

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF
ARMED CONFLICT IN UGANDA
GULU DISTRICT, 1986-1999**

PART 1

AN ISIS-WICCE REPORT
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**DOCUMENTING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF
ARMED CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN UGANDA:
THE CASE OF GULU DISTRICT, 1986 - 1999**

A RESEARCH REPORT

BY

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TRANSLATION

The Gulu Research Team (See Appendix II)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The war in Northern Uganda began in August 1986 and is one of the longest armed conflicts in the history of Uganda. It has destroyed individuals, families and communities. The economy of the region has collapsed with agricultural production being disrupted while livestock and property was looted. Women and girls were abducted and raped and some forced into marriages, young men and girls conscripted to swell rebel ranks where they were forced in actions of killing their weak friends. The entire populace was subjected to the most cruel forms of mutilation, maiming and killing by all fighting groups. While the majority of men have failed to cope with the war trauma and many taken to heavy drinking out of frustration, women with the burden of trauma and fending for families have either individually or in groups organised self-help activities to support their families economically.

This Isis-WICCE supported study was undertaken in 1999 to assess the impact of the war on the women of Gulu focusing on their war experience, the position of their rights, their coping mechanisms with the war and contributions to their society in distress. The study was undertaken as a harbinger of the necessary healing process and geared towards putting the Gulu, and indeed war-affected Uganda, women agenda in the mainstream of all relief, resettlement and rehabilitation services.

Study Objectives

The main objective of the study was to assess the effects of armed conflict on the women of Gulu. Specifically, the study set out to document women's experiences during the armed conflict and examine the effects of war on women's health and economic status. In addition the study set out to find out women's roles and participation in the armed conflict, their coping mechanisms during war and post war situations, as well as the impact of war on gender relations.

Study Methods

The study was carried out within the population originating from 13 sub-counties of Gulu District but living in internally displaced people's camps (IDPs) within an 18-kilometer radius of Gulu Municipality. A participatory approach, involving the researchers, community based organizations, respondents and opinion leaders was adopted. A semi-structured individual interview questionnaire was administered to 81 respondents, 66 of whom were females. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews/case studies and key informant interviews with various categories of male and female respondents were also carried out.

Findings

As a result of the war, the average number of children and particularly male adults declined due to deaths, abductions, emigration or departure for military service. The absence of men in the homes in particular increased women's responsibilities.

The population have been exposed to traumatic experiences including captivity/arrests, forced torture and killing of others, intimidation, walking long distances without food or walking bare footed in thorns and bushes and extreme humiliation especially to women. The major health problems faced by this survivors include;

untreated fevers, reproductive health complications, STIs including HIV/AIDS, broken and severed limbs and a host of other ailments. Psychosocial problems were the most numerous.

There were numerous marital break-ups, forced early marriages multiple and homosexual rapes, and unwanted pregnancies. Inadequate access to schools, destruction of buildings, the un-conducive school environment and increased opportunity cost of schooling due to shifting gender roles caused by war have all negatively impacted on girls' education in particular, further depressing the status of women.

The prolonged insecurity disrupted farming, trade and farm based marketing activities leaving a highly depressed economy in Gulu. War not only resulted in massive dispossession of the study population (mainly women) but also reduced the volume of property owned considerably. The mass displacement of the rural population into over-crowded "protected villages" had significant impact on family cultural means of livelihood and usual coping mechanisms. This situation was further compounded by natural calamities such as the drought in 1997.

The poorest women were household heads, particularly widows and single mothers. Those who fled to town had to adjust to the new environment, an environment in which there was high competition for resources such as food, water and fuel.

Recommendations

Considering that the healing process will take long, the following needs to be done by all stakeholders for the well being of the region:

- The war should be ended and the full stock of the war undertaken even if it means sacrificing of some principles of the fighting factions.
- Any strategies for resettlement and rehabilitation should be structured in such a way as to ensure full participation and care for the population including women, children and the elderly so as to ensure that the healing process does not omit effective strategies for some population sub-groups.
- A *Truth Commission* about the brutal acts that were meted out to the population in this region should be set-up to re-assure the population about the rule of law and their ability to access it.
- The government needs to carry-out internal checks on the army to ensure the return of faith in the population towards this important institution charged with the responsibility of protecting the lives and property of the citizens of this country.
- There is a need for a regional economic and social rehabilitation plan and commitment of resources. Such a plan should be participatory and involve the population in the area especially the women
- Organizations which have proved effective in empowering poor communities should be given all the necessary support at all levels (policy formulation, planning, allocation of resources and implementation), to provide guidance to the rebuilding process. The role of private initiative in all these aspects should not be ignored.
- There are a few positive aspects emerging out of this war such as the increased realization of the need to empower women economically to sustain society through difficult times. Such aspects need to be built on in all future plans of resolving the effects of this war.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1.0 INTRODUCTION

The war in Northern Uganda began in August 1986, soon after the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government took over power in Uganda. Some of the defeated armed groups that had fled into southern Sudan started infiltrating back into Uganda from their bases, leading to growing unrest in Gulu and other districts bordering the Sudan. A battalion of the NRA, comprising largely of former fighters of the Federal Democratic Movement (FEDEMU) was posted to Gulu district to quell the unrest. Known for their lack of discipline and their brutality, this battalion instead fuelled up the rebellion. The soldiers met the popular rebellion with brutal force. Some of the rebel groups like the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), later made peace with government. However, another rebellion sprung-up soon after. This was known as the Holy Spirit Movement led by Alice Lakwena, a local prophetess/medium healer. This group was also soon defeated and scattered by Government troops in eastern Uganda while attempting to fight its way to Kampala. While some of the fighters were captured, Lakwena fled to exile into Kenya. Later on the same defeated group was re-organised into the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.

While the fighting groups, which fought the government forces to control the region were many, their mode of fighting and the pattern of events were similar. Even the nature of havoc they have caused to individuals and communities has largely been the same; namely:

- Infiltration of an area by rebels;
- Armed conflict or battles between the rebels and government forces;
- Robberies, harassment, rape, maiming and killings occasioned by both sides.
- Abductions of the youths especially by the rebels;
- Internal displacements of the population sometimes in different directions; and
- Destruction of the household economic base and social infrastructure.

The thirteen years of civil war in northern Uganda dating back to 1986 have led to the near collapse of the economy of Gulu and other affected districts in the area. Agricultural production has been greatly disrupted following the displacement of people. Cattle and other livestock upon which the Acholi depended so much for income are almost non-existent. People living in camps have lost nearly all their property. Some peasant farmers continue to survive through the growing of crops such as rice, beans, groundnuts, sesame, millet, maize and a variety of vegetables, albeit with a lot of difficulties.

In particular, women and girls have been the target of violent acts such as abduction, rape, mutilation, maiming and killing. Despite the various difficulties women have faced during the prolonged insurgency, they have continued to demonstrate resourcefulness in the way they have been able to organise themselves in the midst of crises and be able to support their families economically. One indicator of wom-

en's economic initiative is the number of activities being undertaken by individual women or groups of women in the form of self-help projects. These include dealing in agricultural produce, brewing beer and cooking food for sale in public places or in small makeshift eating-places. These efforts provide households with the means to acquire other essential consumer items and food to feed the family.

The majority of men on the other hand have failed to cope with the rapidly changing situation. In situations where farming cannot be practised like in Gulu town, many men have failed to find alternative economic survival mechanisms and have taken to heavy drinking out of frustration. Some have resorted to performing previously despised jobs like general sale of labour to perform menial tasks.

1.1.1 Statement of the Problem

The war in Gulu has been one of the longest armed conflicts in the history of Uganda. The years of war have had both short and long-term effects on the local population. Although war is usually organised and fought by men, women and children often become the worst victims.

1.1.2 Rationale and Significance of the Study

A number of research projects have been undertaken by Institutions such as ACORD, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Parliament of Uganda and by individuals. Most of these studies however have not focused on the women and their experiences during the war. Where deliberate attempts were made to study the effects of war on women, such as in the case of the oral testimonies of Gulu women collected by ACORD in collaboration with Panos Institute in 1995, these have been limited in geographical coverage and size of the study population.

In June 1998, Isis-WICCE published a report of a research study on women's experiences during armed conflict conducted on the war that took place in the "Luweero Triangle" between 1980 and 1986. This study was about a relatively shorter war fought in the different cultural and economic settings of central Uganda. The available knowledge on women's experiences during war, their mechanisms for coping, their contributions, and how they respond to human needs during and after war, therefore remained limited.

It has become increasingly clear that in order to be effective rehabilitation strategies to address war affected areas need an in-depth understanding of the prevailing social, demographic and cultural patterns. Wholesale assumptions that do not take into consideration the special needs of women, girls and children as a result of the war often have very limited impact on their well being and recovery process. Moreover without a wider understanding and a comparative analysis of the effect of war on women under different cultural settings, it becomes difficult to draw universal inferences and to design effective strategies for coping with war and its effects.

Given the above background and the limitations in the existing body of knowledge, it proved necessary to carry out a complementary study on women's experiences of the conflict in northern Uganda (1986 - 1999) in order to assess the impact of the war on the women of the area. This study would add on the existing knowledge about women's experiences during armed conflict situations. It would assess the

trauma experienced by women through the loss of homes and livelihoods and the violation of their human rights. It would also reveal women's coping mechanisms; their contributions to the war efforts and peace building; and their response to human needs such as the full responsibility of taking care of the family members (children, the old, sick and the disabled). Above all this study would address the effects of war on women resulting from sexual abuse, maiming and/or mutilation, stigmatisation and rejection by spouses and family members.

The study would contribute towards the war victims' healing process by giving the women an opportunity to open-up and relive their experiences and combining their efforts in trying to find solutions. It would make women's experiences part of the historical events of war situations in the country and guide the packaging and delivery of relief, resettlement and rehabilitation service in other parts of the country where similar situations may arise.

The study results would be used as an advocacy and lobbying tool for law reform and in the enforcement of the existing laws related to human rights violations. Countrywide, the study would serve as a tool for sensitising the public, women's NGOs, the communities and the country at large about the consequences of armed conflict on women and the national economy.

1.1.3 Key Research Questions

With no end to the war in Gulu in sight, but with some relative calm having been restored, it became appropriate to take stock of the effect of this war on the population and particularly its effect on the emerging class of family breadwinners - the women. In order to achieve its objective the study was to address itself to the following key questions:

1. What were women's experiences during the armed conflict?
2. What were the roles and contributions of women during different time periods of the armed conflict?
3. How did women cope with displacements and the inadequacy of basic means of survival?
4. What was the impact of war on the health of women and their economic wellbeing as well as that of their households?
5. What are the lessons to be learnt by individuals, households, communities, government, relief and rehabilitation agencies, women organisations, human rights activists and policy makers?

1.1.4 Study objectives

Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to assess the effects of armed conflict on the women of Gulu and to draw lessons to be used for coming up with strategies to alleviate the effects of armed conflicts on women generally and on the women of Gulu district in particular.

Specific Objectives

More specifically this study was to:

- Document women's experiences during the armed conflicts in Gulu between 1986 and 1999.
- Examine the effects of war on women's health and economic status.
- Find out women's roles and participation in the armed conflict.
- Find out women's mechanisms for coping during war and post war situations.
- Review the impact of war on gender relations.

1.2.0 METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 Study Design and Process

The study adopted a participatory approach, in which both the design and actual implementation were carried out through a process of consultation, sharing of views, opinions and experiences between the researchers, research assistants, respondents and opinion leaders.

A preparatory workshop, held in June 1998, gave women from all war-affected districts of Uganda an opportunity to share experiences. During the workshop a concept paper prepared by Isis-WICCE was discussed. The study methodology, including the method of identifying study participants was reviewed and the study districts selected. During the workshop the districts of Luweero, Iganga, Soroti, Gulu and Kasese were identified as study areas under the long-term project.

At the end of April 1999, Isis-WICCE made a reconnaissance visit to Gulu as part of the preparations for the study. During the visit introductory meetings were held with the district leaders, some NGOs and potential respondents. Training of research assistants was also conducted.

1.2.2 The research Team

The fieldwork was conducted by Isis-WICCE in collaboration with People's Voice for Peace (PVP); a local NGO based in Gulu District. Members of PVP had previously collaborated with Isis-WICCE in other programmes and activities. The study fieldwork team consisted of seven women and two men research assistants. Most of these research assistants had already carried out other research projects including the collection and documentation of the oral testimonies of both women and men about experiences during armed conflicts.

A two-day training programme for the research assistants was conducted in Gulu town. The training mainly focused on the research methodology and issues connected with investigating sensitive and tragic issues. The assistants were also con-

ducted through the study topic and objectives, where their role in the study was highlighted.

1.2.3 Literature Review

A literature review of materials produced on the study subject by various researchers was carried out before the commencement of the fieldwork. The 1998 Isis-WICCE Exchange Programme Institute participant from the area had already documented 20 case studies as part of the participant's individual project¹. These together with case studies documented by Isis-WICCE during visits to Gulu (the 1998 involvement in the Advocacy workshop in collaboration with UWONET and field visit during this research) became part of the literature review for this research. Other case studies included the 30 oral testimonies on "women and war" documented in 1993 by Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD)², five (5) men's testimonies on the theme men and their attitude to violence collected in 1998, and studies done by World Vision and Unicef.

1.2.4 Sensitisation Visits and Meetings with the Communities

After the training, the researchers developed work plans for visiting and sensitising the communities among whom the research was to be conducted about the project. The sensitisation meetings were held at the sub-county headquarters of the selected sub-counties.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Sensitise the communities on the objectives of the proposed study.
- Solicit support and build rapport with people in the communities and their leaders.
- Obtain ideas from opinion leaders/women leaders in the identified communities on how best the study could be carried out and identify potential respondents for the study.
- Determine the community's expectations and clarify the main purpose of the study.

The participants of the sub-county meetings included sub-county chiefs, LCIII chairpersons, village LC leaders, women LC leaders, CBO and NGO local leaders, widows, single mothers, married women and the youths.

1.2.5 Fieldwork

The research fieldwork was carried out between May and August 1999. The relatively improved security situation in the district enabled researchers to reach sub-counties outside Gulu Municipality within a radius of 18 kilometres from Gulu town. Various methods were used to collect data for the study. These included individual interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews/case studies and

¹ Atim Tebere Margaret. Report on women's experiences of war during armed conflict in northern Uganda - Gulu district. June 1999. A report.

