create a more responsive environment. PEARL works in Gulu and is funded by UNFPA, the Government of Norway and the European Union.¹⁶⁴ In addition, local groups such as the **Gulu Women's AIDS Task Force (GWATF)** conduct workshops to train women and adolescent girls on HIV/AIDS education. Once trained, the women and girls sensitize communities about HIV/AIDS prevention and care through song and drama.

Meeting Point assists communities dealing with the effects of HIV/AIDS on victims and families, including children and adolescents. Founded in 1990 by family members of AIDS victims, early Meeting Point volunteers visited AIDS patients and their relatives at a time when sufferers were stigmatized and there was little knowledge about how the disease was spread. In 1994, Meeting Point registered as an NGO and today has many branches, including in IDP camps. They engage in a host of activities, including working with the district to arrange for the

adoption of AIDS orphans or facilitating patients' access to medical care; assisting families with income-generation activities; providing prevention education, including with adolescents and youth as trainers and learners; and conducting home visits with AIDS sufferers.

INTERNATIONAL DONORS

The 2001 Consultative Group (CG) meeting¹⁶⁵ between Uganda and its donors resulted in a pledge of US\$2.5 billion from donors for the Ugandan budget over the next three years.¹⁶⁶ Donor resources provide nearly half of Uganda's total operating budget and are focused on infrastructure and private sector development, social service provision, decentralization and agriculture modernization, as well as policy and institutional reform.¹⁶⁷

Despite this level of support, little assistance is invested in the war-torn districts of northern Uganda. In fact, overall donor support to northern Uganda from 1996 – 2000 is estimated to be approximately US\$100 million.¹⁶⁸ A demonstration of the inadequacy of this amount is the fact that the WFP's 2001 appeal for just one year of food assistance in Uganda, targeted toward the displaced and refugee populations in northern and western Uganda, is over US\$36 million.¹⁶⁹ Currently, almost 60 percent of this project remains unfunded.¹⁷⁰

Although donors acknowledge that insecurity prevents them from investing in some humanitarian and development operations, they also say the government must invest less in defense and more in northern "peace and reconciliation."

According to UNOCHA, northern Uganda has suffered from a split assistance strategy by donors in Uganda, under which funds are disbursed to the more stable regions, leaving humanitarian activities in the north "chronically underfunded."¹⁷¹ Although donors acknowledge that insecurity prevents them from investing in some humanitarian and development operations, they also say the government must invest less in defense and more in northern "peace and reconciliation."¹⁷² The budget of the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, responsible for humanitarian

assistance, has proportionally decreased as humanitarian assistance has increased during the past several years.¹⁷³ At the 2001 CG meeting in Kampala, Western donors requested that the government end the war in the north, provide greater resources for the amnesty and increase development programs in order to reduce poverty.¹⁷⁴ The World Bank appears to be attempting to do its part with a new Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project noted below. It proposes to prioritize community participation and address youth needs.

International donor funding explicitly addressing adolescent issues is rare. Instead, they are incorporated in broader funding schemes for children or for communities as a whole. Because of this, the scope of donor support for adolescents is difficult to ascertain. Moreover, when donor attention is focused on adolescents, it is largely targeted at those who were formerly abducted. Without minimizing the great needs of these children, this leaves unmet the needs of the majority of young people, who are also desperate for assistance and support for their capacities.

Highlights of international funding to programs that include adolescents are described below. This information by no means represents all the funding that includes adolescents and youth or an evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions.

International donor funding explicitly addressing adolescent issues is rare . . . when donor attention is focused on adolescents, it is largely targeted at those who were formerly abducted.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides about US\$30 million annually in assistance to the north, the majority of which is in the form of emergency food relief although some of it also benefits adolescents.¹⁷⁵ Since mid-1999, USAID has been implementing a US\$10 million program, *Improved Foundation for the Reintegration of Targeted Areas of Northern Uganda (RENU)*, which includes **the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund's (DCOF)** support for reintegration and rehabilitation programs for war-affected children and adolescents.¹⁷⁶ Through Red Barnet (Save the Children Denmark), DCOF has committed US\$1,352,155 since April 1999 to pro-

mote the reintegration of formerly abducted children into their families and communities in Gulu. Save the Children Denmark Uganda works with local partners to implement the project, including GUSCO, CPA, the Department of Youth and Children of the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development and the Gulu District Local Government. DCOF has also provided US\$1,467,919 to AVSI since August 1999. AVSI works in Kitgum with the IRC to improve the psychosocial well being of formerly abducted children and adolescents as well as that of the general population.¹⁷⁷ USAID will also provide funding to the IRC for sustainable youth projects in Kitgum as follow-up to this youth-led research study.

A new, four- to five-year, US\$125 million **World Bank** project, the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project II (NURP II), is slated to empower communities in northern Uganda, including Acholiland,¹⁷⁸ by enhancing their capacity to plan for their needs and implement sustainable development initiatives. The project will include a focus on vulnerable populations, mobilizing them to join mainstream development processes. These vulnerables include unemployed youth, youth whose education has been interrupted by conflict, orphans and female-headed households. Project components include a *Community Development Initiative*, which will finance community-based, demand-driven initiatives; a *Vulnerable Groups Support Sub-Project* that will target vulnerable groups using a participatory process; and a *Community Peace-Building and Conflict Management Component*, which will support community peace-building processes, including the reintegration of abductees.¹⁷⁹ The World Bank also hopes that NURP II will focus on youth through a pending two-year, US\$1.3 million youth intervention funded by the Japanese Social Development Fund.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supports basic education and psychosocial support for approximately 250,000 children of primary school age in Uganda, some of whom are adolescents affected by armed conflict in Uganda, including in Kitgum and Gulu. UNICEF works through several international and local NGOs and government ministries, and will provide some US\$2 million in 2001.¹⁸⁰ The percentage of this that will be earmarked for Acholiland is not known. UNICEF has also committed to funding youth-related initiatives in Kitgum District as a follow-up to the Women's Commission's adolescent research study.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing nearly US\$19 million for refugee assistance in Uganda, including for Sudanese refugees in Kitgum and Gulu Districts.

During 2001, the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is providing US\$1,668,911 to African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), AVSC and the Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) to improve the access and availability of reproductive health services for the internally displaced populations in Gulu, with an emphasis on service delivery for men, women and adolescents.¹⁸¹

The **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** is funding a US\$214,800 program to support the livelihood needs of 130,000 Acholi youth between 15 and 25 years old who have been displaced in the Districts of Kitgum, Gulu and Masindi, which neighbors Gulu to the south. Implemented by Christian Children's Fund, the program will provide basic life skills and promote entrepreneurship among internally displaced youth for self-employment. This program fills "an important gap not covered by UNICEF, WFP or NGOs, as the future of the Acholi rests with its present youth."¹⁸²

A CALL FOR INCREASED ADOLESCENT CAPACITY-BUILDING AND MORE YOUTH CONTROL OVER FUNDING FOR THE NORTH

While these funding initiatives seem promising, there is need for them to include a comprehensive adolescent and youth capacity-building component. Today, few youth-run organizations are in a position to provide strong leadership in program implementation, leaving outcomes largely out of their control. To jumpstart young people's capacity and opportunities for leadership, funds should also support:

- Education and skills training for adolescents and youth, including business, leadership, conflict-resolution, peace-building and more
- Efforts to include young people as integral decision-makers and project implementers
- Adolescent and youth monitoring and evaluation (including of fiscal responsibility)
- Access to banking, loans and credit

Support for building young people's capacity must target girls and boys equally and should involve parents and other supportive adults.

In addition, local organizations in particular require increased funding. The CPA, for example, says that lack of funding has limited the numbers of children and adolescents that they can help return to school. Currently, CPA has only sufficient funding for the most vulnerable, such as orphaned formerly abducted children and adolescents, although they desire to expand this program to include the thousands more war-affected children who are desperate to return to school.¹⁸³

Many adolescents feel that these government officials, as well as arms dealers, business officials and others benefiting from the conflict, have deliberately slowed peace processes. "When there is nothing from which they can benefit, they shall support the peace process," say the adolescents.

Many adolescents, moreover, complain that government corruption is sidetracking much donor funding to Acholiland. Adolescents say that government officials are benefiting from the war by acting as channels of assistance and intermediaries between the donors and the people. These officials are thinking of their own interests far ahead of the interests of their constituents, young people believe. The Gulu research team reported a belief that some government officials have misused "over 50 percent" of the donor funding meant for the victims of armed conflict.¹⁸⁴ In addition, many adolescents feel that these government officials, as well as arms dealers, business officials and others benefiting from the conflict, have deliberately slowed peace processes. "When there is nothing from which they can benefit, they shall support the peace process," say the adolescents.¹⁸⁵

Many Acholis say that government and donor spending on infrastructure and job creation is a far better long-term investment than military spending and that it would lead to improved security and restore their confidence in the government. Adolescents call on the international community to "intervene in this lasting insecurity, which has claimed many innocent civilians' lives," to disarm the rebels and to transmit donor funding directly to the community, including young people, in order to avoid government corruption.¹⁸⁶

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

A serious peace initiative between the Ugandan government and the LRA, involving the traditional chiefs and elders of the Acholi community, broke down in 1994.¹⁸⁷ Subsequent attempts at peace in the past few years have been promising, but have shown few concrete results in terms of the release of the thousands of children and adolescents held captive by the LRA. In December 1999, the presidents of Uganda and Sudan signed a peace accord in Nairobi, Kenya, which was negotiated by the U.S.-based Carter Center. While the aim of the accord was to normalize relations between the two countries, it also contained provisions for the return of all abductees and an end to the support of rebel groups in each country. Following the agreement, the Sudanese government began to facilitate the release of the children. Most of those released, however, were *not* abducted Ugandan children held captive by the LRA. Instead, some were Ugandan adolescents who had escaped the LRA on their own and were living in Sudan, while others had not been abducted at all. While the Carter Center continues to work toward strengthening this agreement, only 285 adults and children have been repatriated since the agreement was signed nearly two years ago.¹⁸⁸ Another agreement, the Joint Communiqué on Immediate Action on Abducted Children, was signed in Winnipeg, Canada in September 2000 and has also met with minimal success.¹⁸⁹ Similar to the 1999 accord experience, the few children and adolescents who have returned have escaped on their own or they had not been held hostage by the LRA, and the war has continued.