² Arms to fight arms to protect: Women speak about conflict. U.K: Panos, 1995.

key informant interviews with various categories of respondents. Video and audio recordings as well as still camera photography of the process and the destruction caused by the war were carried out.

Individual Interviews

Individual respondent interviews were carried out in homes using a structured questionnaire. Generally, male research assistants interviewed the men respondents while female research assistants interviewed the women respondents. The individual interviews also considered the situation before the war. The war experiences covered included:

- The various atrocities committed by the fighting forces;
- Property owned by the respondents before and during the war and damages caused to the property by the war;
- Respondents' experiences during flight and in hiding;
- Life faced in camps and "protected villages";
- Women's survival strategies during the war;
- Changes in traditional gender roles; and
- The impact of war on the health of women.

Group Discussions

In all, ten group discussions were conducted. The participants were people who had suffered similar problems. The selected groups were:

- The landmine victims (1 female group and 1 male group);
- The sexually abused (female group);
- Those who suffered abduction (1 female and 1 male group);
- Child mothers (1 female group);
- Those who suffered displacement (1 female and 1 male group);
- Soldier's wives and/or "camp followers" (1 female group); and
- Ex-combatants (1 female group).

The size for group discussions had been planned to be between 12 and 15 respondents, but some groups registered numbers as large as 27 while some were very few. The child mothers and ex-combatants were particularly few. The abducted males group discussion was mixed, with 4 women and 2 men. The problem of getting enough abducted males was the general fear of being recruited into the national army, as a recruitment exercise was reportedly on-going at that time.

Group discussions focused on issues like:

- Who the initiators of the war were;
- How the civilians were handled/treated by the warring groups;
- Experiences during flight and in hiding;
- Life in camps and "protected villages";
- Gender roles;
- Ways of meeting basic needs;
- The rehabilitation process;

- Health problems; and
- Lessons learnt from the war experiences.

In-depth Interviews/Case Studies

Previously documented testimonies tell a variety of stories including the general hardships that women went through during the war, problems of abduction, sexual abuse and the general destruction caused by the war. In-depth interviews were conducted with women who had been subjected to various Human Rights abuses, which included:

- Maiming and mutilation;
- Sexual harassment including rape and other forms of violations;
- Physical torture including burning with paraffin;
- Injuries caused by land and personnel mines as well as other explosives; and
- Witnessing the brutal murder of close relatives.

Key Informant interviews

Interviews conducted with various key informants focused on:

- Information on causes and progress of the war;
- Support given to help people cope with the situation;
- Revival of socio-economic structures; and the
- Assistance and services provided to the most vulnerable members of the community (women, children, disabled).

The above information was useful in corroborating the information collected from other respondents. It also helped to understand the gaps that existed and may still exist in service delivery as well as gauging the appropriateness of the ongoing support by NGOs/ Agencies, the government and donors.

Filming and Photography

Video and audio recording as well as still camera photography was used throughout the research exercise to capture the general environment of the study and as a way of record keeping. The effects of the war on the infrastructure and on several women who were physically maimed were captured in pictorial form. Publication of some of these however, may involve express permission being sought from those photographed, and hence, they are not included in this report.

1.2.6 Study Area/Population

The whole of Gulu district, and indeed the whole of northern Uganda, was affected by the long-running conflict which has left many lives lost, a lot of property destroyed and immense anguish and helplessness among the people of the region. It would have been ideal to reach all the 23 sub-counties of Gulu district, but due to limited resources and logistics only seven sub-counties were selected for the study. Attempts were made to reach at least one sub-county in each county of the rural areas.

The sub-counties studied were:

- The four sub-counties of Gulu Municipality (Bardege, Laroo, Layibi and Pece)
- Koro sub-county in Omoro County
- Lamogi sub-county in Kilak County
- Paicho sub-county in Aswa county.
- Koch Goma sub-county in Nwoya County

It turned out that due to the massive displacements not all respondents were permanent residents of the selected areas. Some of the respondents were from the non-study sub-counties of Bungatira, Palaro, Pabo, Ongako and Bobi. Most of the non-resident respondents had moved and were now living with relatives or in camps within Gulu town, trading centres or hospitals, Missions and churches. Consequently, it can be said that what was documented during the research is a fair representation of the situation that had existed in the Gulu district for the last 13 years.

In addition to the women respondents, some men respondents were included to act as a control group and in order to help in understanding men's perceptions of the impact of war on women and children. The selection criteria for the respondents were willingness to talk about one's experiences and the ability to put aside time for the discussions. This was very important because in a situation where people live from hand to mouth, time becomes a valuable resource in making ends meet. The individual respondents were selected from among the survivors who lived in their respective communities before 1986, and were aged above eight years at the beginning of the conflicts. These were considered to have been old enough to recall stories and experiences and to be able to meaningfully share these with the research team.

There were 81 respondents for individual interviews, of whom 66 were women and 15 were men (control group). More than three-quarters of these respondents (62 out of 81) were based in Gulu at the time of the survey. Besides the individual interview respondents with whom questionnaires were completed, 130 other respondents were involved in 10 focus group discussions.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with individual female ex-combatants who are members of the Uganda Veterans' Association. Other respondents included 30 key informants, 8 organisations (ACORD, World Vision, World Food Programme, AVSI, NRC, Action Faim, GUSCO and Gulu Development Agency). In addition key informant interviews were held separately with the leaders of the main religious denominations in the area, namely: the Catholic, Protestant and Islamic faiths.

1.2.7 Data Analysis and synthesis

All the research assistants were involved in the analysis and synthesis of the qualitative data collected during the research period. Information from the questionnaire was first collated by going through the questions one by one and writing down various responses on the newsprint with markers. Data from the group discussions was also grouped under themes and later ideas were integrated.

Later the questionnaires were coded, a data entry screen designed using a computer and data entry done using the epi-info software package. This was then converted

into SPSS for easier analysis. Frequency tables were run and are presented in this report. An independent consultant carried out a qualitative data analysis and report review.

Quotations of testimonies given by respondents during interviews or discussions are carried in this report with minimum editing for clarity.

CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHIC, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC STATUS

2.1 Geographic Background

Gulu district is found in Northern Uganda. It lies between longitude 30° 21" East to 32° East and latitude 02° to 4° North. It is bordered by the Republic of Sudan in the North, Kitgum district in the North East and East, Apac district in the South East, Masindi district in the South, Nebbi district in the South West and Moyo and Arua districts in the West (see Map: I, Appendix 2). The district has a total area of 28,834 sq. kilometres (11,264sq. miles). Of this area, 10,301 square kilometres is the arable land under agricultural activities, the rest being covered by open water swamps, forests and game park reserves.

Gulu experiences marked dry and wet seasons. The average total rainfall is 1,500 mm per annum with a monthly average rainfall varying between 14 mm in January and 230 mm in August. The wet season normally extends to October with the highest peaks in May, August and October. The dry season begins in November and extends up to March. The average maximum temperature is 30° C with a minimum of 18° C. The relative humidity is high during the wet season and low in the dry season.

The vegetation consists of intermediate savannah grassland characterised by open canopy of trees and underlying grasses. The trees are fire resistant and therefore able to regenerate after being burnt by fire. The common tree species include Acacia, Ficus, Natalensis, Combretum, Borasus and Aethiopum. While the common grasses include Imperata Cylindrica, Hyperrhania rufa and Digitaria Scalarum. There are also some herbs like Bideu Pilosa, Ageratum Coinzolds, Amaranthus species and Lantana Camara. However, man's activities have interfered with the natural vegetation and this had led to the introduction and development of secondary vegetation. The common trees and grass species introduced include Eucalyptus, Jacaranda, Cypress, Thevita, Oeruvian, Pines, Hibiscus, Bougainvillaea and Flamboyant.

The location of Gulu, its terrain, climate and vegetation, have played a significant role in the intensity and duration of the war. In addition, they form the main natural resource base on which, the agriculture that the women and their households rely for their personal existence depends.

2.2 Demography

90% of the population of 338,308 (as at the 1991 census) is composed of 166,144 males and 172,164 females belonging to the Acholi ethnic group that is closely related to the Luo tribal group living along the Lake Victoria shore areas of Western Kenya. Both speak a similar language - Luo.

Table 1: Basic Demographic Indicators, 1991 (during the early years of War)

Characteristic	Rural		Urban		District	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>Age</i>						
0 - 4 years	16.5	16.3	15.4	15.2	16.4	16.2
5 - 14 years	30.1	27.6	24.6	25.4	29.5	27.4
15 - 64 years	50.5	52.8	58.6	57.6	51.4	53.3
65+ years	2.9	3.2	1.4	1.8	2.8	3.1
<i>Religion</i>						
Catholic	71.5	74.0	65.5	68.6	70.8	73.3
Church of Uganda	18.8	17.5	27.6	26.5	19.7	18.5
Moslem	0.5	0.2	4.1	2.9	0.9	0.5
<i>Education</i>						
Literate population aged 10+	62.5	29.6	82.5	59.5	64.8	33.2
Population 6yrs+ that never attended school	23.9	56.6	12.4	31.9	22.6	53.7
Population 15yrs+ that completed primary	30.3	10.9	59.3	35.9	33.9	13.9
Population 20yrs+ that completed Secondary	6.9	1.2	23.1	8.0	9.0	2.0

(Source: Republic of Uganda (1992))

2.3 Cultural and Socio-economic Situation

The Acholi society has remained relatively non-hierarchical, being basically organised along the clan line. Historically, there was no central political authority, though clans did rally under the leadership of a chief (Rwot) for religious, political and defensive purposes. There was no unifying economic system or religion, though they spoke a common language, and shared common traditions and customs. Marriage, in particular played a central role in binding different clans together. Land is still communally owned on clan/family basis with fragmented plots apportioned to individual clan/family members.

Traditionally; Acholi gender relations used to display some sort of “balance” in the management of resources by men and women, albeit with men enjoying a pronounced favourable position to that of women. Women controlled food crops, which were never sold for cash and which men had no direct access to; while men had total control over livestock, which could only be sold or slaughtered with the consent of the man. Cash crop proceeds were also under the direct control of men and they used such money to cover family expenses such as paying tax, buying clothes and paying school fees for the children. The men’s traditional control of the family income, including the wives’ earnings put the women at a great disadvantage and has been a source of tension in recent years where women have tended to have greater control of family earnings.

The prevailing insecurity has greatly affected the settlement pattern with the majority of people currently living in camps commonly referred to as “protected villages” and in the town of Gulu and its suburbs. Economically, agriculture and cattle keeping were the mainstay of the area, the Acholi being a historically pastoral tribe. Over the past decade and more the once big livestock herds in the district have been wiped out by cyclical resurgence of conflict, thus denying the Acholi society one of its major sources of wealth and livelihood. The majority of the population now consists of subsistence farmers. Hand hoe cultivation still predominates, as there is no pronounced commercial farming. Major crops grown include rice, cassava, sweet potatoes, sesame, groundnuts, millet, beans, maize, banana, sorghum, pigeon peas for domestic consumption. Some of these such as rice, sesame, groundnuts have, in recent years, become a major source of income for many households. In the past the major cash crops used to be cotton and tobacco, which have been almost eliminated by the persistent instability and neglect.

Life expectancy is extremely low, being 37 years for men and 44 years for women, compared to the national average at 45.7 years for men and 50.5 for women (Republic of Uganda, 1995). The most common diseases in the district are malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections, cough, worm-infestations, eye diseases, HIV/AIDS and STIs. There are high rates of infant and maternal mortality (estimated at 700 deaths per 100,000 live births) which contribute to a comparatively low population growth rate of 2.05% (compared to 2.5% nationally). The few existing and operational government health facilities lack drugs and personnel. Most people go to Lacor Hospital, a private Catholic Mission hospital.

The increasing high costs of living and particularly on basic social services such as health, education and transport, coupled with the massive displacements, destruction of means of livelihood and lack of marketing opportunities has left many people more vulnerable than before. The cost of medical services, secondary and tertiary education has been rising such that many can hardly afford them. Consequently, school enrolment has steadily declined throughout the district.

Some members of the Acholi community have also lost the financial support they used to get from the relatives who have been retrenched from the civil service, the privatised government companies and the armed/security forces. Development activities have been seriously interrupted by civil strife and insecurity from the 1970's to date. There have been no meaningful development activities going on in the district

On the surface it would appear that since in the Acholi society land is communally owned, men and women have equal access to land. However, a closer examination of the land tenure system indicates that even before the insurgencies, women's access to land was considerably limited and often pegged to their marital status. Lack of control over land by women normally puts them at high risk especially during separation or divorce, because they normally lose their right to the land they had tilled for ages as wives. Widows too could lose the right to use the deceased husband's land in the absence of sons. Refusal to be inherited by the relatives of the deceased husband also invariably results into eviction from the land. With the war and an upsurge in HIV transmission awareness, the situation has become bad, as most women do not want to be inherited by the in-laws for fear of impoverishment and contracting HIV. Widows without male children and divorcees currently depend on the kindness of relatives or their own ability to hire or buy land.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WAR PROCESS AND WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

3.1 Introduction

The study reveals that the armed conflict in Gulu can be broken down into two distinct periods. Between 1986 and 1992 there was intensive war that was fought within Uganda, while the period after 1994 the war took on a regional outlook due to the involvement of the Sudan Government.

The fighting took place mainly in rural areas of the district. The August 1986 invasion by the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) immediately led to the total control by UPDA of rural areas (villages and bushes) while NRA held the main roads and towns. People found themselves caught between the two fighting forces, which continued to commit atrocities against them. In this chapter different experiences of women at the hands of rebels and government soldiers are recounted.

The main strategy of fighting groups revolved primarily around the control of civilian population by both sides. Many men fled because they had become prime targets of both fighting forces. Those who were found would be beaten up terribly, killed or arrested. Some men would be ambushed as they commuted between the hiding places/protected camps and the villages to collect food. Some of them would be forced by government soldiers to join them.

Consequently, most women were left with the unenviable role of catering for their families in an environment in which they themselves were insecure and severely lacking resources to offer the necessary care.

3.2 The 14 -Year War in Northern Uganda

3.2.1 Phase One: The UPDA and Alice Lakwena (1986 - 1988)

The war in Northern Uganda began with an invasion of the area by a group mainly made up of former government soldiers and politicians, calling itself the UPDA. This group offered a relatively conventional military resistance to the NRM Government. During the second half of 1987, this organised rebellion began to collapse. Many of the well-trained former officers of the UNLA who were leading the various rebel factions had either been killed or given up the fight. In late 1987, large numbers of the fighters began surrendering in response to the government Amnesty Act. In early 1988, the UPDA began peace negotiations with the government. In May of the same year, a cease-fire was officially declared between UPDA and NRA and on June 3, 1988, a peace accord was signed between the two sides.

The other major source of instability during the period was the panic caused by the Holy Spirit Movement led by Alice Auma Lakwena, a traditional healer/medium. This was a grass-root-based resistance. Increasingly, the rebellion took on a

charismatic spiritual outlook more than that of a concerted political movement that it was. Many of Alice's followers were killed because of the belief in her claims that after being anointed with Shear-nut butter/oil, they would be protected from all danger including being killed by bullets. Her army was finally defeated in eastern Uganda in November 1987 in an abortive attempt to march to Kampala and take over state power. She fled to Kenya where she was arrested but later released and handed over to the UNHCR. Following her defeat, other offshoot groups of similar persuasion continued to cause havoc in the district. Her father (Severino Lukoya Kiberu) decided to continue the struggle but he was poorly organised and was eventually captured by the NRA but was later released.



The 14 year old Gulu war has deformed many young and old women

Government forces also committed a number of Human Rights abuses between 1986 – 1987. For example, some people blame government soldiers for the loss of the entire cattle stock of the district, which dealt a big blow to the economic and social life of the people of the area.

3.2.2 Phase Two: The rise of Joseph Kony (1987 – 1991)

At about the same time that Lukoya's movement began, Joseph Kony was also mobilising forces to resist the Government. Kony's movement started in 1987 and was still continuing at the time that the study took place. Some of the UPDA fighters who did not agree with the 1988 Peace Accord and some members of Lukoya's group, decided to join Kony's fighting force. In 1993, the group's name was changed to Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Right from the start, Joseph Kony's alleged spiritual powers made him to use violence when dealing with civilians. At times, he claimed to be cleansing the Acholi people of spiritual contamination. However, it appears that this was aimed at establishing total control through instilling fear and terror. Reports of massacre of civilians by this force started coming out as early as 1988. His recruitment techniques at that time included the forceful assimilation of UPDA fighters and abduction of civilians.

After the peace accord with the UPDA in 1988, the government attempted to deal a last blow to the other rebel groups through a major military operation. From October 1988, NRA forcibly moved people from their homes in the rural areas and pushed them into Gulu town. This was aimed at depriving the rebel groups of logistical

support from the civilians. But the operation was mismanaged. In the course of this operation, some soldiers reportedly committed extra-judicial executions and burnt down homesteads and granaries. People flocked to Gulu town but logistics of receiving them were not in place. The operation instead ended up creating strong resentments by the people towards the government, which in turn helped to further fuel the war.

Between March and July 1991, the NRA mounted another major military offensive code named "Operation North". This was also characterised by the heavy-handed treatment of civilians by the government troops. Gulu was sealed off from the rest of the country. NRA soldiers were alleged to have extra-judicially executed hundreds of villagers. Hundreds others were detained without charge or trial. Various leaders from northern Uganda (18 of them) who questioned the strategy or who protested these human rights violations by the NRA were arrested and charged with treason. Many of these atrocities by NRA were reported by Amnesty International (Uganda Human Rights Violation by the NRA 'AFR 59/20/91').

Part of the operation involved the mobilisation of villagers into self-defence units using local weapons like spears and bows and arrows. Kony, in retaliation began an intensive campaign of punishment, which included mass killings of the "Arrow Brigade" members sometimes including their relatives and neighbours. Hundreds of others were mutilated by cutting off limbs, lips, ears, nose or even gouging out the eyes.

The "scorched earth policy" of forcing people into towns though successful in denying Kony a recruitment base, brought a number of problems. These included lack of proper shelter and water, poor sanitation and insufficient supplies of food for the population. There was also pressure from local and international sources to allow people to return to their homes. Between 1989 and 1990 the population were allowed to return to their villages where their homes and other forms of livelihood had been destroyed.

3.2.3 Phase three: 1992 to early 1994

The years 1992 and 1993 provided a lull in fighting and reconstruction work was able to start. To the majority of people, the war seemed to be over and durable peace appeared to prevail. The Minister of State for Northern Uganda based in Gulu, Mrs. Betty Bigombe, began a peace process that culminated in face to face talks with Kony in late 1993. Early in 1993 Pope John Paul II, while on a visit to Uganda, visited Gulu and used his sermon to the people of the area to call for peace and reconciliation.

This lull made several prominent political figures from Northern Uganda living in exile to return to Uganda. This included former President Tito Okello Lutwa, who spoke out against continuing rebellion in Northern Uganda. The focus of both the general public and government organs in Northern Uganda was on how to build peace and the infrastructure.

Kony apparently took advantage of the government amnesty and talks to embark on wide-scale recruitment and training for a fresh attack on government positions. In

February 1994, President Museveni gave the LRA a seven days ultimatum to come out of the bush or face the consequence. The LRA did not heed the ultimatum, marking the collapse of the Peace Process. The LRA withdrew to the southern Sudan where they were equipped with all sorts of weaponry, including ammunitions and landmines. The conflict once again began escalating.

3.2.4 Phase four: 1994 - 1999

From 1994, there was a steady escalation in the fighting as government forces sought to wipe out the LRA militarily while the LRA, with bases in Sudan and arms supplied by the Sudanese government, built up its fighting forces through large-scale abductions. The abducted boys and girls were trained to serve in a brutal manner as combatants in the LRA forces. The girls were also assigned as “wives” (sex slaves) to the LRA commanders.

During 1995 and 1996, the war entered one of its most violent phases. Both the LRA and Government forces seemed to have been locked in the struggle for direct control of the civilian population. Many civilians were massacred by the LRA. Some people started voluntarily flocking to the Trading Centres and Gulu town, seen as relatively safer places, while fleeing away from the LRA. The Government forces on the other hand began to move people into “protected villages” to cut off the LRA from food supply and to isolate them. By mid-1998, 90% of the population in Gulu District was staying in 30 camps. Child abduction, looting and killings continued even within the camps. UNICEF estimates indicate that the LRA abducted approximately 10,000 children between 1994 to 1998.

Over the last four years prior to the study, the government had increased its military presence in the district, and re-organised the army command structures. In addition, the population seemed to have largely become tired of the war and given-up any support for Kony. As a result there was a period of relative peace in Gulu districts occasionally interrupted by Kony’s invasion that is often met by relatively swifter government responses. The last incursion from Sudan had been in February 1999 and since then, the reported disturbances such as looting, robbery and abduction of persons to help in carrying looted property were allegedly being carried out by robbers/bandits who tended to move in small numbers of between seven and ten.

From April 1999, many people from the camps started taking the opportunity of the relative peace to visit their original homes, some had started cultivation while a few had started building temporary dwelling shelters. The children had remained schooling in schools within the displacement camps.

3.3 The LRA Excesses and Brutality

The following extract was made from an indepth interview with one of the victims of the LRA brutalities:

“Some women and I were destined for Lamin La Dera to purchase some cassava since it was cheaper there as compared to Atede where I used to live. Hardly had we walked for some distance when we entered an LRA (Lord’s Resistant Rebels) ambush. We tried to run for our dear lives

but realized that, there was no escape route since we were trapped in the middle of the ambush.

We were then put under gunpoint and ordered to remove our shoes and sandals. We had been tied together and marched into the bush and taken to the rebels. On reaching the camp, we realized that we were in great danger the rebel commanders were seated on low stools with machetes laid down in front of them. They were 4 in number and one of them who introduced himself as Commander "Gun Smoke" said 'we welcome all of you to our camp'. He then ordered us to sit down and they started questioning us about the general condition in town to which we answered. They then told us that they were to deal with us. We only understood what they meant when about 6 Kadogos (child soldiers) were instructed to sharpen the machetes. We were called in turns one after the other until the last person. They skillfully cut off the lips, ear and nose of the one who was the first to be called and she was forced to eat the parts of her body while we all looked on breathlessly. The next turn was mine. The story was repeated until the last person.

The notorious commander, "Gun Smoke" ordered the Kadogos to axe us to death but the other three disagreed with him and overturned the order.

A bell was then rung and prayers were conducted for the Kadogos to cleanse them from sin. As soon as the prayers were over, we were told to disappear as fast as possible as they also disappeared in the opposite direction."

The war in Gulu has so far been extremely violent. The war experiences narrated include, sexual abuse/assault, various forms of physical and mental torture, unlawful arrest and detention, maiming and mutilation, various forms of harassment with threats and false accusations. The LRA in particular, developed a reputation for the ritual use of violence aimed at instilling fear in the communities. Many suspected government informers were particularly targeted and killed between 1987 – 1991. In Gulu there are a number of people who became "dehumanized" as a result of the brutality of the LRA. There are 55 victims (29 men, 26 women) who were maimed in 1991 by the LRA by cutting off some of their body parts like ears, lips and nose. See box above.

These acts which severely disrupted the social fabric of society, were aimed at reducing civilian confidence in the ability of government to provide protection for the civilian population and their property. The mutilations were also meant to serve as punishment for having talked about or discussing rebel activities with government soldiers. It was also a way punishing the populace for not heeding the rebels' warnings and instead picking up arms to fight them. The atrocities were committed in retaliation for the mobilization of villagers into self-defense units by NRA and some local leaders. These groups had taken up spears, axes, bows and arrows and organized themselves into the "Arrow Brigades" to fight the rebels.

3.3.1 Sexual abuse and harassment

The threat and/or experience of sexual violations happened at a very wide scale. All respondents had some information to give about this problem. Both Government forces and the LRA sexually abused women and girls extensively. The LRA in particular was widely reported to have engaged in various forms of sexual abuses and violations.

To many women respondents, rape by government soldiers was reportedly “more tolerable” than the brutality meted-out by rebels to their rape victims (see the narration below).

A Tale of Torture and Genital Mutilation

Rebels of LRA crossed to Atiak in April. At 11.00 a.m. they found me asleep under a mango tree in our compound. One of them came to me and ordered me to get up, which I did. Another one asked me why I was sleeping at that time. I told him that I had been harvesting vegetables and felt tired so I decided to rest and then fell asleep. He then asked me whether I thought I was of any value to them. I told him I did not know. He then hit my head with the butt of his gun and a machete and I collapsed in front of the hut. Their commander immediately rushed and questioned the offender why he had hit me. He did not answer. He then ordered all the other captives to be brought where I was. I lay down pretended as if I had not heard anything. They then started hitting other captives' heads with machetes and the butts of their guns. They left many dead and others unconscious.

One of them then asked why they should leave me. Another replied that they were already tired of having sex with women. He said that they should do something else to me. He ordered that I should be dragged to an open space. I was then taken under a tree. One of them asked for a knife, which was handed to him. He ordered me to lie upside down, which I refused. He then said, since I was stubborn and was following them, they would teach me a lesson I would never forget. Two rebels spread my legs in opposite directions and tied them with ropes. They then started piercing my private part with a knife and cut it up to my anus. I tried to struggle for my freedom but was too weak to move. One of them said I should be killed and my head smashed but another said that what they had done to me was enough, I should just be beaten and left to die. They beat me and left me unconscious. After a short while there was heavy rain. I could not move anywhere and it rained on me for almost two hours.

I regained consciousness in the morning and found bodies of other captives they had killed next to me. My son's wife came to check on me in the morning but when she saw dead bodies she ran away without asking me what had happened.

I was later taken to Lacor Hospital for treatment. I went without any money or food expecting that I would be given food at the hospital. The problems did not end. Rebels arrested my daughter two days after I had left Atiak, hit her head three times with an axe and chopped off her hand believing she was dead. She was fortunate in that some people found her and brought her to Lacor Hospital.

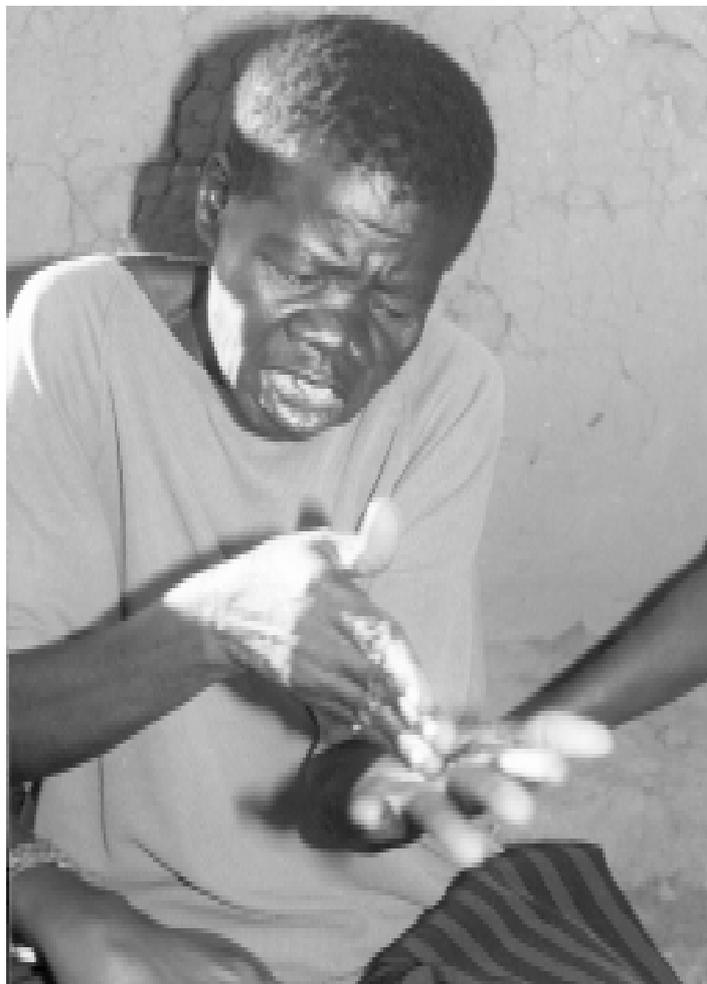
Currently, I am very weak and can not do much work. I sell paraffin and charcoal for my survival as well as that of my daughter's children. Unfortunately,

the little I had I used for my medical expenses and my business has virtually collapsed. I bleed frequently through the nose and ears. I have gone to hospital several times but it seems there is no way in which I can be helped. I should have gone for an operation but can not, simply because I do not have the money. I cannot even control my bowels, which has forced me to stay at home. The worries, pain and helplessness I am going through is making life meaningless to me .If it was not for my daughter's children I would prefer to die and rest from all the problems I am facing.