*“First and foremost, we need peace.
That is what the young people
are saying.”*

— Betty, 16, adolescent researcher
from Gulu, presenting research findings
in New York, September 2001

RECENT PEACE EFFORTS IN UGANDA

Acholi people in northern Uganda express wide support for an amnesty bill passed by the Ugandan Parliament in late 1999, offering amnesty and reintegration to all current and former rebels. While local

communities are working to sensitize people about the need to support the amnesty, government implementation of the measure has so far been slow.¹⁹⁰ Representatives of the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI) believe the effort has suffered from a lack of resources and is “rather ineffective.”¹⁹¹ Community members and adolescents also fear that if the amnesty law is not coupled with measures to end poverty in the north, LRA members who accept the amnesty might then go back to the LRA voluntarily. Many suggest that a local housing provision, skills training and a credit or grant scheme are needed for LRA members to take advantage of the amnesty and successfully reintegrate into the community.

More recent and significant regional political changes began to take place in early 2001, reviving hopes for peace. The Government of Sudan openly initiated withdrawal of LRA support, and the Sudanese military is increasingly helping abducted children to escape. Rehabilitation workers and recent escapees participating in the Women's Commission research study reported little communication between the LRA and the Sudanese government. They also reported that the LRA leader Joseph Kony ordered them to shoot at the Sudanese military forces. Furthermore, an increased presence of Ugandan military in the north of Uganda has made the Uganda-Sudan border more difficult to cross. This has divided the LRA into two factions, one led by Kony in Sudan and the other by senior commanders in Uganda.

But the divide has gone beyond geography: some LRA commanders in Uganda no longer want to return to Sudan and are negotiating their reintegration with district and religious leaders and UPDF officials in Gulu and Kitgum. A high-level LRA commander recently escaped from southern Sudan, taking 50 abducted children with him. Joseph Kony, increasingly paranoid about disloyalty within his command structure, has reportedly withdrawn weapons from all but a select group of individuals, who now are guarding the abducted children.¹⁹²

Talks between the more moderate LRA commanders in Uganda, UPDF leaders and local Acholi officials are proceeding.¹⁹³ Many Acholis credit UPDF Fourth Division Commander Brig. Henry Tumukunde for bringing about an environment of reconciliation between the LRA and the UPDF. A number of political, religious, cultural and other Acholi groups,

including the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI), Kacoke Madit, the Kitgum Peace Initiative (KPI), the Gulu District Peace and Reconciliation Team (GDPRT) and the Acholi Parliamentary Group (APG), are also supporting the peace negotiations. However, few of these initiatives involve substantial youth leadership.

In addition, a variety of promising international initiatives are underway. Most notably, on Sept 18, the Governments of Sudan and Uganda normalized diplomatic relations with the reopening of the Ugandan Embassy in Khartoum.¹⁹⁴ According to the Ugandan presidential press secretary, the announcement by Sudanese President Al-Bashir of the withdrawal of his government's support to the LRA has "paved the way" for improved relations.¹⁹⁵ The European Parliament of the European Union also sent representatives to northern Uganda in March and again in June 2001 to meet with local leaders, IDPs and government officials to advocate for peace. In addition, a United Nations High Commission for Human Rights delegation traveled to northern Uganda in April 2001 to investigate the abduction of children and adolescents.

Community members and adolescents also fear that if the amnesty law is not coupled with measures to end poverty in the north, LRA members who accept the amnesty might then go back to the LRA voluntarily. Many suggest that a local housing provision, skills training and a credit or grant scheme are needed for LRA members to take advantage of the amnesty and successfully reintegrate into the community.

While these and other efforts are promising, the road to real peace requires a halt to further abductions and full-scale release of the captives. Pressure from the international community and widespread public support are also urgently needed. Furthermore, even though the Ugandan government has increased the number of its troops in the north, which the Acholi people have largely welcomed, the UPDF remains largely ineffective at stopping LRA attacks.

Determination, commitment and reconciliation are needed more than troops. And economic development and poverty reduction measures are needed as urgently as peace talks.

PEACE EFFORTS IN SUDAN

In Sudan, there has been little significant progress towards peace – despite four meetings in 2000 between the government and the SPLA with mediators from the Intergovernmental Authority for Development. In July 2001, the Sudanese government and a number of opposition and rebel groups accepted an Egyptian-Libyan peace initiative that provides for an interim government in which all political forces will be represented.

However, SPLA leader John Garang is calling for the demands of the National Democratic Alliance, a broad political alliance which includes the SPLA and northern insurgent forces opposed to the government, to be part of the peace initiative. Their demands include the separation of religion and state, the right to self-determination for southern Sudan and holding President Al-Bashir accountable for his alleged crimes. It is doubtful, however, that President Al-Bashir will accept these demands, and presently he is refusing to permit opposition parties to join a transitional administration until they first enter into a "political agreement" with the government. In addition, while the Government of Sudan has ended its support of the LRA, the Ugandan government has not yet ended its support of the SPLA.¹⁹⁶ Thus, even if fighting ends in northern Uganda, the war in southern Sudan may continue, with ongoing ramifications for adolescents and other young people in the region.

Although the SPLA forcibly recruits children and adolescents, SPLA representatives have repeatedly provided assurances to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Sudan that they would discontinue the use of child soldiers. In addition, in early 2001, the SPLA cooperated with UNICEF and other organizations in the demobilization of 3,200 child soldiers, some of whom NGOs believe were not in fact child soldiers. The SPLA has stated that there are 7,000 more child soldiers still to be demobilized.¹⁹⁷

XV. RECOMMENDATIONS

BRING PEACE TO NORTHERN UGANDA AND SOUTHERN SUDAN

The Governments of Uganda and Sudan should:

- Once and for all, abide by the provisions of peace agreements signed by Sudan, Uganda and others to end the wars in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, securing the immediate release of all children and adolescents abducted by the LRA and the SPLA.
- Immediately halt all support to the LRA and the SPLA, and urge them to disarm and release all captives.
- Provide strong leadership and resources to implement the amnesty process in Uganda and secure the demobilization and reintegration of LRA fighters in cooperation with the United Nations and local and international NGOs.

The LRA and SPLA should:

- Negotiate peace with the Governments of Uganda and Sudan, and disarm and release all captive children and child soldiers.

The United Nations and the International Community should:

- Urgently call on the Governments of Uganda and Sudan, and LRA and SPLA to end the wars in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, and support the immediate release of all children and adolescents in captivity.
- Monitor the implementation of local and international peace efforts.
- Support the peace efforts of the Carter Center, the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, Kacoke Madit, the Kitgum Peace Initiative, the Gulu District Peace and Reconciliation Team, Acholi Parliamentary Group and other local and international groups, encouraging adolescent participation in these efforts.

IMPROVE SECURITY FOR ALL CIVILIANS, AND SECURE THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN NORTHERN UGANDA AND SOUTHERN SUDAN

The Governments of Uganda and Sudan should:

- Implement and enforce all the provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law in domestic law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRC, end recruitment of under-18 soldiers into government forces, and demobilize all child soldiers currently within government ranks.
- Adhere to the United Nations *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and the *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Children*.
- Protect children and adolescents from rebel abduction, forced recruitment, forced labor and sexual enslavement; and continue to support the demobilization and reintegration of children and adolescents who have escaped from rebel groups.
- End the rape, "defilement" and sexual exploitation of adolescent girls and women by enforcing national law and prosecuting all perpetrators of this violence, especially UPDF soldiers in northern Uganda.
- In northern Uganda, increase collaborative work with District officials, NGOs and civilians to improve Ugandan army security patrols, particularly around IDP camps, refugee settlements, schools, medical facilities and transportation routes.
- In southern Sudan, cease the military bombardment of civilian targets by government forces.
- Establish national programs to increase the professionalism of the Ugandan and Sudanese armies, including education on human rights, international humanitarian legal standards and the protection of refugees and IDPs.
- Allow stringent independent monitoring of military conduct vis à vis children and adolescents, especially in Ugandan IDP camps, where rape and sexual exploitation of adolescent girls committed by the UPDF is rampant.