While the primary reason for the rebels to abduct men seems to have been the need to swell the rebel's ranks, sexual gratification and abuse seems to have been the number one cause for their abducting women. The abducted women and young girls who managed to escape and/or were rescued during confrontations with government forces testified to how all females, young and old, taken into captivity by rebels were vulnerable to sexual violations and abuses.

Besides sexual harassment, the abducted girls/women carried out similar work as the abducted boys/men. This included looting food, carrying heavy loads, building huts, fetching water and washing clothes. They experienced the big burden of working as soldiers, being "wives" at night and being treated like prisoners.

Before settling down into rebel camps all women were reportedly routinely raped by multiple num-



Neither was she spared at the age of 50 years

bers of rebels and any reluctance or attempt to resist usually meant summary execution. Sometimes severe punishment was meted out to the victim until she gave in. The resultant effect of these acts of physical sexual abuse and mental harassment often resulted into serious ill health. One respondent said:

"Later all the girls that were abducted and defiled or raped were married off to rebel leaders or used for general sexual service to rebels. Some commanders were reported to have 4 to 5 wives while Joseph Kony himself had over 30 wives at any one time."

During these forced marriages to rebels there was some degree of enforced faithfulness to individual rebels with violations punishable by killing the woman. If the "husband" died either at the war front or through sickness, the "wife" would be put aside for some months and thereafter subjected to a humiliating ritual cleansing exercise and married off to another rebel after some months.

The government army too was accused of excesses of sexual abuse as indicated in the following excerpts about the 1986 - 1988 counter insurgency operations:

“The worst thing about the NRA soldiers was having forced sex with women one after the other. Men and women were collected during what they called a “screening exercise” to flush out the rebels from the community. The men and women were then put in separate groups. Then in the evening, the NRA soldiers started sexually abusing the women in the compound. One woman could be forced to have sex with six NRA men, and this went on for two days”.
(Bennett, O., Bexley J., and Warnock K., (eds.), (1995).

“Some women were raped in their own homes when found carrying out domestic activities or working in the fields, going to markets, health centres, collecting firewood and water.”

Some women believed rape was being used as a “Government weapon” as stated by a respondent from Patiko sub-county:

“According to me, it is the government which is intentionally spreading AIDS virus by raping women when they go for firewood. Is raping one of the government weapons to fight the women”? (Bennett, O., Bexley J., and Warnock k., (eds.), (1995).

Group discussions during the research revealed cases of sodomy said to have been committed by government soldiers. The following testimony was recorded during the group discussions

“The Government soldiers (Tek Gungu) raped men in Alero, Gurugururu and Amuru. Most of the raped men were later killed.”

It was reported that soldiers continue to defile young girls in places like Lacor and other areas of Lamogi sub-county. In Koro Division, the commanders are said to condone and shield soldiers who lure and turn young girls of 15 - 17 years into “wives”. This was considered sex slavery by to some of the “soldiers wives” interviewed during the study.

Women talked to during the individual interviews and group discussions expressed their ordeals of different forms of sexual abuse at the hands of the Government forces and rebels. These and the thirty-six sexually abused women currently being supported by PVP reported various complications including backache, abdominal pains, abnormal discharge and sores in the private parts, burning sensation while passing urine, swollen stomach, vomiting blood, loss of body weight, still-births, miscarriages, inability to conceive and mental disorders.

Men who did not belong to the rebel or government fighting forces are also reported to have raped the women and girls.

The victims saw rape as sometimes being used as a form of torture more than for the sexual satisfaction of men. This is because it affected all categories of females including very young girls and the very old women. In many cases, the rape was

performed in front of other people including family members. Some respondents talked of some women who died at the hands of the army men following rape.

It was the danger of rape from the rebel Lord's Resistance Army soldiers which is believed to have forced many girls and young women into sexual slavery by becoming "camp followers". This was the situation whereby women kept following the government soldiers from place to place for protection or economic gains.

"Our women used to be faithful to their husbands. However, with the war, there were rampant cases of rape which caused many marriages to break as women and girls have turned to "camp following" to avoid being raped".

3.3.2 Slavery

Some of the abducted children have died or been sold into slavery or remain stranded in the bush, especially inside Sudan. One girl who returned in 1996 reported that most of the young children were being exchanged for guns and landmines to the Arabs in Sudan. She reported that her "ex-husband", a rebel commander had negotiated with the Arabs and 110 children were taken by plane to an unknown destination.

3.3.3 Forced Murder

To ensure compliance all abducted persons including women were forced by rebels to participate in brutal acts. Girls, women and men were initiated into rebel ranks through the forced torture and killing of their colleagues. The following is an extract from an in-depth interview with a woman who fled from rebel captivity:

"While in captivity, even shy girls were forced to murder those condemned to die. They had to kill while others were looking on".

3.3.4 Other forms of Torture

Whereas it is generally known that during situations of armed conflict women are targeted for sexual abuse, in Gulu it was evident that in addition women faced other forms of torture. Below are some of the extracts.

"One night in 1994, rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) stormed our home and demanded for money. Three days previously my three brothers had sold their sugarcane in town. When they failed to produce the money, however, the rebels tied their hands the infamous "Kandooya or three piece" style and vowed to kill them. My two sisters, my aged mother and I would all be witnesses to their death.

The "condemned" were then led a short distance from home to what would be their execution ground. It was not to be however, with typical mother's love for her children, the aged woman pleaded the rebels to kill her instead of her sons as she would not be able to raise up the remaining orphans. They (the rebels) consented and thus, surrounded by her weeping children, the old woman was kicked down and methodically trampled upon until she was dead and all her bones broken. We were all forcefully made to watch the gruesome murder. Fearful and thoroughly traumatized I fled home after the rebels had gone and only returned after some church members (Balokoles) had come and buried my mother.

All through the pain and trauma of this loss, my husband never once set foot to say a word of condolence or give any material help to assist me. He has since remarried another woman. I am now left entirely on my own to look after the children and some other orphans. It's not easy. Though I sell petty goods at the market, the money raise is not enough to meet all my children's needs".

3.4 Human rights abuses by government forces

Just like the rebels, government soldiers were also reported to have committed serious Human Rights abuses during the war. Group discussion participants mentioned the following human rights abuses:

- Killing of civilians some of whom were buried in latrines and mass graves or burnt alive in their grass-thatched huts as in Pabo, Opidi, Anaka, Ongako, Pagoro sub-counties; and suffocating prisoners in pits dug in the ground as in Burcoro and Palenga sub-counties.
- Looting of property, destruction of homesteads and crops by burning; and forceful use of homes as barracks for soldiers as in Awach and Lamogi sub-counties.
- Raping of girls/women and homosexual assault on men.
- Rustling cattle from the districts of the Acholi under the guise of the Karimajong rustlers.
- The "Kandoya" style torture, which involves tightly tying a victim's arms behind the back and leaving the victim to die of breathing difficulties.
- Cutting the victims arms and leaving them to die. In some cases where death did not occur, the victims became permanently paralyzed.
- Mounting of military operations to "clear the area of rebels", during which victimisation and harassment of civilians was rife.

3.4.1 Rape and Sexual Harassment

The effects of rape on women were as varied as were the circumstances under which it occurred. Besides the break-up in marriages, there was a noticeable emotional stress in all the women who suffered rape. The following narration by a respondent who was a victim of rape serves to illustrate some of the complexities involved:

"One day in July 1996 at 3.00a.m, I woke up and went out for a short call. As I was coming back, I saw a government soldier standing in front of my door. I was so frightened and tried to run away. He spoke to me in Swahili, but I could not understand what he meant. I managed to run into the hut and as I tried to lock the door, he forced it open. He followed me inside and tried to pull me outside but I resisted and held on to my child. However, he was too powerful for me and later managed to pull me outside.

He then started talking to me in Swahili but I did not understand a thing of what

he was saying. When I tried to scream, he covered my mouth with his hands thus preventing me from shouting. He did not want me to go back inside the house.

So I thought of diverting him towards an LC I official's house, which was close by so I could receive help from there. He however, kept holding my hands and I could not move very far. I then asked him in Luo why he wanted to kill me and whether there was anything wrong with going for a short call at night.

Fortunately, this time I was near the LC official's home and he heard me scream for help. The LC official wanted to come out but his wife stopped him. He then told his wife that he could not withstand someone being killed near his home without him going out to help. The LC official then came out and started talking to the soldier. In the meantime, I managed to find my way into the LC official's house. How the LC official managed to escape from the soldier, I can not tell. The soldier then rushed inside the house where I was now hiding and got to me and raped me.

After his action, the soldier fell asleep and I managed to take his gun and went with it to my brother-in-law's home. My brother-in-law then gathered other people who went and found the soldier still asleep. They tied him up and at dawn he was taken to his detach where a statement was written and everything ended there.

It was so unfortunate that the rape resulted into a pregnancy. I was so upset but there was no way I could destroy the pregnancy. When time for my delivery came, I found myself with twins - both boys. One of the twins died when he was one year old.

My grief grew when after being raped and the death of one of the twins, my in-laws accused me of prior sexual agreement with the rapist soldier. My in-laws and even my elder children do not like surviving twin..

I am struggling to pay school fees for all my children but it is too much for me. My work does not provide enough for the family”.

There were many girls who got pregnant. Some escaped and came back with babies or while still pregnant. These women are at a loss as to what to do with such children. Some have developed mental problems with associated psychosomatic complaints.

The following extracts indicate multiple incidences of sexual harassment at the hands of government soldiers:

“The Government soldiers have been defiling young girls in Lacor. Some of the cases were reported and nothing done about it. The people in the area are very annoyed”.

“Women/girls suffered rape during flight and currently in the camps from Government soldiers”.

“Some soldiers are turning young girls aged between 15 and 17 years into wives. Their leader, condone the practice”.

The following excerpts show some of the other excesses committed by the government soldiers as reported by some respondents.

“When NRA came in Awach (in Owalo Parish), houses were burnt all livestock (cattle, goats, chicken) taken. Many people were killed including my father.”

“‘Cilil’ (the NRA) collected chickens, goats, and household properties in Koch. Three of my sisters and my mother were killed. Hot molten jerry cans were poured on my father who went through a lot of suffering and problems afterwards. He was assisted by a relative.”

“In 1996, the mobile government troops (two soldiers) raped the daughter of my co-wife. She was only ten (10) years old. She was badly mishandled by the soldiers.”

“Government soldiers are luring young girls into sex, taking people’s things by force and being very arrogant. The girls living with the army are treated like sex-slave and are abandoned at any time.”

3.5 Life as wives of soldiers

The life of women as “wives” of soldiers was prone with difficulties. These included seclusion from the rest of society, brutal handling by their husbands, lack of economic support and rejection in the event that the soldiers got re-united with former wives. Wives of soldiers/camp followers were also exposed to similar danger as their husbands as they followed them from place to place. The following extracts indicate the difficulties in the lifestyle women led as wives of soldiers. Many were also separated from their children who would then be sent to grandparents for protection from danger of attacks by rebels.

“Wives of soldiers are expected to remain within the barracks. They are virtually kept like prisoners. The soldiers are very arrogant to their wives –the majority of whom are not formally married to them, and they don’t want to see relatives of the women in the barracks.”

“When the ‘first wife’ comes from home, the ‘current wives’ are chased away even if one has a child or is pregnant, and no support is given to them.”

“The women came to their present (soldier) husbands for various reasons. Some men (soldiers) were serious and wanted to take them on as house wives; some women ran away from their civilian husbands due to economic hardships or mistreatment; and some girls had nowhere else to stay after the parents were killed.”

“Once in the barracks, some women would leave one soldier for another because they wanted those that can ably support them and the family.”

“Soldiers’ wives follow their husbands because they don’t send money home

for children's upkeep. Some women get tired of eating the same food without changing diet because they don't have enough money to buy other foodstuffs."

"Children are left at home without parental care because they cannot be brought to the military detachments which are usually insecure."

"At times they have nothing to eat especially when salary delays. The civilian population are reluctant to assist the wives of soldiers even if they are in great need."

3.6 Life in Protected Villages or Camps

Many women and children fled to or were forced to go to villages or camps protected by the government army. There were 24 such camps in Gulu district at the time of research. These camps or protected villages were ill prepared to receive these people. They had inadequate water supplies, poor sanitation and limited or no health services. The inhabitants of these camps had fled mainly from Pagoro, Awee, Parabongo, Labongogali, Pagak, Pabo, Ongako Lacor and Koro sub-counties.

Respondents reported that they had variously found their way into the "protected villages" in 1996. Some had fled their homes in terror as a result of massacres and continued intimidation by LRA rebel forces. Some said they "spontaneously" moved away from unsafe locations and initially took refuge in a variety of places such as trading centres and towns. A lot more people talked of having been forced by the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) to go and live near army detachments which were eventually named "Protected Villages". The government army had shelled some villages in order to drive people away to camps. Common to all these movements was the fact that there was always a danger that one cycle of movement from the pre-war home would result into another at a later stage. Some women moved away from camps in the villages to Lacor camp 3 miles from Gulu town situated at a private hospital owned by the Gulu Catholic Diocese. Those who ran to Lacor had fled from the killings, looting, abductions, and sexual harassment and abuse that were rampant in other protected camps like Amuru, Pabo and Olwal.

The civilians did not welcome the forced displacement strategy and up to the time of the research those living in the camps perceived it to be punitive. Respondents complained that the Government army had failed to protect them from assault by the LRA as the latter sought to abduct children and loot food. Further more, the UPDF soldiers were themselves seen to be directly responsible for luring girls young women into sex or forcefully raping them. The respondents could not come up with any benefit of staying in the camps. Instead they said that rather than providing protection for the civilian population, this military counter insurgency tactic resulted in a number of untold sufferings and as such most of the displaced seemed to prefer facing the dangers of insecurity within their local villages to staying in "protected camps". The following extracts shed some light on the misery in the camps which was not made better by the behaviour of some soldiers responsible for protecting the civilians in IDPs:

"The mobile NRA who were in the 118 Battalion in Olwal camp were raping both men and women alike. An old woman of sixty years was also raped,

she became sick, developed diarrhea for two years and passed away. It was found out that she had died of AIDS.”

“There are a lot of problems in the camp e.g. diseases such as - diarrhea, vomiting, STD, HIV/AIDS and these affected us and the children, others include cough, malnutrition, abdominal pain and chicken pox - all diseases which should not be killing people if the situation was not bad.”



Internally displaced persons lack even the basics

Problems or risks of staying in the protected camps also included high death rates due to conditions associated with overcrowding and the limited provision of sanitation, health care and food. Many children died from preventable diseases like malaria, measles, diarrhoea, malnutrition and upper respiratory tract disorders, as illustrated by the following excerpt.

In sum, the total destruction of homes, abandonment of fields, loss of economic assets and stock seed undermined the women’s established patterns of survival strategies in food production, household chores and trading systems and made them feel totally helpless. Access to land around the camps became very difficult and food supply by NGOs and UN Agencies was not always guaranteed especially at times of intense military activity by the LRA.

The foregoing problems, combined with the high risk of contracting STIs and HIV/AIDS as a result of the sexual molestation have left the communities with long-term health and social problems. Faced with the poor conditions in the camps and the poor record of safety afforded by the camps, some villagers have periodically returned to their homes in search of food. There have been many reported incidents in which unarmed civilians have been caught in the villages by UPDF soldiers and

beaten, raped and/or killed.

Some of the sexually abused/tortured and the female landmine victims being supported by PVP were some of the unfortunate victims of this type of circumstances. The victims narrated how they used to return to their homes during the day to work on their land or obtain food and in the process got hit by landmines, fell into rebel ambushes or were sexually abused by the government soldiers.

3.7 Experiences during flight, hiding and displacement

For some people hiding in the bush remained the best alternative to staying in the camps. This was more common among those who did not have any close relatives in Gulu town and were sure to starve if their place of refugee was town. In the bush they survived on stealing food. Alienated from their productio base the land and subsequent displacement into the bushes or protected camps, impoverished the population. Women heads of households made up predominantly of widows and single mothers, were even more vulnerable. Those who fled to town had to adjust to the new environment, an environment in which there was high competition for resources like food, water and fuel.

While the women's role in supporting children single handedly was exemplary and widely reported, in some instances some women played a part in making the lives of some war victims more difficult as indicated in the extract below:

"My father ran and left us when we were still very young. We were kept and supported by my mother who later also died. Our stepmother who was supposed to take care of us was very brutal and because of this, I decided to go with an army man for support."

For those that fled to the bush, basic necessities (salt, soap, food, and medical care) were out of question. Food too was scarce and in most cases people used to eat once in a day or in two days. The choice of what to eat was also limited.

In the bush, people kept on changing locations so that armed men could not trace them. Those living close to towns, missions or churches commuted daily to sleep in the institution dormitories or on verandas of the houses at night. Hiding in the bush, especially at night was terribly risky.

"We hid in the bush during day time and returned home only at night to prepare food and sleep, then go back to the bush at day break to hide in shelters near streams and valleys where we thought it could be difficult for armed men to find us. Soldiers began to follow us by our footprints. If they found anyone, they would burn the shelter together with you in it."

Hiding children deep in the bushes was a job undertaken by many women. The children had to be kept hidden and silent. They would be called for meals or when there was need to move to new a location using whispers. Gagging of babies using pieces of cloth was yet another survival strategy adopted by women. Mothers with young children could not be allowed to stay with the rest of the group for fear of the

children's cries attracting the enemy. Many women reported having to walk about or force their babies to suckle all the time. All the talking was carried out in whispers. One respondent said,

"I would carry at least two children one on the back and one around the neck. The children understood the difficulties they were in and most of the time kept quiet."

During food preparation, some people would leave some one to watch outside or on a tree.

Monitoring news about the enemy's movements was important aspect of survival. If there were reports of armed men approaching, everyone would move in the opposite direction and take cover.

"While moving, it was very important to continue asking people you meet and inquiring about general conditions of the place and the area one was heading to. In most cases, people would keep away from the main road or path and walk through the bush. Listening and having sharp eyes were very important. You had to strain your ears to catch sounds of gunshots and its directions. Foot marks were removed by bending grass backwards using long sticks."

Adapting to living without the basic necessities of life and improvising were vital during the war, especially while on the run. Due to lack of soap, some people used roots (Te Laliya) for washing and most of them said they got used to eating food without salt.



Malnutrition among children in war affected areas will have a grave impact to their well being

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EFFECTS OF WAR ON WOMEN'S LIVES

4.1 Introduction

The war in Gulu can be said to have affected the lives and health of the people in three different ways. First there were the abductions and forced migration out of the fighting areas. Then there was death arising out of torture, combat activities or being caught in the crossfire. The third effect was the destruction of life support infrastructure including health units and health personnel. For ease of comparison, women's experiences have been divided into three distinct periods. These are the period before the war, that during the war and the current period. Whereby the current period refers to the time during which there was a lull in fighting. This is also the time when the study was carried out. The full-scale LRA activities declined in 1998, but the violence continued right up to February 1999. The reason for looking at the period of lull was to try and understand the changes that may have taken place in camp life and to assess any rehabilitation that may have taken place.

Women were asked what their greatest fear was before and after coming to towns. Most of them gave personal safety, uniformed men, being killed, HIV/AIDS, abduction and being maimed by landmines and stray bullets as their greatest fears before coming to town. Their greatest fear while in town was robbery at night, torture by fighting forces, homelessness, and lack of economic survival activities and consequently, means of meeting basic needs.

4.2 Effects of War on Household Composition

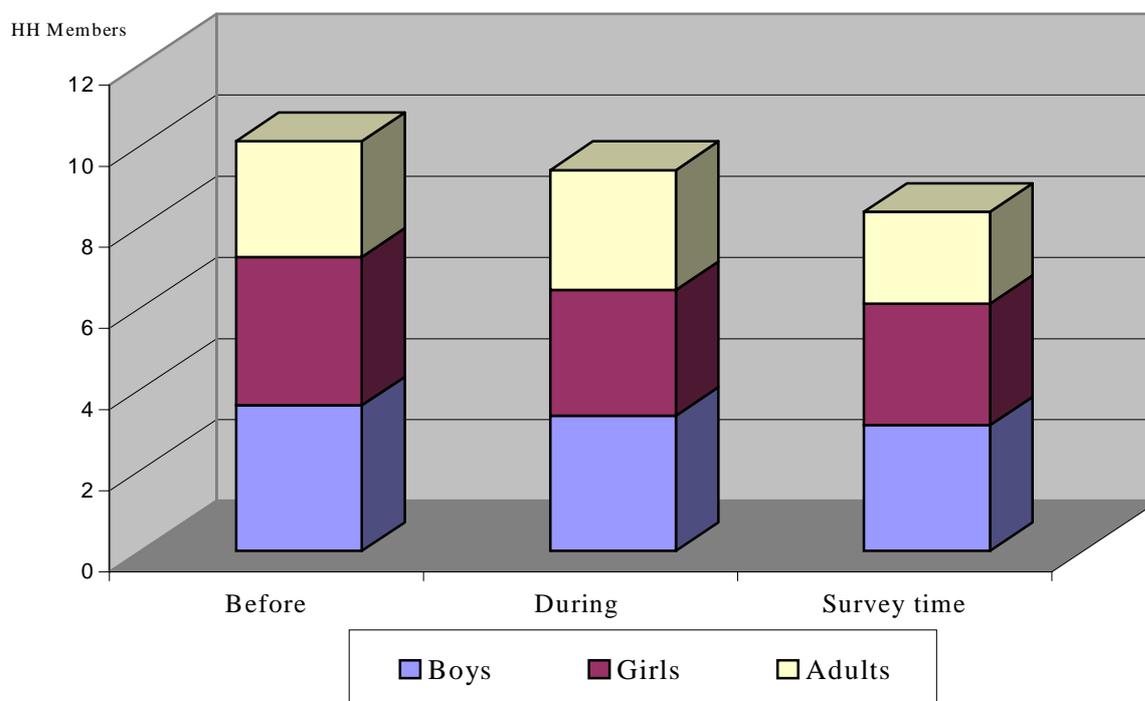
The study found that before the war there were on average 3.6 boys, 3.7 girls and 2.9 adults per household³. Households were also fairly big with an average of nearly 11 members. During the war these averages declined to about 3.3 boys and 3.1 girls respectively. The average number of adults on the other hand slightly increased. The only possible explanation for this is the fact that during the war many children were abducted or sent to relatively safer places while adults remained behind to carry out some food cultivation. See Table 4.1 and Fig. 4.1 below. Table 4.1: Household composition before, during and after the war

³ The Question on household composition was not gender segregated.

Table 4.1: Household composition before, during and after war

Membership Categories	Before	During	Survey time
Mean number of Boys	3.58	3.33	3.09
Mean number Girls	3.66	3.09	2.99
Mean no. of adults	2.85	2.96	2.27
Average household members.	10.73	12.04	9.95

Figure 4.1: Household composition before, during and after war



The slight increase in the average household size from about 11 members before the war to about 12 members during the war was probably because many households in relatively safer places such as towns had to accommodate members of the extended family and some friends. The average household size at the time of survey (period of relative peace) was however smaller than either before or during the war with the average number of boys and girls also declining slightly. The average number of adults had a comparatively much more pronounced decline to about 2.3 persons per household. The overall mean household size also declined from 12 during the war to 10. The only possible explanations for this decline were deaths, abductions and displacement of some household members due to war.

Although the questionnaire did not specify the sex of the adults it would appear there were more men killed in the war while others fled to save their lives or were forced by circumstances to keep a very low profile. The following extracts on this issue are taken from the group discussions:

“Many boys got killed in the process of abduction. Some were suspected by Government forces to be “rebels” and badly mistreated, killed or arrested.”

“In 1996 rebels killed 17 men and boys in Awayugi and laid them along Parabongo Road.”

“My father ran away and left us when we were still very young. We were kept and supported by my mother who later also died.”

“Then the Government soldiers started arresting the former soldiers, men and boys from the villages mistreated, tortured and killed them by tying them the kandoya `3 piece’.”

The absence of men from the home inevitably lead to an increased burden of work for women and this situation continued even during the period of relative peace.

4.3 Abduction and its effects

Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army started abductions in 1988 as a way of swelling the numbers of the rebels and in order to intimidate the local population into supporting the rebellion. The abducted people would also be used as a human shield against government attacks. It is not easy to establish the exact number of people abducted by the rebels since the war began, as very many of them were subsequently killed or injured and left to die. An estimated 10,000 children are said to have been abducted from 1988 to the time of the study and of these more than 3,000 had not yet returned by the time of survey.

Many of the interviewed women reported helplessly seeing their children dragged from beds at night. Others reported never seeing their children who were grabbed while on their way to school, in school classrooms and compounds, or while tilling the fields. For some of the young children that managed to escape, they are likely to have died on their way back. Their parents remain with great pain and trauma of understanding what fate could have befallen these children.

The following extracts were made out of some of the testimonies given during the study and serve as a pointer towards the magnitude of rebel abductions:

“Some women lost all their children.”

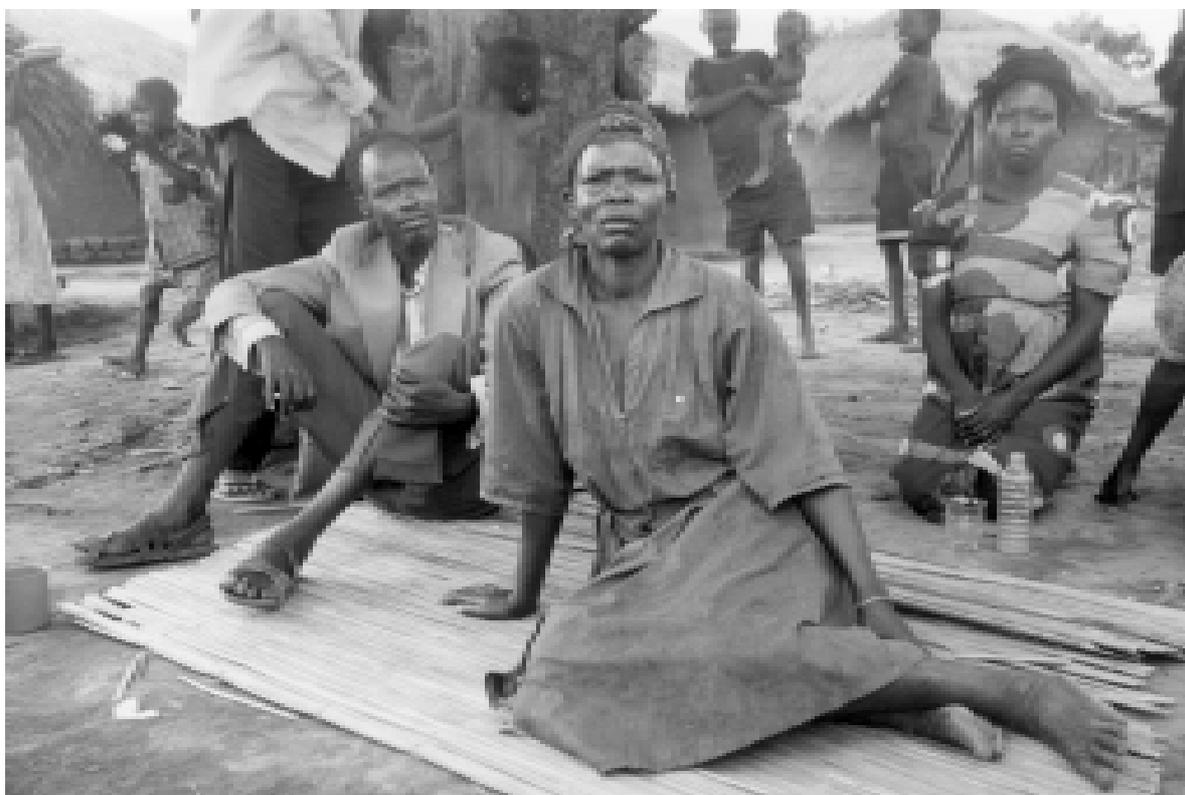
“My brother was abducted in 1996 and died in Sudan. On the same day, my brother’s son was also abducted and his whereabouts are not known.”