The United Nations should:

- In cooperation with the Organization for African Unity, mandate the High Commissioner for Human Rights to increase monitoring of human rights violations against children and adolescents in northern Uganda and southern Sudan committed by government forces, the LRA and the SPLA, and the implementation of recommendations made by the UNHCHR delegation to northern Uganda in 2001.
- Appoint an Ombudsman for Children's Rights in East Africa to work with international, national and community groups, including adolescents, with a focus on the northern Uganda/southern Sudan conflict.
- Employ the Security Council to invoke the United Nations Charter and authorize the deployment of peacekeeping forces by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to northern Uganda and southern Sudan to demilitarize and disarm rebel groups, in cooperation with the Governments of Uganda and Sudan.
- Ensure all United Nations agencies working in northern Uganda and southern Sudan involve adolescents and youth in human rights and protection monitoring.
- Assign a lead agency for IDPs in northern Uganda to work with the Ugandan government to provide a comprehensive response to their protection and care, including children and adolescents.
- Continue UNHCR's work with the Ugandan government, international donors and refugee communities in northern Uganda to fulfill their protection function and avoid further sacrifice of programs addressing the protection of children, adolescents and women in the face of shrinking resources. UNHCR field staff must also increase their presence in refugee settlements to facilitate cooperation between refugees, Ugandan settlement officials, NGO settlement administrators, the military and police on protection issues.
- Increase advocacy efforts on behalf of IDPs in northern Uganda and southern Sudan by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Francis Deng, including a joint international/national investigation into alternatives to the protected IDP camps in northern Uganda.
- Increase advocacy efforts by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSGCAC), Mr. Olara Otunnu, to speak out against atrocities com-

mitted against children and adolescents in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. The SRSGCAC should also work closely on advocacy efforts with adolescents in the region, facilitate peace negotiations at all levels, and promote the deployment of a Child Protection Advisor by DPKO to the region to assist and monitor all child protection efforts.

The LRA and SPLA should:

- Respect and adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and cease human rights abuses against children and adolescents and other civilians, including murder, abduction, forced recruitment and sexual slavery.
- Immediately release all abducted children and adolescents.
- Enter into peace negotiations with the Governments of Uganda and Sudan, the international community and local peace representatives.

The International Community should:

- Increase pressure on all warring parties in northern Uganda to immediately commit to peace.
- Provide sufficient funds to support all United Nations and NGO work in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, particularly the work of UNHCR and support for IDPs, and ensure these funds involve and benefit adolescents.
- Mandate and ensure independent monitoring of child and adolescent protection in all security and humanitarian operations in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. This should be a priority of the new United States Special Envoy to Sudan.
- Ensure local and international NGOs work in partnership with adolescents and other community members, UN bodies and governments to address and needs, rights and protection of children and adolescents in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN NORTHERN UGANDA, AND SUPPORT ADOLESCENT LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVES

The Ugandan government, the United Nations and the International Community should:

- Prioritize economic development and poverty reduction measures equally with peace initiatives to alleviate poverty-induced protection problems, including the sexual exploitation of girls, and lay

the groundwork for sustainable peace and development.

- Ensure that adequate international development assistance reaches northern Uganda through improved international monitoring.
- Increase existing support for the livelihood of formerly abducted adolescents, and expand livelihood support to other adolescents, especially girls, orphans, heads of households, refugees and IDPs; interventions should include income-generation activities, vocational and skills training, education about banking and saving, and access to grants, credit and loans.
- Increase funding for WFP humanitarian assistance to northern Uganda to improve food security in the north while the conflict continues.
- Increase security in northern Uganda, dismantle the IDP camps, ensure safe access to land for adolescents and others, and provide them mine awareness and skills training, tools, seeds, cattle and other animals to ease their repatriation and/or otherwise secure their self-sufficiency.
- Increase access to land for Sudanese refugees so that they can become self-sufficient, exploring possibilities of moving the Achol Pii refugee settlement to a safer area of Uganda with more land to cultivate.

FULFILL ADOLESCENTS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION, HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The Ugandan Government, the United Nations and the International Community should:

- Act immediately to counteract the decimation of children's and adolescents' right to complete primary education in northern Uganda with emergency support for Universal Primary Education in the north, ensuring especially that girls, orphans, IDPs and refugees have full opportunities to attend school.
- Initiate a combination of expanded governmental and private sponsorship support to increase the number of young people finishing primary school, where additional school structures are constructed, teachers are better trained and school lunches, clothing and other learning supplies are provided to young people.
- Prioritize UNICEF support for education in the north, and implement Integrated Community

Services programs, or "Child-Friendly Spaces," in the IDP camps.

- Establish an education fund for war-affected adolescents in northern Uganda to support their higher education, and enable greater numbers of Ugandans and Sudanese refugees from northern Uganda to complete secondary school and university.
- Support the inclusion of reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, peace-building and civic education in school curricula.
- Improve access to public health information for all adolescents, including on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, and facilitate access for adolescents to health services suited to their particular needs.
- Establish and increase support for existing psychosocial support services for adolescents, including especially formerly abducted young people, orphans and those living with HIV/AIDS.

INCREASE SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS' CAPACITIES AND LEADERSHIP

The Ugandan Government, the United Nations, the International Community and Adolescents should:

- Ensure the active involvement of adolescents in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of all services and activities, with special attention paid to the inclusion of girls.
- Create opportunities for enhanced dialog between adults and adolescents in the community, and ensure young people's full participation in community decision-making, including peace initiatives.
- Provide existing youth structures within the Ugandan government more support to become more responsive to the range of adolescent and youth issues in the north, supporting young people's creativity, energy and enthusiasm.
- Encourage and provide support to the creation and strengthening of community youth groups and associations.
- Ensure young people remain or become more involved in groups and activities at the community level, and support their leadership to become more active advocates at a local, national and international level to achieve all of the aforementioned recommendations.

XVI. APPENDIX

POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN UGANDA AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

HISTORIC ANTECEDENTS TO CURRENT CONFLICTS

The current conflict in northern Uganda has its roots in ethnic mistrust between the Acholi people and the ethnic groups of central and southern Uganda as well as in the religious and spiritual beliefs of the Acholi people and the manipulation of these beliefs. Ethnic divisions were compounded by 68 years of British rule, when colonial administrators recruited mainly Acholi people from northern Uganda into military service, while southerners received higher education and civil service jobs. These differences skewed the power structure and level of development between the peoples of the north and the south. At the time of Ugandan independence in 1962, the majority of the educated elite lived in the south, while the north remained at the margins of national development.¹⁹⁸

For the next two decades, Acholi soldiers were increasingly embroiled in civil conflicts as perpetrators and victims of violence, and the Acholi people became increasingly isolated from the rest of the country. In the 1960s, under Uganda's first elected president, Milton Obote, Acholi soldiers were accused of human rights violations against citizens. During the eight-year reign of terror unleashed by dictator Idi Amin Dada against the Ugandan people, Acholi soldiers were slaughtered. Acholi soldiers were then implicated in the deaths of thousands of civilians during the civil war between Yoweri Museveni's guerrilla National Resistance Army (NRA) and President Obote's second government in the early 1980s, particularly in the central Ugandan area known as the Luwero Triangle.¹⁹⁹ Despite the fact that the majority of Acholi civilians did not participate in and had little knowledge of the events in Luwero, many Ugandans continue to hold the Acholi responsible for the Luwero atrocities due to the high number of Acholis in the armed forces at the time.

An Acholi-led government briefly came to power under General Tito Okello in 1985, but was soon overthrown by the NRA, which drew its support pri-

marily from southern and western Uganda, with Yoweri Museveni at its helm.²⁰⁰ When the NRA took power, many Acholi military men turned in their weapons and returned north to their homeland, but others took refuge across the border in southern Sudan, fearing revenge attacks from the NRA. No attacks materialized until May-July of 1986, when the NRA/Federal Democratic Movement (FEDEMU) unit arrived in Acholiland, comprised mainly of Baganda combatants, among whose families were victims of the Luwero Triangle atrocities. This unit looted, threatened and beat civilians, increasing tensions between the Acholi and the new government. Pledging to overthrow Museveni and his government, the Acholi soldiers who fled to southern Sudan organized a counterinsurgency movement called the United People's Democratic Army (UPDA). The UPDA was the precursor to what became the LRA.

THE BIRTH OF THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY AND THE SPREADING OF TERROR

The UPDA was first headed by a woman named Alice Auma Lakwena, who claimed to be a spirit medium possessed by the Holy Spirit. She manipulated Acholi beliefs in spirit power and took up the fight against Museveni's forces with a ferocious, missionary zeal. Convincing followers they were immune to bullets, Alice Lakwena led thousands of youth to their death. In 1988, when the Ugandan government offered amnesty to those who abandoned the armed struggle, 2,000 Acholi troops joined the National Resistance Army (NRA), but several units remained in Sudan, committed to continuing the conflict.

In late 1987, Joseph Kony, a 26-year-old cousin of Alice Lakwena and also a self-proclaimed spirit medium, took control of the Acholi forces in southern Sudan by the authority of "divine instruction." In 1992, Kony changed the name of the UPDA to the Lord's Resistance Army, and still serves as its leader today. While Kony initially enjoyed some popular support among the Acholi, who widely believe in spirit power, civilian support decreased in the early 1990s, and most Acholi people now fear him.

Sudan and Uganda are involved in a proxy war by supporting each other's rebel groups in the region. Since 1994 until just this year, the Sudanese government has provided arms, logistical support and base camps to the LRA in southern Sudan and has also used the LRA to fight its own rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In retaliation for

Ugandan support of the SPLA, Sudan also uses the LRA to destabilize Uganda. The principal victims in this proxy war are civilian populations in Uganda and Sudan, especially young people.