“My son was abducted at Pagoro camp in 1987 when the government troops were fighting Lakwena (rebels). He was fourteen years old and was schooling in P.5 at Keyo Primary School. We don’t know if he is still alive”

Both boys and girls were equally vulnerable to abductions by rebels and government soldiers. The following extracts from group discussions with women who had fled rebel captivity puts into perspective the suffering that girls abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army went through.

“All the girls abducted were defiled, raped and married off to rebel leaders or used for sexual service to rebels. If the husband died either at the war front or of sickness, the ‘girl wives would be put aside for ritual cleansing and married off to another rebel after some months.”

By 1992, Kony had intensified the abductions of children aged 11 – 16 years for his army. The method of operation was to invade villages especially remote areas, kill some people; abduct the children; and loot houses and granaries. Those who tried to resist the abductions were cut with machetes.



Living in protected camps has not stopped the abduction of both young and old

Most were abducted to carry the looted food, properties and wounded fighters while girls were kept as sex-slaves. Since girls and women were objects of sexual satisfaction for men and to carry the loot they were often guarded closely and constantly warned about the dangers of trying to escape back to their home area or into government hands. Some extracts from women who had escaped out of rebel captivity show the severity of punishment for re-arrested escapees:

“Anybody who tried to escape when caught was brutally murdered in front of the others to instill fear in others so that nobody else should try to escape.”

“For those trying to escape or those who were disobedient, punishment in the LRA was severe. It included stoning, clubbing or cutting to pieces with machetes till they died.”

“Some people were given up to 150 lashes of the cane on the neck, head and legs. The buttocks was often spared since it was known to have a lot of muscles which would protect the culprit against pain”.

The elderly and those who were disabled or became injured and were therefore not of much use to the rebels did not fare any better in terms of survival as indicated by the following extract from group discussions.

“The disabled children and elderly people became a big burden.”

“The rebels abandoned those hit and injured by landmines. Many eventually died of diseases and hunger.”

Other experiences the girls and women in captivity underwent included being forced to torture and kill others, having to walk long distances through bushes and thickets bare footed and without food or having to withstand various forms of humiliation and intimidation.

Girls were particularly in constant worry about their monthly periods since there were no clean pieces of cloth to use as pads. Water for cleaning themselves was also in short supply. Blood on their clothes or legs would show everyone that they were having their monthly periods. They would be separated in quarantine huts and not allowed to mix with other people until the periods were over and they had undergone some cleansing rituals. One respondent reported:

“If a girl gets her monthly period when they are on the move, she is ordered to move alone and not to touch anybody in the group for fear of ‘defiling’ them and bringing bad luck to the rest of the group.”

“I was so unhappy, I felt like a prisoner, especially when boys laughed at us”. said another escapee girl respondent.

Such experiences stigmatised these girls as they felt like outcasts and it enhanced their low self esteem.

4.4 Effects of the War on the Household and Women’s Livelihood

One of the ways of understanding the effect of war on women’s economic status is to examine their primary occupations before and after the war (Table 4.2)

Table 4.2. Major source of female income at various time periods of the war.

Activity/Occupation (source of income)	Time Period	
	Before the war N=61	At Time of Study N=61
Cultivation	19 (31.1)	12 (19.7)
Trade/business	3 (5.0)	5 (8.2)
Paid job	15 (24.6)	16 (26.6)
Hired labour	1 (1.6)	4 (6.6)
Other – (including students)	20 (32.7)	8 (13.1)
House wife/no employment	3 (5.0)	16 (26.2)

As indicated in the foregoing table (Table 4.2), by the time of the study many women were de-linked from farming as their main source of livelihood. For instance while 31% of the women reported that their main occupation before the war was cultivation fewer than 20% of them were still having cultivation as the main occupation and source of livelihood. The main cause for this shift in occupation categorization was the effect of war on accessibility to land.

“Families continue to carry out some cultivation within and near the camps. Some people would go back to cultivate their own land and collect cassava from the former gardens.”

“In the protected village there was no land for cultivation near the camp. People who live in camps and who illegally go to cultivate their land in the villages are seriously beaten when the UPDF soldiers catch them. Two people were caught this way and beaten seriously and accused of being rebel collaborators.”

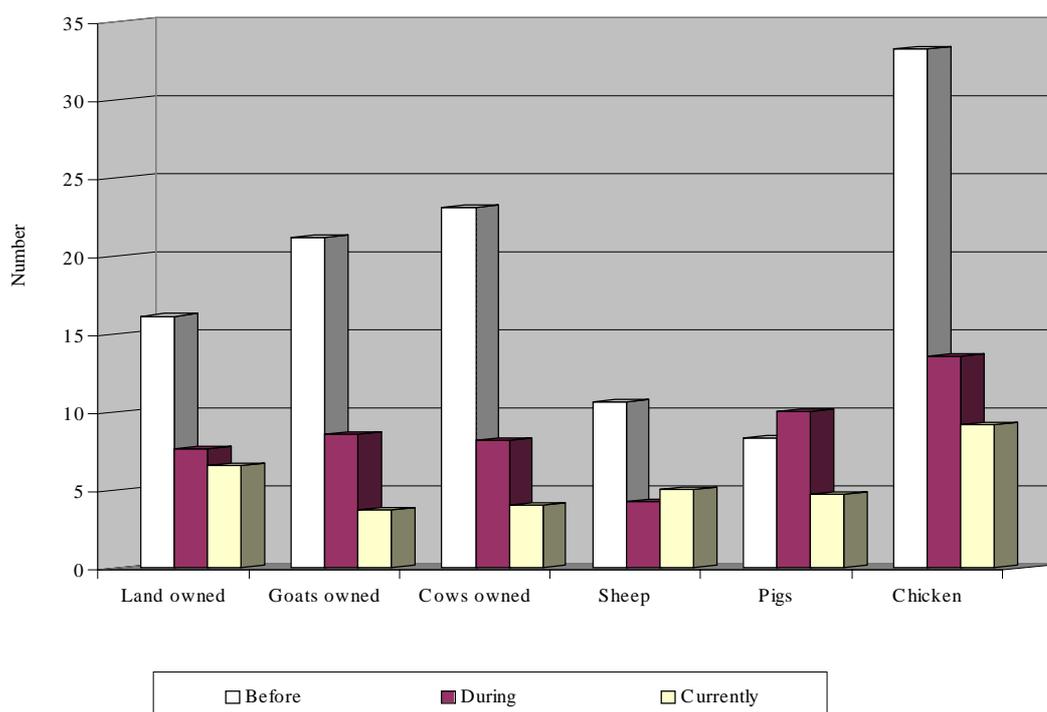
Out of 81 respondents, 40 reported that they owned land before the war. This number was reduced to less than half during the war and remained so up to the time of the study.

It is worthy noting that before the war Gulu had a vibrant mixed farming system including cultivation of crops and rearing of animals. While cattle and goat rearing were largely a men/boys' affair, cultivation of crops was predominantly in the hands of the women. During the war cattle and other livestock were rustled. An estimated 98% of the cattle from the region of the Acholi were rustled in the late 1980s. The following extracts were taken from the group discussions. Table 4.3 shows a general decline in the property that households owned right from the time before the armed conflicts, through the period of conflict to the time the study took place.

Table 4.3: Socio-economic indicators before, during the war and at the time of survey

Property ownership	Before the War	During the War	Time of Study
Land owned (in acres)	16.15	7.67	6.57
Goats owned	21.19	8.60	3.73
Cows owned	23.11	8.17	4.00
Sheep	10.63	4.25	5.00
Pigs	8.33	10.0	4.7
Chicken	33.3	13.6	9.2

Figure 4.2: Property ownership before, during and after the war



The following extracts indicate some of the causes of the decline in livestock population in the district of Gulu.

“In 1989 NRA soldiers looted people’s cows, goats and other household property including clothes from Alero sub-county. They also burnt down people’s houses and granaries.”

“When people were running to Gulu town, NRA soldiers were seen beating people and confiscating their property...”

“All cattle, goats, sheep and pigs have been depleted by both government forces and rebels leading to poverty.”

“Thirty heads of cattle taken by rebels in Omel in 1986.”

“In 1995 we were terribly tortured by LRA rebels, my three brothers killed and 12 heads of cattle, 100 goats, foodstuff like pigeon peas and sesame looted or destroyed.”

“When the NRA soldiers came in Awach houses were burnt down and cattle, goats and chicken taken. Many people, including my father were killed.”

The loss of livestock had two main consequences on the population in Gulu. To all household members it entailed loss of wealth invested in for years. The ability to sell cattle and other livestock to meet family needs in education, shelter, clothing and medical bills was curtailed for most households. This had a significant impact on family livelihood security, coping mechanisms and, as will be seen later, marriage.

To the women the loss of livestock meant increased responsibilities. Since animal rearing, henceforth the primary contributor to household welfare, was no longer feasible, the household economic burden fell squarely on the women's shoulders. Men's contribution in cultivation remained minimal and they resorted to heavy drinking.

“Many men are idle and desperate and as such they have resorted to heavy drinking.”

Group discussions revealed that the cash crops grown before the war included cotton, rice, groundnut, sesame and sunflower while the main food crops were cassava, sweet potatoes, millet, beans, sorghum and pigeon peas. While these crops remained the main crops grown in the area the volume of production has greatly reduced. During the discussions, all able-bodied respondents indicated that cultivation is still their main occupation.

It emerged from the group discussions that the main effect of war on farming was the disruption of the farming patterns and reduction in the size of the fields. During the height of the insurgency, no farming activities could be carried out, especially in the rural areas. People abandoned their homes and gardens between 1987 and 1989 when they were ordered to leave rural areas to go to Gulu town and again in 1996 when the majority were ordered to move to the camps where they were living up to the time of the study. Owing to scarcity of land around the camps many women are engaged purely in vegetable production around the camps while some women in town are hiring land from the town suburbs for cultivation. The production of cash crops on such hired pieces of land is considered a luxury many families cannot afford as most families grow only crops for direct food consumption.



Her survival strategy (brewing gin) has brought negative results to men, youth and women

The war increased the proportion of unemployed women and housewives. Many disabled women in participating in the group discussions were suffering from permanent deformations, which made it difficult for them to fend for themselves. As a result many of them have become totally dependent on relatives for food and shelter. Several of the women had been abandoned by their husbands and/or lost their sources of income.

Prior to the war there were very few Acholi women engaged in the hired labour. At the time of survey this category of occupation among the women of Gulu had substantially increased (See table 4.2). Group discussions revealed that when the rural areas were depopulated and people taken to the protected villages or camps, the population was cut off from their means of survival – the land. Food became scarce and the displaced people had to depend on food rations. Since the average family consisted of 10 persons, the food given was not enough to keep the family. Women reportedly adopted survival strategies like offering casual labour to obtain some extra food to supplement what was being provided.

It is also important to note that the number of women who reported to be students went down as a result of the war. It could be postulated that the women that were still students before the war had by the time of study moved into the other groups. However, the mere change in age does not offer all the answers to the reduction in the number of students among women in the district of Gulu. The wanton destruction of schools in the district by the war process implied that the capacity of the district to provide education to its population was sharply reduced. In addition the fact that parents had to force their under age daughters into marriage as a strategy

of protecting them from rebel abductions and sexual harassment, is yet another plausible reason.

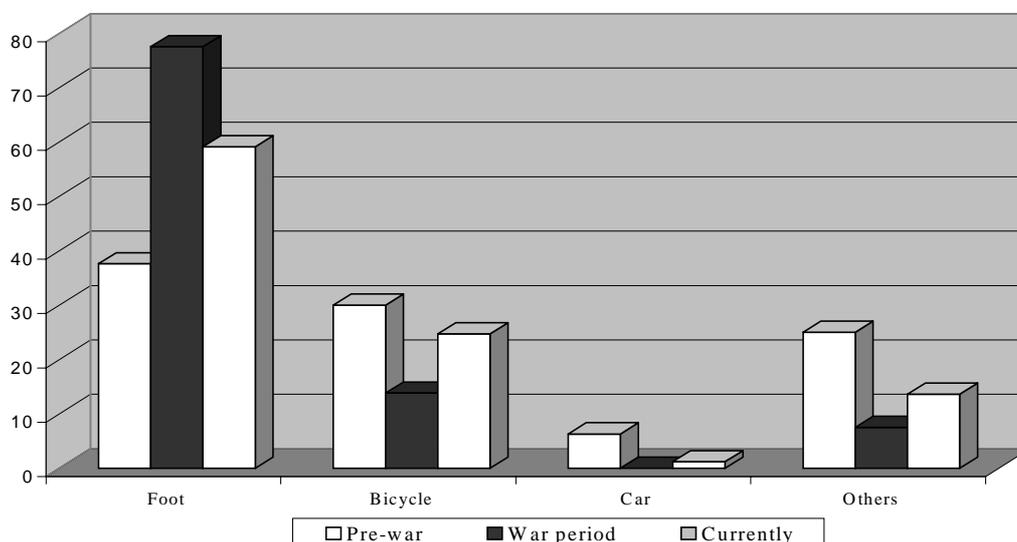
Trade did not feature very prominently among the activities of women in Gulu district either before the war or at the time of the study. One possible reason for this is that one needs financial capital to carry out any trade and since the Acholi women did not traditionally control money, they could not easily trade. This is supported by the fact that the type of businesses the few women who reported trade as a means of their livelihood were involved in included sale of agricultural produce, retail trade especially in second-hand clothes, cooked food/tea and sale of local brew. It was also reported that some husbands did not favour women's involvement in trade. In addition, the strenuous domestic and farm workload for the women is one of the factors that prevent them from engaging in activities that would take them far from their homesteads.

The effect of war on the economic welfare of the women in particular, and society generally may be assessed by the changes in the transport patterns of the population before the war, at the height of the insurgency and during the time of study. Table 4.4 and Figure 4.3 show that during the war the proportion of households whose means of transport was on foot, more than doubled from 38 % to 78 %. Conversely use of the bicycle as the household basic means of transport reduced from 30 to 14 % before and during the war respectively. At the time of study use of the bicycle as the best means of transport had improved slightly.

Table 4.4 *Best transport means for the household before the war and after*

<i>Transport means</i>	<i>Pre-war</i>	<i>War period</i>	<i>Currently</i>
Foot	37.6	77.5	59.1
Bicycle	30.0	13.8	24.7
Car	6.3	0.0	1.2
Others	25.0	7.5	13.6

Figure 4.3: Household means of transport before/during the war and current



Reasons for the changes in bicycle use a means of transportation featured in the group discussions as quoted below.

“... even the few material belongings we were running with were looted. The NRA soldiers used to demand receipts for all household equipment including clothes people were wearing, claiming they had been looted from Luweero. At roadblocks, during night operations and under other circumstances people lost bicycles, radios, clothes and anything else they possessed.”

In conclusion, the prolonged insecurity disrupted farming, trade and associated marketing activities leaving a highly depressed economy in Gulu. War not only resulted in massive displacement of the study population, especially women, but also considerably reduced the amount of property owned. The massive displacement of the rural population into over-crowded “protected villages” had significant impact on family means of livelihood and their usual coping mechanisms. In late 1996 severe malnutrition among the encamped population in Gulu District was as high as 70%, before NGOs and agencies like ACORD, World Vision and ICRC began distributing emergency food and seeds. This situation was further compounded by natural calamities such as the drought of 1997.

4.5 Women’s Migration, Housing and Performance of Survival Roles

Shelter is one of the basic human needs. In Africa, women are expected to move to the husband’s family and compound where they will live as long as the marriage lasts. Upon the death of the husband a woman’s security of tenure of residence is usually guaranteed if they have produced children (especially sons) in their marital homes and/or if they accept to be inherited by a person from the husbands’ lineage. In many African cultures it is the duty of the husband to provide shelter to the wife and his family.

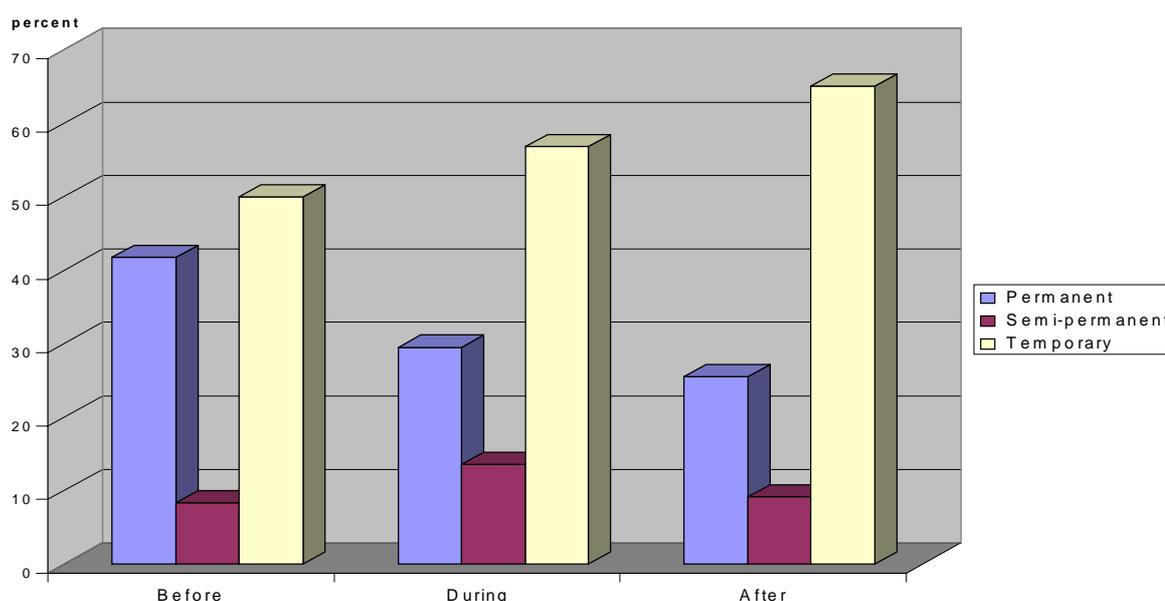
4.5.1 Effects of war on women’s access to shelter

It can be seen from Table 4.5 and Figure 4.4, that while prior to the war about half of the respondents were staying in permanent or semi-permanent houses, by the time of survey only about one third of these women were staying in permanent or semi-permanent houses. Over the same period the proportion of women residing in temporary shelter had risen from less than 50 % before the war to over 65 % at the time of survey.

Table 4.5 :Changes in type of housing at different stages of the war

<i>Type of house before the war</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>During</i>	<i>After</i>
Permanent	41.7	29.5	25.5
Semi-permanent	8.3	13.6	9.1
Temporary	50.0	56.8	65.0

Figure 4.4: Type of housing at different stages of the war



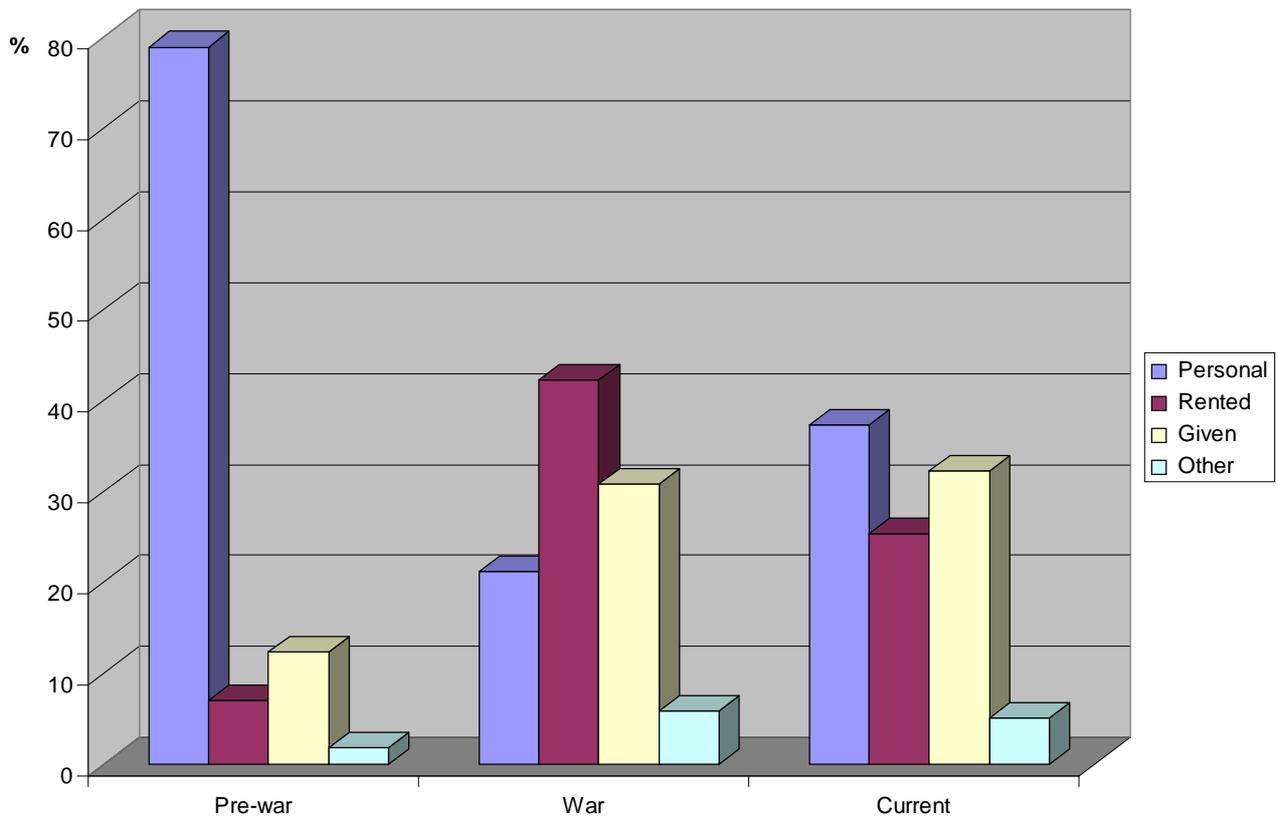
4.5.2 Displacement and its Effect on Housing Occupancy

One primary effect of war on women is the factor of displacement in housing accommodation as shown in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.5. In relative terms twice as many (42%) were renting accommodation during the war while 31% stayed in given accommodation. The proportion of respondents staying in personal accommodation at the time of study had slightly risen to 37 % compared to 21% at the war period. Here given accommodation was taken to mean staying with friends and relatives.

Table 4.6 Household occupancy status

<i>Occupancy status</i>	<i>Pre-war</i>	<i>War-period</i>	<i>Current</i>
Personal	78.9	21.2	37.3
Rented	7.0	42.3	25.4
Given	12.3	30.8	32.2
Other	1.8	5.8	5.1

Figure 4.5: War effects on housing occupancy status



Group discussions and key informant interviews also revealed the massive displacement of women from their usual residences as a result of war. Practically all respondents reported shifting location many times during the war. Some people got displaced to Gulu town while others hid in shelters built deep in the bush known as “*alup*”, and some stayed in camps or protected villages. The distance covered by the displaced people depended on the size of the group one was moving with and the means of travel at their disposal. The distance that could be covered on foot while carrying some items of property was limited. Some people that could afford managed to leave the district altogether and are currently residing in other parts of Uganda such as Masindi, Kampala, Jinja and Entebbe. Many women fled with a number of family members (dependant brothers, sisters, mothers). Some would initially leave some young children behind.

4.6 Effects of War on Girls’ Education

In most rural areas of Gulu district, most housewives are either illiterate or have attained only primary level education while young girls have never had the opportunity to attend school. During the study it was revealed that the relatively less education for girl children is because of parental attitudes. Acholi society still places a high premium on marriage and bride price for girls. Since sending them to school did not necessarily increase their “value” with regard to bride price, girls were usually not given an opportunity for higher education since this was perceived as a waste of time and resources. Rather the girls stayed at home to be prepared for their

roles of being respectful and hardworking future wives by their mothers and aunts. Boys on the other hand got all the opportunities to go to school and learn new things.



Many girls opted out of school to support their mothers

Apparently this traditional attitude is now slowly changing. Some women reported that girls are gradually being sent to school especially by educated parents. However, the number of girls attending school keeps decreasing as one moves up to higher classes because of high rates of dropouts due to pregnancy.

The war appears to have had a more direct and profound effect on the education of children in Gulu, and more especially the girl child. The danger of abduction and sexual abuse by rebels kept most of the girls in Gulu district out of school. As early as 1988 the LRA rebel soldiers targeted schools as recruiting grounds to swell rebel ranks and as a source of girls for rape. The following extracts from group discussions reveal the impact of the LRA's abductions on women and education.

"Rebels would waylay the pupils who were coming back from school and other pupils were shot. That was in 1996."

With tales such as the above filtering to many parents in Gulu through those who fled rebel captivity, it is not surprising that the majority of parents in rural Gulu felt the risk of sending children and in particular their daughters to school was rather too high.

Group discussions further revealed that during the war most of the abducted girls could not go back to school due to high level of trauma resulting from their experiences during captivity. Others apparently felt too old to go back to Lower Primary school, yet others returned when pregnant or with unwanted babies. The following extract from a group discussion reveals some of the constraints of girls returning to school:

“The girls who returned home have found it difficult to go back to school due to teasing from fellow children at school, especially the boys. Some girls who joined formal schooling have dropped out complaining of being teased.”

But there were other factors, which generally hindered the education of children in the war-affected areas. The closure of almost all rural schools during the war, the abduction and killing of teachers, the state of war which kept people always on the move from one place to another and abject poverty were major barriers to education of children in Gulu. In the protected villages the conditions of schooling were so harsh as to make it difficult for many to access education

“Many children lost their schooling when there was abrupt transfer to camps. Other camps are without schools, though schools developed later in the camps but these schools are too full.”

Even where there was easy access to schools the opportunities for girls to attend school were made difficult by the war. The high death rates among men and the shifting gender roles in the provision of economic needs for the family as a result of the war, meant that mothers increasingly called on their daughter’s labour to obtain the household basic needs. The demand for girls’ labour in the fields, at home and in the search for food-for-labour made girls’ school attendance an untenable luxury in many homes.

4.7 Effect of war on Family Life

The first major effect of war on family life is perhaps on the age at which marriage was being consummated. During group discussions it emerged that the age at which girls got married had largely gone down. The causes of this are many. Firstly, most schools in the district closed down for many years and with children not going to school marriage, especially for the girls was foremost on the minds of the parents. Secondly, most parents realised that the longer their daughters stayed unmarried the more they became vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape by rebels, government soldiers and other men in the community. Under such circumstances the parents often pressured their daughters to get married as soon as they attained puberty. Thirdly, some households without any other source of livelihood and particularly food provision pressured their daughters to get married to soldiers and other well-off men on whom they could depend for food provision and protection. Fourthly, with many men abducted or forced into exile in other district to avoid being labelled rebel collaborators, control over the behaviour of children and in particular their daughters was totally lost. This lack of control and guidance coupled with the peer pressure during adolescence often led to early marriages. Finally, out of fear of rebels many girls and women were reported to have taken to the phenomenon known as “camp following” which made many of them concubines of soldiers who in turn offered them protection and some food. The following extracts are taken from group discussions:

“It (the war) has led to early marriages especially of girls as parents find it difficult to keep girls of 14 years old. This has led to defilement.”

“Problems in displaced camps (‘Akonyi’) forced girls to elope with soldiers.”

“Many young women/girls are being lured by army men for food and financial assistance. A number of marriages are breaking due to this type of behaviour.”

“Many young children are being ruined through adapting bad life including practising sex.”

With regard to marital status under rebel captivity it is apparent that the effects have been far reaching and left a permanent mark on the lives of captured girls. According to the victims there was no minimum age for marriage. The criteria used for marrying off girls to rebel men seemed to be signs of puberty.