Beyond opposition to the Museveni government and a declared adherence to the Ten Commandments, the LRA has no coherent political or other objectives. Instead, since the early 1990s, it has mainly waged a war of terror against the Acholi population, which it accuses of betraying their cause and believes is complicit with the new government.²⁰¹ The LRA engages in hit-and-run attacks against the civilian population, and as a result, more than half and as many as three-quarters of the population of Acholiland – some 480,000 people – have been internally displaced.²⁰² Adolescents are among the principal targets of the LRA, which has brutally abducted more than 11,000 young people in the past 15 years, subjecting them to murder, torture, forced recruitment, mutilation, forced labor and sexual slavery.

THE SUDAN CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTHERN UGANDA

Civil war has plagued Sudan since 1983, particularly in the oil-producing areas of southern Sudan that are home to between 5 and 7 million people. Over 2 million have died from fighting between the government and rebel groups, and more than 4 million have been displaced. Sudan's long conflict is also fueled by racial, cultural, religious, economic and political differences between the country's northern, largely Arab Muslim population, and the people of the south, comprised chiefly of blacks who are either Christian or who follow local traditional religions. Combatants on both sides have targeted and exploited the civilian population, adolescents in particular. The SPLA is the principal rebel group in southern Sudan. Led by John Garang, the group receives military and logistical support from the Government of Uganda. The SPLA and its political arm, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), claim to be seeking political autonomy within a united Sudan. SPLA troops and other armed opposition groups loot and confiscate humanitarian relief supplies, forcibly recruit child soldiers and rape civilians, including adolescent girls. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Sudan estimates around 9,000 children have been drawn into Sudan's civil war as combatants. Others believe that number may be as high as 15,000.²⁰³

Since 1993, the Sudanese government and its armed militia groups have been controlled by the hard-line National Islamic Front (NIF) and led by President Lt. Gen. Omar Al-Bashir. Their forces have bombed and terrorized Sudanese citizens in the south and have attacked schools, hospitals and other humanitarian and civilian sites. In 2000 alone, Sudanese government planes bombed civilian and humanitarian targets at least 152 times in southern and central Sudan.²⁰⁴ The government has also denied badly needed relief supplies to civilians and violated the rights of children and adolescents.

The Sudanese government also relies on other paramilitary and armed forces with long histories of forcibly recruiting children and adolescents under 18. The government uses the armed tribal militias of western Sudan, which abduct children and adolescents, to fight against the SPLA. In 1997, the Sudanese government decreed that all boys aged 17 to 19 were obliged to serve between 12 and 18 months of compulsory military duty in order to receive the official certificate of completion from secondary school that is required for entry into a university.²⁰⁵

In 2000, Uganda was providing asylum to some 200,000 refugees from Sudan, including land for their temporary settlement. The Ugandan government has, however, failed to offer adequate protection in Sudanese refugee settlements. The SPLA moves freely in northern Uganda. Sudanese refugees, including adolescents, remain at risk of forced recruitment into the SPLA from inside Uganda. In addition, LRA soldiers, many of them abducted young people, have also attacked Sudanese civilians and fought against the SPLA. Many Sudanese refugees have been killed, wounded, abducted and raped by the LRA, and their property has been looted and destroyed. In July 1996, 115 Sudanese refugees at the Achol Pii refugee settlement were massacred by the LRA.²⁰⁶

METHODOLOGICAL MATERIALS

A Luo language version of this survey was also used by the Kitgum/Pader reserch team.

SURVEY of top adolescent concerns:

Age: _____ Sex (circle): Male / Female

Location: _____ Date: _____

Please read the following list of issues carefully and rank your top ten concerns, beginning with number 10 as your biggest concern.

For example, if your biggest concern is adolescent violence and crime, mark a number 10 next to that category. If your second biggest concern is child abuse, mark number 9 next to that category, and so on, using numbers 10 through 1.

Concerns:

- Insecurity, abductions and murder _____
- Displacement _____
- Child abuse _____
- Rape and defilement _____
- Prostitution _____
- Adolescent violence and crime _____
- Being orphaned and lack of parental/family care _____
- Alcohol and drug abuse _____
- Disability _____
- HIV/AIDS _____
- Adolescent and/or forced marriage _____
- Unwanted pregnancy _____
- Unemployment _____
- Poverty _____
- Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing _____
- Getting an education _____
- Lack of communication and understanding between youth and parents/elders/community _____
- Government neglect of youth concerns _____
- Cultural breakdown and immorality _____

GUIDE TO FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Remember: you are RESEARCHERS investigating youth problems and solutions, NOT giving your opinions on problems or solving the problems of the youth you talk to.

GENERAL FOCUS GROUP TIMELINE:

- 1 hour spent talking about adolescent/youth problems;
- ½ hour (30 minutes) talking about solutions to problems and possibilities for peace;
- ½ hour (30 minutes) for administering the SURVEY of top ten concerns.

Focus Questions:

*What are the biggest problems you and other young people face in northern Uganda, and what are some solutions to these problems?

*How does one become an adult in northern Uganda? What is “adolescence” or “youth”? Describe it.

The following are sample questions developed in the training workshop for possible use in the focus group discussions. These are not the only questions you may ask, again, they are just samples, and are among many other questions that you might want to ask depending on the group of adolescents/youth that you are speaking with:

Security:

- How has the conflict affected you and your family? Do you feel safe?
- How have youth been affected by this insurgency? Who has been targeted?
- Has your family been displaced by the conflict? If so, were you forced to move from your ancestral home or did you move voluntarily? Do you want to return to your ancestral home? Are you safer here than at your ancestral home? If not, what could be done to make you feel safer?
- How are girls being treated in your community? What kinds of abuse, violence and exploitation do they face? How do girls cope with this violence and abuse?

Education:

- Are you attending school? If so, where, and what is it like/what is the quality of the education? If not, why not and how do you spend the majority of your time? What kinds of educational opportunities do you think would be most useful to you and other youth in your community?
- How many youth attend school in your community? Does your community value education for both boys and girls?
- Is it dangerous for girls in your community to walk to school? Have you heard of cases of girls being abused or getting pregnant at school? If so, who is at fault? What is the public opinion of young mothers who go to school; what are the problems they face attending school?
- Do disabled youth have equal access to education, including vocational training?

Livelihood and Poverty:

- Do you have a job? Do your family members have jobs? If not, is this a problem?
- Are there income-generating activities available in your community? If so, what kinds of income-generating activities are available to adolescents and youth? If not, what kinds of income-generating activities would be most effective for adolescents and youth?
- Do you have enough to eat? Do you have land for growing your own food? If not, can you access other land to grow food? How far away is the land?
- Describe your home. How many people are living there? Is there enough space for all of you? Are your basic needs (food/clothing/shelter) met?

Health and Mental Health:

- What are your main health problems and the health problems of other adolescents and youth in your community?
- Do you need and have access to health care services and information?
- Do you know any adolescents or youth who have, or have died from, HIV/AIDS?
- Do you know how to protect yourself against HIV/AIDS?
- What do you think you and other youth can do to reduce and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS?
- What are the main health problems of girls who are menstruating or sexually active? Do youth have access to sex education and the information and services they need?
- How has your mental and emotional health been affected by the conflict? How has the mental and emotional health of other youth in your community been affected by the conflict?

Community Relationships:

- Do you feel youth have enough opportunities to participate in community decision-making?
- Do you feel adults/elders understand the problems of young people today?
- What can be done to increase understanding and cooperation between youth and adults/elders?

Peace and Youth-led Solutions:

- Can you imagine a time when there will be peace in northern Uganda? If not, why not? If so, why? In either case, what would it take to make peace a reality?
- What is your opinion of the current war and abduction of children and youth? What needs to be done, and by whom, to end the war and abductions?
- What are your hopes for the future? Where do you see yourself in five years? What will you be doing, and what support do you need to accomplish these goals?

ACRONYMS

ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development	PEARL	Program for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Health Life
APG	Acholi Parliamentary Group	PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative	PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation	RCU	Red Cross Uganda
AVSI	Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale	RENU	Improved Foundation for the Reintegration of Targeted Areas of Northern Uganda
BPRM	Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (U.S. State Department)	RUFO	Rural Focus
CG	Consultative Group	SC	Security Council
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
CPA	The Concerned Parents Association	SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
CPAR	Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief	SRS	Self-reliance Strategy
CVC	Community Volunteer Counselors	STC	Save the Children
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (USAID)	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
FEDEMU	Federal Democratic Movement	UN	United Nations
GDPRT	Gulu District Peace and Reconciliation Team	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organization	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
GWATF	Gulu Women and AIDS Task Force	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IOM	International Organization for Migration	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks	UNOCHA	United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
KICWA	Kitgum Concerned Women's Association	UNPAC	Uganda National Program of Action for Children
KPI	Kitgum Peace Initiative	UPDA	United People's Democratic Army
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army	UPDF	Ugandan People's Defense Forces
MAG	Mine Advisory Group	UPE	Universal Primary Education
NCC	National Council for Children	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization	USCR	U.S. Committee for Refugees
NIF	National Islamic Front	WFP	World Food Program
NRA	National Resistance Army	WHO	World Health Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council		
NRM	National Resistance Movement		
NURP	Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project		
NYC	National Youth Council		

XVII

ENDNOTES

- 1 In 2001, Kitgum was split into two districts: Kitgum and Pader. Gulu borders Kitgum to the east, and Sudan borders both districts to the north. According to the Government of Uganda (*Quick Facts: Government of Uganda*, www.government.go.ug/gulu.htm and www.government.go.ug/kitgum.htm), Gulu is home to some 399,000 people, and Kitgum and Pader are home to some 480,000 people (1999 estimated population). Other documents put the figure at around 700,000. According to the US Committee for Refugees' (USCR) 2001 report, funding constraints and conflict have prevented relief organizations from conducting a census of displaced people.
- 2 The first estimate is from *Uganda People 2000*, Photius Coutsoukis, November 2000, www.photius.com/wfb2000/countries/uganda/uganda_people.html and the second statistic is from *National Youth Policy, A Vision for Youth in the Twenty-first Century*, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, The Republic of Uganda, 2001, p. 4.
- 3 Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, Section 1: The Conflict in Gulu and Kitgum, United States Government, October 1997.
- 4 *Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Pader District Achol Pii Refugee Settlement, Sub-Project Monitoring Report: January-June 2001*, 01/AP/UGA/LS/400 (j), International Rescue Committee.
- 5 International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and UNFPA categorize adolescents as 10-19, youth as 15-24 and young people as 10-24. The Women's Commission report *Untapped Potential, Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*, 2000, p. 10, states that adolescence is defined chronologically, as pertaining to certain ages; functionally, as a process during which individuals make a critical transition from childhood to adulthood; and ultimately by its cultural and societal contexts, which vary widely. The Convention on the Rights of the Child considers children to be "every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."
- 6 *National Youth Policy, A Vision for Youth in the Twenty-first Century*, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, The Republic of Uganda, 2001, p. 9. The youth policy does not undermine or seek to change the definition and interpretation of a child as stipulated in Uganda's Children's Statute of 1996, which defines a child as "a person below the age of eighteen years." The policy also states that it seeks to be harmonious with the programmatic definitions of international agencies, including United Nations agencies which define youth as persons between 15 and 24 years old and the Commonwealth Youth Program definition of 15 to 29 years. The National Youth Council (NYC) statute of 1993 enacted by the Ugandan Government had previously identified youth as 18- to 30-year-olds in naming them as eligible to become members of the NYC. The new policy thus creates a definition that bridges overlapping definitions of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood by using 12 to 30.
- 7 Women's Commission interview, Kampala, May 3, 2001.
- 8 Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 10, 2001.
- 9 *National Youth Policy, A Vision for Youth in the Twenty-first Century*, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, The Republic of Uganda, 2001.
- 10 Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP camp, Gulu, May 12, 2001.
- 11 Adolescents consistently cited "immorality" as a concern, indicating it involves a general lack of values, where adolescents behave disrespectfully or selfishly and/or engage in acts that are considered by many to be improper, such as socializing at modern discos, watching videos, having sex outside marriage or committing crimes.
- 12 Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 8, 2001.
- 13 Kitgum/Pader research team and Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 21, 2001.
- 14 Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 2001.
- 15 International protection involves efforts to ensure the range of human and humanitarian rights of individuals and communities as established under international law and reflected in national law. Among others, these include the right of children and adolescents to be safeguarded from armed conflict and of refugees not to be returned to the country from which they have fled persecution. Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring the protection of their citizens, refugees and others within their borders, and nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, communities and individuals, including young people, all have important roles to play. For more information on the protection of refugees refer to *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, produced jointly by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its NGO partners. See also *Guidelines for the Protection and Care of Refugee Children* from UNHCR, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Summary of International Treaties Pertaining to Children Affected by Armed Conflict, UNICEF Sub-NGO Working Group in Children in Armed Conflict.
- 16 As described throughout the report, the LRA and SPLA are major violators of children's and adolescents' rights. While they are non-state actors and are not signatories to international treaties agreed to by governments, they should be pressured to adhere to the same principles of humanitarian and human rights law.
- 17 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Uganda*, The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, US Department of State, February 2001. According to this report, the UPDF, along with local defense units, the police and Directorate of Military Intelligence, which has detained civilians suspected of rebel activity, have all committed "serious human rights abuses."
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*, September 1997.
- 20 *Uganda: IDP treatment "Runs Counter to Humanitarian Principles"*, IRIN, Gulu, Uganda, August 21, 2001. See also *Let My People Go, The forgotten plight of the people in the displaced camps in Acholi*, an assessment carried out by the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative and the Justice and Peace Commission of Gulu Archdiocese, July 2001.
- 21 *Uganda: Acholi Leaders Urge Government to Dismantle IDP Camps*, IRIN, East Africa News Brief, August 23, 2001. See also *Let My People Go, The forgotten plight of the people in the displaced camps in Acholi*, an assessment carried out by the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative and the Justice and Peace Commission of Gulu Archdiocese, July 2001.
- 22 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Uganda*.
- 23 Robert Gersony.
- 24 Ibid. While Women's Commission researchers were in Gulu, the UPDF shot and killed three people, two of whom were young men aged 21 and 22, and injured about 40 others in Pabbo "protected camp," mistaking them for LRA. The young people who were killed had been out in the bush hunting for seasonal white ants, which are considered a delicacy. Dennis Ojwee, *UPDF Kill 4 Civilians*, The New Vision, Saturday, May 12, 2001.
- 25 Robert Gersony. See also: Amnesty International, Uganda: *Amnesty International calls for release of school girls abducted by the Ugandan armed opposition Lord's Resistance Army*, Amnesty International, October 29, 1996.
- 26 Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*.
- 27 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Uganda*.
- 28 Refer to Cyprian Musoke, *Kony Turns Guns to Sudan Government*, The New Vision, Uganda, August 25, 2001.
- 29 Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*. See also: US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Uganda*.
- 30 This database was developed and is maintained jointly by UNICEF and the Government of Uganda.
- 31 Sudanese refugee adolescents are known to have been abducted by the LRA in other areas in northern Uganda as well.
- 32 The first attack, on February 14, resulted in the looting of property (including foodstuffs, household items, clothing and money) and the abduction of six people (four nationals and two refugees, aged 18 and 11). The second, on February 23, resulted in the looting of 20 households, abduction of five nationals and three refugees (all three escaped within several hours) and the severe beating of one refugee. *Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Pader District Achol Pii Refugee Settlement, Sub-project Monitoring Report, January - June 2001*, International Rescue Committee (IRC), p. 3.
- 33 Kitgum/Pader research team and Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 2001.
- 34 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 1, 2001.
- 35 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 14, 2001.
- 36 A few children have reported spontaneously being released from captivity en route to Sudan mainly for strategic, practical or unknown reasons. In addition, some adolescents reported that commanders had turned a blind eye to their escape.

- 37 See chart (*The LRA has abducted over 11,000 children and adolescents since 1986*) on page 14.
- 38 Despite the fact that most of the LRA are abducted children and adolescents, the SPLA operating in southern Sudan and backed by the Ugandan government does not differentiate between a fleeing abductee and an LRA fighter and will shoot to kill when encountering someone they believe to be part of the LRA. Thus, young people must also evade the SPLA on their journeys out of southern Sudan.
- 39 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000: Uganda*.
- 40 Case study prepared by Aneno Maria Palma, formerly IRC Psychosocial Program Assistant, Kitgum. Undated.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Robert Gersony.
- 43 Elizabeth Jareg, *The Long Road Home*, Save the Children Norway and Denmark, May 2001. This report says that one-third of abductees are girls, while "Humanitarian Update Uganda" (Volume III, Issue VI, OCHA, June 2001) states that the Abducted Children Registration and Information System puts the figure at 20 percent.
- 44 While the vast majority of the Acholi and Sudanese people interviewed stated their abhorrence for the activities of the LRA, many acknowledged their belief that there are those among the Acholi people in northern Uganda and abroad who profit from (through receipt of stolen goods and protection), and/or support, their insurrection.
- 45 Women's Commission interview, Padibe IDP camp, Kitgum, May 2001.
- 46 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 6, 2001.
- 47 Adolescents assert that this is very difficult to prove, however, as it can be emptied quickly.
- 48 *SUDAN: SPLM/A reported to be recruiting in Ugandan camps*, IRIN News Briefs, OCHA, August 17, 2001.
- 49 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 2001.
- 50 Kitgum/Pader research team and Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 2001.
- 51 Adolescent boys may also be the victims of sexual violence, but there is little evidence, perhaps due to cultural taboos surrounding the occurrence and discussion of such violence.
- 52 Under Ugandan law, "defilement" includes any sexual contact outside of marriage involving girls younger than 18 years of age, regardless of consent or the age of the perpetrator. (There is debate over its application to boys). While defilement carries a maximum sentence of death, that punishment has never been given to a convicted rapist. Violence against women, including rape, remains common. Polygamy is legal under both customary and Islamic law, and a wife has no legal status to prevent her husband from marrying another woman. Men may also "inherit" the widows of their deceased brothers. From: *AFROL Gender Profiles: Uganda*, AFROL, undated, www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/uganda_women.htm. The words rape and defilement are used interchangeably in this report.
- 53 Kitgum/Pader research team and Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 2001.
- 54 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 2001.
- 55 Gulu research team interview, Awer IDP camp, Gulu, June 2001.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Gulu research team and Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP protected village, Gulu, May 8, 2001.
- 59 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Kitgum Primary School, Kitgum, June 2001.
- 60 Women's Commission interview, Padibe IDP camp, Kitgum, May 2001.
- 61 *AFROL Gender Profiles: Uganda*, AFROL, www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/uganda_women.htm.
- 62 These funds were raised by IRC from the Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration of the United States Department of State.
- 63 *World Refugee Survey 2001*, U.S. Committee for Refugees, Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 2001, p. 118.
- 64 An international NGO, MAG's work in Uganda is funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs.
- 65 Interview with Neil Elliot and Richard Moyes, MAG, Kampala, May 30, 2001.
- 66 *Problems and Solutions Identified by Adolescent Researchers in Northern Uganda*, Gulu Research Team report, Gulu, Uganda, 2001.
- 67 *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kitgum Region*, Kitgum/Pader Research Team report, 2001.
- 68 World Food Program, Uganda, www.wfp.org/OP/Countries/uganda/emop5_816_01.html.
- 69 *No School*, Sunday Vision, Uganda, Home News section, May 27, 2001.
- 70 *Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Pader District, Achol Pii Refugee Settlement, Sub-project Monitoring Report*, IRC, January-June 2001, p. 15. There are three primary schools in Achol Pii and one secondary school, which is still under construction. Students in the schools are both Ugandan nationals and Sudanese refugees. The schools belong to the Pader District Education Committee and also receive support from IRC/UNHCR due to the large number of refugee pupils in the schools.
- 71 Schools in the refugee settlement play a key role in the community. They are open to nationals and refugees in the area and also provide jobs to both Ugandan and Sudanese refugee teachers. One level of tension has involved a pay differential between Sudanese refugee and Ugandan teachers. Sudanese teachers complain that the Ugandan teachers are paid more. The rationale in this pay differential, however, is that the Sudanese teachers receive humanitarian food assistance and free health care, which the Ugandan teachers do not. Corresponding decreases in the salaries of the Sudanese teachers are calculated as a result.
- 72 Women's Commission interview, Gulu town, Gulu, May 14, 2001. One of the most famous cases of abduction occurred when 139 girls from St. Mary's School, Aboke were abducted by the LRA in October 1996.
- 73 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, June 2001.
- 74 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Padibe IDP camp, June 2001.
- 75 Women's Commission interview, Kitgum Town Council, November 2000.
- 76 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, West Ward, Kitgum Town Council, June 14, 2001.
- 77 The secondary school system in Uganda is roughly based on that of the British system. Following seven years of primary school, young people go on to four years of secondary school, following which they take "O-level" (Ordinary Level) exams. If they choose to go on for additional secondary schooling, they study for two more years and then take "A-level" (Advanced Level) exams.
- 78 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, KICWA Center, Kitgum Town Council, June 2001.
- 79 Statistics acquired by the Gulu research team, August 2001.
- 80 Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, June 2001.
- 81 Gulu research team interview, Gulu, June 2001.
- 82 Norwegian Refugee Council. Information received from Eldrid Middtun, NRC Education Advisor, August 2001. This three-year program has been funded by the Norwegian government's Agency for Development Cooperation.
- 83 It should be noted, however, that the newly formed Pader District is still very much in the early stages of establishing its structures. Some good policies include the commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UPE.
- 84 *Uganda Profile*, Country Information Center, Africa Business Network, www.ifc.org/abn.v1/cic/uan/english/prof.htm. See also: The World Bank Group, *Countries: Uganda profile*, World Bank, September 2000, www.worldbank.org/afr/ug2.htm; The World Bank Group, *1999 World Bank Poverty Report: Uganda*, The World Bank, 1999; The World Bank Group, *Uganda Receives First World Bank Poverty Reduction Support Credit: Country to get \$150 million for fight against poverty*, World Bank, June 1, 2001; *UGANDA: Key reformer gets new poverty reduction credit*, IRIN, OCHA, June 7, 2001.
- 85 *UGANDA: President acknowledges rising poverty in the north*, IRIN, East Africa News Brief, OCHA, July 30, 2001. See also: USAID Uganda, *Northern Uganda Program*, www.crosswinds.net/~usaid/uganda/northern-uganda.html; The World Bank Group, *Uganda-Northern Reconstruction II Project Report*, World Bank Africa Regional Office, February 5, 2001, www.worldbank.org/pics/pid/ug2952.txt.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Although 1,900 kcal is the WFP standard daily humanitarian ration for a community that is not active, it amounts to one meal a day, when carefully rationed. By comparison, the US Department of Agriculture recommends that American teen girls eat 2,200 calories per day and teen boys eat 2,800 calories per day. For adolescent unaccompanied minors like Joseph, being disciplined enough to ration food over the course of a month is nearly impossible. Non-food items, including a pan for cooking, are issued only once to all new arrivals in the settlement, and it is very difficult to maintain them on open fires. It is also difficult to gather the wood needed to make fires for cooking, particularly given the tension with local communities. Preparing food is thus also very challenging. Joseph also described how he had sold his non-food items at one point in order to purchase some food when he was hungry, compounding the food security problem he is facing.

- 88 USAID Uganda, *Northern Uganda Program*. See also: Robert Gersony. Beginning in 1987, the Karamojong raiders began decimating the Acholis' livestock, with little government opposition. The cattle population of Gulu and Kitgum in 1985 was about 285,000; in 1997 the population was 5,000, or less than 2 percent of the earlier number. Goats and other livestock have been similarly affected. The replacement cost of the plundered cattle herd is estimated at close to US \$25million.
- 89 Robert Gersony.
- 90 The IRC, World Vision and GUSCO all offer skills training as part of their rehabilitation and reintegration programs for formerly abducted children and adolescents.
- 91 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 2001. If these items are to be distributed, they should be combined with training to improve agriculture practices and minimize already existing environmental damage, i.e., one cow per family doing "zero grazing," for example, eating maize stalks.
- 92 IRC Uganda, *Psychosocial Support Programs for War-Affected Communities*, International Rescue Committee, Uganda, 2001.
- 93 Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP camp, Gulu, May 12, 2001.
- 94 Interview with Community Services worker and other adults, Acholi Pii refugee settlement, June 2001.
- 95 Gulu research team and Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP camp, May 2001.
- 96 *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kitgum Region*, Kitgum/Pader research team report, 2001.
- 97 Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP camp, Gulu, May 2001.
- 98 *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kitgum Region*, Kitgum/Pader research team report, 2001.
- 99 Gulu research team and Women's Commission interview, Awer IDP camp, Gulu, May 2001.
- 100 See *International and Local Response* section for more information on CPA.
- 101 *Problems and Solutions Identified by Adolescent Researchers in Northern Uganda*, Gulu research team report, Gulu, Uganda, 2001.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 20, 2001. Iron deficiency anemia is often a problem in refugee settlements around the world where there is little access to fresh vegetables and fruits. In many cases, it does not matter how much iron is in the food, and instead, a lack of Vitamin C, which is needed to absorb iron is the limiting factor. According to Dr. Robin Nandy's report, *Trip Report to IRC Uganda Health Programs, Achol Pii Settlement, April 22 - May 2, 2001*, IRC, 2001, "the 1,900 kcal daily ration that the refugees at Achol Pii settlement are provided by WFP consists of maize (corn), pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt." Thus, fresh foods must be obtained in other ways if the refugees are to have them. There is also a therapeutic feeding center located at the Arum Health Center, one of two health facilities in the settlement.
- 104 Women's Commission interviews, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 20, 2001.
- 105 There should be a maximum of 20 people using one latrine, according to the standards put forth in *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, Minimum Standards in Water Supply and Sanitation*, The Sphere Project, 1998, p.13. Thus, this standard is far from being achieved in most areas of Gulu and Kitgum.
- 106 United Nations, *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal: Uganda, 2001*, p. 17.
- 107 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Components in the 2001 Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for Uganda*, UNFPA, 2001, www.unfpa.org/tpd/emergencies/caphtml/uganda.htm.
- 108 WHO, *Outbreak of Ebola Haemorrhagic Fever, Uganda, August 2000-January 2001*, The Weekly Epidemiological Record of the WHO, WHO, February 9, 2001. See also: *Ebola: WHO Team arrives in Uganda; Infections Grow*, UNWIRE, UN Foundation, October 18, 2000; *WHO Declares Epidemic Contained In Uganda*, Kampala New Vision, January 16, 2001; *Supplies Run Low in Ugandan Ebola Virus Outbreak*, New York Times, International Section, October 18, 2000. Speculation on how Ebola was brought to Acholiland included from LRA soldiers in southern Sudan and by Ugandan soldiers returning from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it was traced to the burial according to local tradition, involving the ritual cleansing of the dead by family and friends, to a Gulu housewife who died on September 7. Four hundred twenty-five people contracted the disease in Gulu (393, or 93 percent, of the cases, including in the displaced persons camps in Pabbo, Parabongo and Atiak in Kilak County), Masindi and Mbara Districts, and 174 died.
- 109 WHO, *Outbreak of Ebola Haemorrhagic Fever, Uganda, August 2000-January 2001*.
- 110 Uganda: *Ebola Strain Similar to Sudan Outbreak*, IRIN, OCHA, October 23, 2000.
- 111 Uganda, *Ebola spreading, death toll reaches 39*, IRIN, OCHA, October 18, 2001. See also: *Ebola: Uganda Headed Toward Being Declared Ebola-Free*, UN WIRE, UN Foundation, January 26, 2001.
- 112 Uganda: *Ebola Strain Similar to Sudan Outbreak*.
- 113 Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 15, 2001. See also: *Uganda: Warning that Ebola Still Not Under Control*, IRIN, OCHA, November 8, 2000; *Uganda: Ebola spreads to third district*, IRIN, OCHA, November 13, 2000.
- 114 Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Omiya Anyima, Kitgum, June 2001.
- 115 In Gulu District, there are three hospitals: Gulu Hospital with 216 beds, Lacor Hospital, Anaka Hospital with 104 beds and Fourth Division Hospital (UPDF); 5 health centers; 5 dispensaries; 24 sub-dispensaries; 17 clinics; and 20 doctors in the district. In Kitgum there are 3 hospitals; 28 health units and a total number of 1,076 hospital beds. Information from Ugandan government website: www.government.go.ug/kitgum.htm and www.government.go.ug/gulu.htm.
- 116 UNFPA, *Components in the 2001 Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for Uganda*.
- 117 Some young people also reported concerns about increased drug use among adolescents, but these reports were not fully substantiated by the research. Drug abuse appears to be less of a problem among adolescents and adults than alcoholism.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 UNFPA, *Components in the 2001 Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for Uganda*. In addition, less than 20 percent of births are attended by qualified health personnel, while the national average is estimated to be 50 percent.
- 120 Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader, May 20, 2001.
- 121 Ibid. IRC, which administers services in the settlement and works in collaboration with the Refugee Welfare Council and Health Unit Management Committee in the settlement, as well as District Medical Office and other officials, is now working to fully integrate reproductive health services into primary care services. These efforts will also be linked to those to address sexual and gender-based violence in collaboration especially with Community Services activities. All of these efforts are slated to include a focus on adolescents.
- 122 *HIV/AIDS: Religious Leaders Challenge Uganda Condom Ads*, UNWIRE, UN Foundation, December 12, 2000. See also: *HIV/AIDS: US Announces \$50 Million Donation to Uganda*, UNWIRE, UN Foundation, May 29, 2001.
- 123 Uganda: *World Bank to Boost AIDS Campaign, Africa*, IRIN AIDS Brief, OCHA, 2001.
- 124 *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, June 2000*, STD/AIDS Control Programme, Ministry of Health, Kampala Uganda, June 2000. Overall, prevalence rates have fallen from 27.1 percent in 1993 to 12.3 percent in 1999. At Gulu's Lacor Hospital the adolescent (15-19) prevalence rates have fallen from 21.5 percent in 1993 to 7.4 percent in 1999, the youth (20-24) rates have fallen from 31.8 percent in 1993 to 13.1 percent in 1999, and the older youth group (25 to 29) has declined from 28.9 percent in 1993 to 15.9 percent in 1999.
- 125 Women's Commission interview, Gulu town, Gulu, May 10, 2001.
- 126 Women's Commission interview with members of the Gulu Women and AIDS Task Force (GWATF), Gulu, May 15, 2001.
- 127 Women's Commission interview, Meeting Point, Kitgum, November 2000.
- 128 Women's Commission interview, Meeting Point, Kitgum, November 2000 and Women's Commission and Kitgum/Pader research team interview, Meeting Point, Padibe IDP camp, May 2001.
- 129 While there is an association in Gulu for people living with HIV/AIDS (TASSO), there is no money or supplies for treatment. Groups like the Gulu Women's AIDS Task Force want to go beyond community sensitization to help AIDS orphans gain livelihood and parenting skills, but there are no funds for this.
- 130 Women's Commission interview, Meeting Point, Kitgum, November 2000.
- 131 *Problems and Solutions Identified by Adolescent Researchers in Northern Uganda, Gulu District*, Gulu research team, 2001 and *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kitgum Region*, Kitgum/Pader research team report, 2001.
- 132 *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda, Kitgum Region*.
- 133 As described in the Women's Commission report, *Untapped Potential, Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*, "psychosocial" can be defined as follows, as referenced from: *Cape Town Annotated Principles and Best*

Practice on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa and UNICEF's *Interregional Programming Workshop on Psychosocial Care and Protection*. "The term 'psychosocial' underlines the close relationship between the psychological and social effects of armed conflict, the one type of effect continually influencing the other. By 'psychosocial effects' is meant those experiences that affect emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory and learning ability and how a situation may be perceived and understood. By 'social effects' is meant how are defined the ways in which the diverse experiences of war alter people's relationships to each other, in that such experiences change people, but also the experience through death, separation, estrangement and other losses. 'Social' may be extended to include an economic dimension, as many individuals and families becoming destitute through the material and economic devastation of war, thus losing their social status and place in their familiar social network." Dr. Mike Wessells, a professor at Randolph Macon University and expert on the psychosocial effects of armed conflict on children, further comments that the meaning of "psychosocial" varies according to cultural context.

- 134 Traditional religion has its own version of PTSD in which the fears and demons are externalized. The healing lies in family or community actions and/or rituals rather than individualized therapy performed by a professional.
- 135 Women's Commission interview, Kitgum, Uganda, November 2000.
- 136 Many former abductees end up in UPDF custody as they make their journey home. The UPDF holds them for a period of time, interrogates them about their experience and then releases them.
- 137 Humanitarian Update Uganda, June 2001, Vol. III, Issue VI, page 6. According to UNICEF, as of June 2001, a total of 212 persons who escaped southern Sudan during 2000-2001 have become part of a repatriation program to Uganda. As further reported by UNOCHA, 29 persons (17 of them under 18 years old) were returned to Uganda on July 4, and 48 were awaiting return from Khartoum.
- 138 Separated children are with a family member other than their parents, whereas unaccompanied minors are not with a parent or a family member.
- 139 In Uganda, children missing either parent or both are considered orphans.
- 140 US Department of State, Uganda, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, February 2001. See also: *HIV/AIDS: Religious Leaders Challenge Uganda Condom Ads*, UNWIRE, December 12, 2000; *HIV/AIDS: US Announces \$50 Million Donation to Uganda*, UNWIRE, 29 May, 2001. The former cites 1.7 million orphans, whereas the latter, more recent, document cites 1.8 million orphans.
- 141 The first statistic is from: *USCR Country Report 2001*, USCR, June 2001. The second estimate is from: *UGANDA - Civil Strife and Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever*, Information Bulletin #1 (FY 2001), (USAID), Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Office of the US Foreign Disaster Assistance, December 29, 2000.
- 142 Gulu research team and Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 13, 2001.
- 143 Women's Commission interview, Achol Pii refugee settlement, Pader District, Uganda, November 2000.
- 144 Some of the information contained here is from: Sara Friedman, "Participatory Approaches to UNICEF Programming, Section II," UNICEF, 2001, p. 44.
- 145 For the entire set of 2,030 responses, 289 are excluded from findings due to irregularities, including incomplete or indecipherable responses or failure to report age, which does not allow for the differentiation between surveys filled out by adolescents and adults.
- 146 The teams were committed to interviewing equal numbers of girls and boys; however, more boys were interviewed than girls. For reasons unknown, this difference occurred primarily in the Achol Pii research team subgroup, where approximately 90 more boys than girls were interviewed.
- 147 Staff members from Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR), Rural Focus (RUFO), Red Cross Uganda (RCU), the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) and Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) were among the adult research advisors in Gulu. Local and international groups were stakeholders in the project in other ways as well, helping with project planning, team nominations and project implementation. Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) nominated a young person to the Kitgum/Pader team and provided some transportation for their work. CPAR, RUFO, RCU, CPA and GUSCO also supported the work of the team in Gulu with nominations and in some cases arranged focus group sessions. All organizations expressed their enthusiasm for learning from the process and its outcomes. Team trainings and post-research analysis sessions were conducted in the Teacher Training Center in Gulu and at St. Joseph's Hospital in Kitgum.
- 148 The focus groups provide an overall qualitative look at the range of issues of concern to adolescents and details about these concerns. The case studies provide a more detailed look at specific issues uncovered, and the surveys help identify the relative importance of the range of issues described.
- 149 In practice, this limit was often exceeded due to community interest, logistical constraints and the researchers simply not wanting to turn people away. While the sizes of the groups were in the majority very manageable, some were very large and reflected a more typical forum for local community discussion, where a big group gathers outdoors to consider an issue.
- 150 The only promises made to the research team members by the Women's Commission were that: the study itself would last four to six weeks; they would participate in a three-day training; they would receive payment for their work, but any additional involvement in follow-up activities would be voluntary; it would be a learning experience; they would be able to make recommendations for action, and their findings would be published in individual team reports and in a Women's Commission report, which they could use in the manner of their choice; and that the Women's Commission would work with them on follow-up advocacy activities.
- 151 The Department of Youth and Children's Affairs develops policies and guidelines and evaluates and monitors government-initiated projects. It also provides technical assistance and capacity-building support for youth officers throughout Uganda. In each district, there is an officer for youth and also one for children. District Probationary Welfare Offices also hold a particular responsibility for ensuring that government policies concerning children are carried out.
- 152 Other Ministries also address children's and adolescents' issues, such as education, and have similar representative structures at the district to village levels.
- 153 Like the CRC, the Children's Statute defines children as persons under the age of 18. The NYC Statute defines youth as 18 to 30, and the new National Youth Policy bridges the two, defining youth as 12 to 30, which thus includes late childhood and early adolescence through to young adulthood. The NYC is not technically a part of the Ugandan government, but it is guaranteed a level of federal funding.
- 154 *Guidelines to Operations of Youth Council*, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, Kampala.
- 155 Women's Commission interview, Kampala, June 2001.
- 156 Women's Commission interview, Gulu, May 15, 2001.
- 157 *Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents in Northern Uganda*, Kitgum Region, Kitgum/Pader research team report, 2001.
- 158 Ibid.
- 159 *UGANDA: HIV/AIDS an extra danger for LRA child soldiers*. The statistic is from 1994 to March 2001.
- 160 *Profile of GUSCO*, AntiSlavery, 2000, www.antislavery.org/homepage/anti-slavery/award/omonabiog.htm. See also: Hon. Betty Akech Okullu, MP (Gulu District), *GUSCO: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, Presentation to Kacoke Madit 1998 Conference, 1998, www.c-r.org/km/conferences/km98/gusco.htm
- 161 Women's Commission interview, Kampala, May 2001 and New York, August, 2001. See also: Allison A. Pillsbury, *Our Children are Missing*, Uganda delegation report, Leadership Council on Children in Armed Conflict, January 2000.
- 162 *World Vision: Psychosocial Support Programme for Children Affected by War*, brochure, World Vision, 2000. See also: Mark Avola, *World Vision Facilitating Healing and Recovery for the War-affected Community in Northern Uganda*, Presentation at the Kacoke Madit 2000 Conference, Tanzania, November 2000.
- 163 Co-founder Els De Temmerman, a Belgian journalist, is also donating the profits from her book, *Aboke Girls*, to the association.
- 164 Uganda Program for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Health Life (PEARL) brochure, UNFPA and the Republic of Uganda, undated. See also: Dr. Bamikale James Feyisetan, *Implementation of Policies, Programmes and Laws Related to Reproductive Health Rights in Selected African Countries*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, United Nations, September 16, 1998. PEARL, which began in 1995, is implemented through the Ministry of Gender and Community Development in collaboration with the Ministries of Health, Labor and Social Welfare and the local government.
- 165 Consultative Group meetings bring together Ugandan government officials, development partners, the private sector, United Nations agencies and civil society, including NGOs, to review the performance of the economy over the previous year and agree on priorities and interventions for the forthcoming financial year.
- 166 *Taking Africa for Granted*, the East African, Editorial, May 21, 2001. Nine hundred million of the total \$2.5 billion will be disbursed during the next financial year, beginning on July 1, 2001.

- 167 *Uganda: FY 2001 Program Description and Activity Data*, USAID, US Department of State, 2001. www.usaid.gov/country/afr/ug/uganda_ads.html Uganda. See also: *Uganda Profile*, USAID, US Department of State, www.usaid.gov/country/afr/ug/; A. Mutumba-Lule, *Retain Cost-Sharing, Donors Tell Uganda*, The East African, Regional Section, April 16, 2001; and Crespo Sebunya, *Foreign donors are convinced that rather than fighting wars, Uganda should be fighting poverty*, Uganda, October 1999, www.peacelink.it/anb-bia/nr378/e07.html
- 168 *Uganda: FY 2001 Program Description and Activity Data Sheets*, USAID, 2001. According to this report, donors to northern Uganda include the Government of Uganda (especially military protection), local district governments, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Norway, the European Union, World Bank, International Committee of the Red Cross, World Food Program, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Development Program, United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
- 169 United Nations, *Inter-Agency Appeal for Uganda, 2001*, pp. 49-50. Moreover, as of April 2001, five months after the 2001 United Nations Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for Uganda was launched, only 17.21 percent had been provided for humanitarian assistance.
- 170 *WFP Appeals for More Aid to Continue Feeding Nearly 700,000 Refugees and Displaced in Uganda*, World Food Program News Release, World Food Program, March 12, 2001.
- 171 *UGANDA: IRIN Focus on Displacement in the North*, IRIN, OCHA, July 24, 2001.
- 172 Sylvia Juuko, *Donors Ask Government to End Civil War*, The Monitor, Kampala, May 17, 2001. See also: Crespo Sebunya.
- 173 United Nations *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Uganda 2001*, p. 15.
- 174 Sylvia Juuko. President Museveni reacted angrily to the pressure, threatening to reject aid that is predicated on "meddling into his government's affairs."
- 175 USAID Uganda, *Northern Uganda Program*.
- 176 *Uganda: FY 2001 Program Description and Activity Data*, USAID, US Department of State, www.usaid.gov/country/afr/ug/uganda_ads.html#ads.
- 177 Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), *Honoring a Commitment to Vulnerable Children, 2001 Report*, DCOF, USAID, 2001.
- 178 These activities will occur in 18 districts in the North and East, particularly focusing on the three sub-regions of Karamoja, Acholi and West Nile.
- 179 Women's Commission interview with Mr. Nerbert Mugwagwa, World Bank, Kampala, May 2001.
- 180 United Nations, *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Uganda 2001*.
- 181 Ibid.
- 182 Ibid, pp. 107-108.
- 183 Women's Commission interviews with the Concerned Parents Association, Gulu, May 14 and 15, 2001.
- 184 *Problems and Solutions Identified by Adolescent Researchers in Northern Uganda*, Gulu Research Team report, 2001.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 Ibid.
- 187 The 1994 peace initiative, led by then-Minister for the North Betty Bigombe, failed when the government doubted the LRA's commitment to the negotiation process as it allegedly simultaneously negotiated with the Government of Sudan. Influential elements within the Ugandan government and military also opposed the peace process. Another failed attempt occurred two years later between the Acholi Council of Chiefs and the LRA.
- 188 *Uganda: Community Leaders Pledge to Protect LRA Returnees*, IRIN, East Africa News Brief, OCHA, August 13, 2001.
- 189 The Communiqué, signed by the governments of Uganda, Sudan, Canada and Egypt and complementary to the Carter Center process, commits Uganda and Sudan to the release and return of the abducted children and the return and resettlement of LRA members.
- 190 It is hoped that due to recent funding to the Amnesty Commission by the European Union, the situation will improve.
- 191 *UGANDA: HIV/AIDS an extra danger for LRA child soldiers*, IRIN, OCHA, July 31, 2001.
- 192 Beyond a missionary zeal, terror and destabilization, the LRA's motives for continuing this campaign against the people of their homeland remain unclear. Limited information flowing from LRA leader Joseph Kony in recent months, as well as prior pronouncements, indicate only vague and general opposition to President Yoweri Museveni's government.
- 193 While there were reports of LRA troop movement towards Uganda from Sudan for the purpose of reversing peace moves made by the LRA in Uganda at the time of this writing, this has not transpired.
- 194 *Uganda-Sudan: Embassy in Khartoum reopened after 6 years*, IRIN News Brief, OCHA, September 18, 2001.
- 195 *Sudan-Uganda: Bashir says Support for LRA Rebels has Ceased*, IRIN News Brief, OCHA, August 21, 2001.
- 196 Ibid.
- 197 Some NGOs believe that this number is inflated and report that some of the child soldiers turned over for demobilization by the SPLA were randomly grouped together and presented as child soldiers in order to uphold an agreement with UNICEF.
- 198 The information in this section is drawn from several documents on the history of the conflict in Acholiland: Robert Gersony, Ibid; *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*, Human Rights Watch Africa, Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project, September 1997; Amnesty International, *Uganda: Stolen Children, Stolen Lives*, Amnesty International, 1997; and Dennis Pain, *The Bending of Spears, Producing Consensus for Peace and Development in Northern Uganda*, International Alert, London, December 1997.
- 199 Robert Gersony. Government soldiers, including the Acholi who made up a large number of its officer and enlisted corps, were implicated in the murder of 100,000 - 300,000 people during 1984 and 1986 in the Luwero Triangle, as well as abducting girls and looting.
- 200 In December 1985, the Okello government signed a peace agreement with the NRA. However, the NRA unilaterally abrogated the treaty just one month after signing the peace agreement, and on January 26, 1986, Museveni's NRA took the capital, Kampala, and quickly consolidated control over all of Uganda.
- 201 Robert Gersony. After an anti-insurgency operation by the Government in 1991 left much of the LRA in shambles, the NRA's human rights conduct significantly improved and much of the civilian population joined a government peace campaign. The LRA, angered by the civilian population's abandonment, retaliated by stepping up human rights violations against civilians throughout 1991 and 1992, resulting in severe mutilation of the civilian population, such as the severing of victims' lips, noses and ears.
- 202 *Uganda: Northern IDPs Trapped by Fear of Rebels*, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Nairobi, July 24, 2001. This IRIN report cites the World Food Program's estimate that there are currently 480,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in 'protected villages' or displaced persons camps in northern Uganda. In addition, Norber Mao, an MP from Gulu and a member of the Acholi Parliamentary Group stated in August, 2001 that 480,000 Acholis in Gulu and Kitgum are internally displaced (*Uganda: Acholi Leaders Urge Government to Dismantle IDP Camps*, IRIN, East Africa News Brief, OCHA, August 23, 2001). The United Nations' *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Uganda 2001* (OCHA, United Nations, November 2000, p. 17) reports that over 75 percent of the population are internally displaced (370,000 people in Gulu and 82,645 people in Kitgum).
- 203 Jason Topping Cone, *Child Soldiers in Southern Sudan Released to UNICEF*, Earth Times News Service, 2001. According to Dr. Sharad Sapra, head of UNICEF's operations in southern Sudan, there are an estimated 9,000 child soldiers in various armed groups in southern Sudan. In the article, *Rehabilitating Sudan's Child Soldiers*, author Samena Chaudhry Birmingham cites an estimated 15,000 child soldiers (www.studentbmj.com/back_issues/0601/news/179b.html).
- 204 U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), *Sudan's Military Bombed Civilian Sites 152 Times Last Year in 2000*, USCR, 2001.
- 205 Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2001*, Sudan chapter, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2000. See also: Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*, Sudan chapter, Human Rights Watch, New York, NY, 2001, www.hrw.org/wr2k1/africa/sudan.html.
- 206 Amnesty International, *Uganda: Amnesty International Calls for Release of Schoolgirls Abducted by the Ugandan Armed Opposition Lord's Resistance Army*, Amnesty International, October 29, 1996.