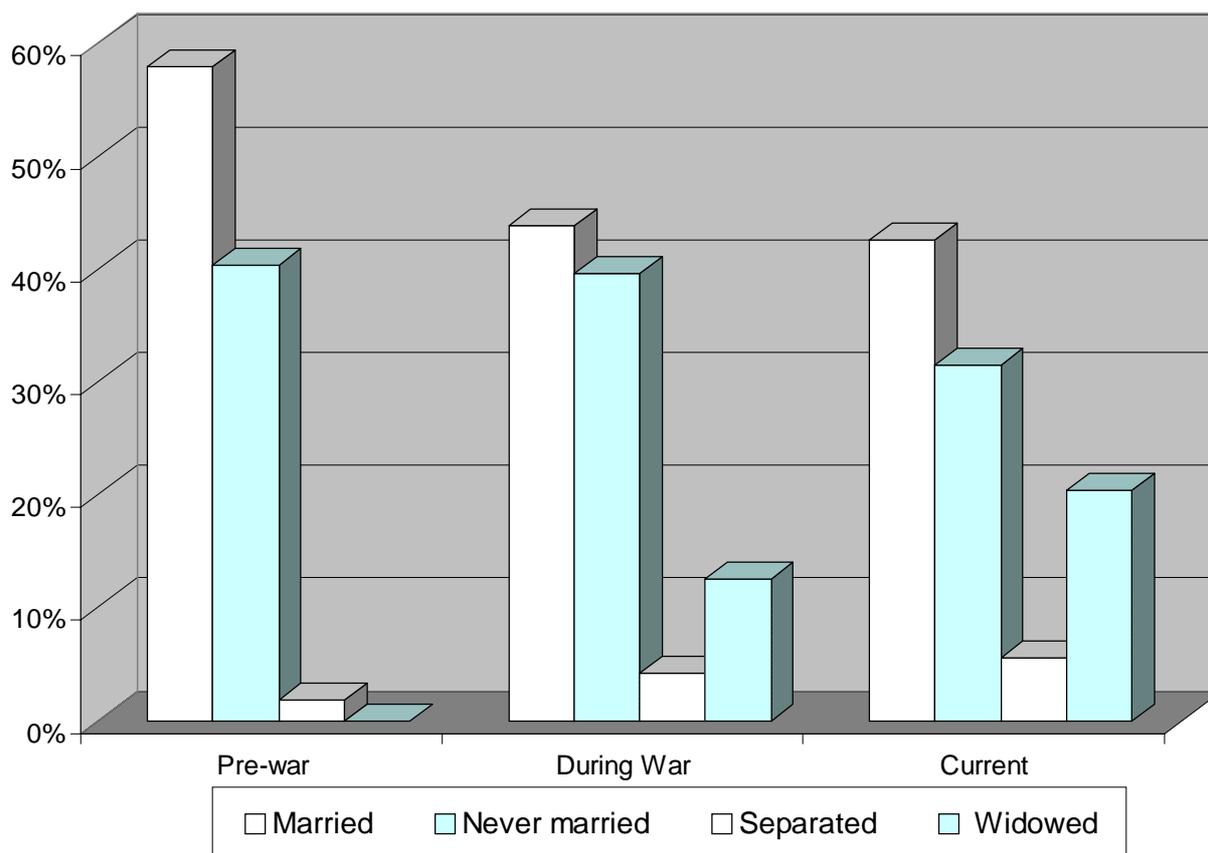
The forced marriages to rebels were a traumatic experience for the young girls as indicated in the following extract:

“There was no minimum age for marriage. The criteria used for marrying off girls to rebel men seem to be signs of puberty. Any girl that has breasts beginning to form would be considered ripe for handing over to a man as a wife.”

War also led to increased breakdown in marriages. Before the war half the respondents were married and there were no widows among them. (Figure 4.6). This situation was however quickly changed by the war process. During the war 13% of the women were widowed and this corresponded with the reduction in the number of married women from 58% to 43%. However, none of the men respondents reported being widowed during the war. At the time of the study, the proportion of women who were widowed had increased to nearly a quarter and only 8% of the men reported they were widowed. This would imply a relatively higher mortality of the men as a result of war compared to women. However it may also imply that men are more likely to quickly remarry after loss of a spouse such that the period between their bereavement and re-marriage is not long enough to report their widowhood status, which may not be the same for war-widows.

Figure 4.6 indicates that there was a progressive decline in the number of women who reported they were married and a sharp rise among those widowed and separated.

Figure 4.6: Changes in Marital status of women in Gulu over the war period



The extent to which war affected marital status however may not be conclusively proved from the above statistics. The changes in the proportion of each component of the marital status over the pre-war, during the war and at the time of study may have been influenced by the age of the respondents. Marriage and its dissolution are highly dependent on age with older persons especially females more likely to be widows than their younger sisters. Thus without a control group such as a non-war affected but culturally similar population interviewed about their marital status over the same period of time it will become more difficult to measure the extent to which war contributed to the breakdown in marriages. However evidence from the focus group discussions indicated that marital dissolution directly arising out of the war widely occurred as indicated below.

“Our women used to be faithful to their husbands. However, with the war there were rampant cases of rape which caused many marriages to break up as women and girls have turned to ‘camp following’ to avoid being raped.”

“Women divorce their men since the man may be helpless and the woman may feel that the man is not supporting her and the family, and hence the divorce.”

The need to protect oneself from the rebels’ “brutal form of rape” to the “more tolerable forms of rape” by government soldiers also contributed to marital instability in the district of Gulu. Many women reported their husbands and/or relatives having rejected them as a result of being raped by rebels and/or government soldiers. The few who had not been directly chased away from their marital homes had lost support from their spouses. The men had expressed fears that the raped wives could have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

Another way in which the war affected marriage was in its impact on the capability of men to marry. Many men have been greatly affected by poverty to the extent that they are not able to marry. Cattle herds, which used to constitute a greater part of the bride price, were depleted.

Remarriage appears also to have been high as a result of the war. For the female respondents who had been married before the war, 40% had acquired new partners during and after the war. This reflected a relatively high rate of partner change in this war-affected population. Even among 17 female respondents who had not remarried during or after the war, five (29%) had had more than one partner.

Table 4.7 Changes in Marriage partnerships by Sex of Respondent

Category of partner	Sex of Respondent		Total
	Female	Male	
With pre-war partner	23	1	24
	60.5%	25.0%	57.1%
New partner	15	3	18
	39.5%	75.0%	42.9%
Total	38	4	42
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4.8 Number of sexual partners by respondents' sex over the war period

Number of partners	Sex of Respondent		Total
	Female	Male	
1	12	1	13
	70.6%	25.0%	61.9%
2	4	2	6
	23.5%	50.0%	28.6%
3	1	1	2
	5.9%	25.0%	9.5%
Total	17	4	21
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Forced marriage was reported to have occurred as a result of war. 14% of the 58 female respondents reported they had been forced into marriage. Collaborative evidence from the focus group discussions indicated forced marriages occurred due to a number of different reasons and had far reaching effects on the status of women.

The search for safety during the war was one of the factors that led to forced marriages. Since girls in particular were vulnerable to sexual abuse, some of them were forced to separate from their parents to live with relatives in town or other places considered safer. In several cases, the relatives tended to overwork the children

leading to some of the children opting for early marriage as an escape route from the child labour abuses by relatives. In other instances, some girls were lured to accept casual sexual relationships with some well-to-do men, who would give money to the relatives with whom the young girls were staying. Some of these relationships would result into marriage.

In several focus group discussions it was also noted that many girls were being married off when still young due to fear of abductions as their parents wanted to get bride price out of the girls before they get abducted. Some few parents were reported to have encouraged their daughters to use sex as a way of raising money or material benefits, like food for the family. The marrying off of young girls for fear of them being raped or abducted or for food security led to girls being denied opportunities to education, unlike the case with the boys. This situation will, for a long time, have far reaching consequences on the future and status of women in Gulu district.

More coercive measures of marriage seem to have been used on both side of the fighting divide. As a result, a number of girls became pregnant and many of those who became “wives” of soldiers contracted STI and/or HIV/AIDS.

War-induced marriage breakdowns were also frequently reported. The breaking down of marriages was confirmed through close interactions with the women victims supported the PVP project. Here, their husbands or relatives as a result of being raped had rejected 30 out of the 36 women (i.e. 83%). The few who were not directly chased away had lost support from the husbands. The men have expressed fears that the raped wives could have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

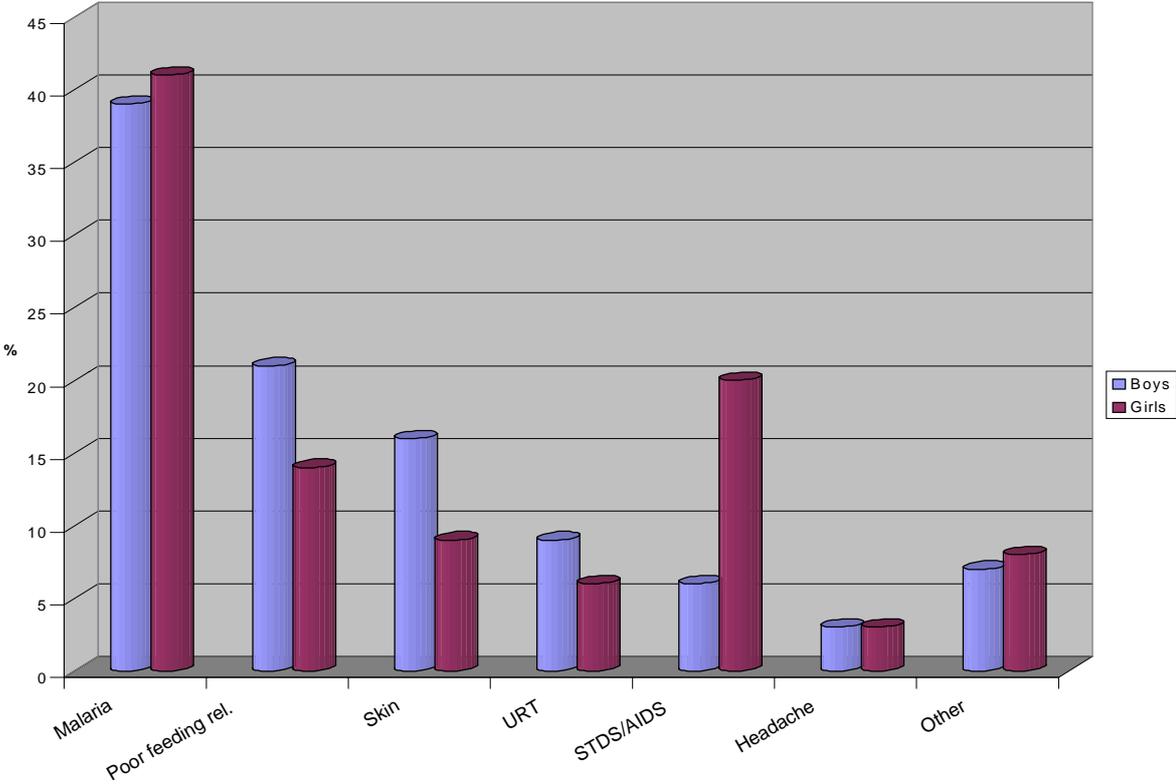
4.8 Effects of War on Women’s Health

The displacement of people from their homes, the long distances they had to walk, the lack of adequate feeding, the hiding while on the run and the destruction of health infrastructure all took their toll on the health of the population especially the women and children.

4.8.1 Major causes of illness

During the war, the leading cause of ill health among the respondents and their families was malaria (Figure 4.7). The respondents also reported relatively high prevalence of URT (19%), skin diseases and body pains for self and other members of the family. Among the girls also sexually transmitted diseases were reportedly quite common.

Figure 4.7: Types of illness suffered by boys and girls during the war



Respondents were asked whether they had suffered any other diseases or encountered other health problems as outlined below (Table 4.9). The outcome was as shown in the table. It should be noted, however, that it is not easy to fully attribute these conditions to war as they can also be afflict persons in a non-war situation to the same extent. Moreover, the question was not specific to the pre-war war or post war periods.

Table 4.9: Health problems of women in Gulu

<i>Health problem</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Poor sleep	43	65.2
Headache	37	56.1
Panic	36	54.5
Stomach-ache	34	51.5
Loss of appetite	33	50.0
Dislike of people and environment	24	36.4
Heart palpitations	23	34.8
Withdrawal	16	24.2
Dislike of socialization	16	24.2
Hypertension	9	13.6
Stroke	6	9.1
Epilepsy	4	6.1
Heart attack	2	3.0

About three-quarters (74 %) of the women reported they still suffered the same conditions at the time of survey.

Two thirds of the female respondents reported not having any problems with their menstrual periods, whereas 30 % reported that they experienced heavy flows during periods. For those with these problems, treatment was obtained from the clinics. About one fifth of the women (23%) reported having experienced urinal-genital problems during the war.

4.8.2 Source of medical care

Only slightly more than half (53%) of the respondents reported that their households obtained treatment from hospitals, 13% got treatment from traditional herbalists while a third reported their household members received no treatment at all (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Most recent source of medical care

<i>Source of treatment</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Taken to hospital	41	52.6
Traditional Herbalists	10	12.8
No treatment	26	33.3
Other	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

4.8.3 Maiming and disability

The war increased disability among the children, men and women. By 1996 the Gulu Rehabilitation Unit had registered a total of 628 children, 386 women and 147 men with disabilities. These had been registered as disabled by bullets, landmines, brutal cutting with machetes, burning and other forms of cruelty. As mentioned earlier on, many of the women in group discussions who were disabled complained and were observed to be suffering from permanent deformations which makes it difficult for them to carry out usual work for the support of their dependants and themselves. As a consequence many of them are now at the mercy of relatives for support in form of food and shelter. Loss of self-esteem, psychological and emotional distress resulting from permanent deformation are thus other characteristics common among this group of women. This is evident in the case study testimonies below:

“It was in the middle of the night when I heard someone calling from outside ordering me to open the door. I asked who that person was, but there was no answer – only the order and a kick on the door. I suspected it was the rebels, I had no choice but to open the door. They entered and started searching all places and demanded that I give them 80,000/= since my husband works with NRA Government. I told them that I had no money, but they insisted that I give the amount they have asked. I told them that I had only 2,000/= but still insisted for 80,000/= which I did not have, I pleaded and pleaded but all in vain. Then they said since I was un-co-operative, they would use me as an example to other people.

I had ½ litre of paraffin in the house, they asked me what it was. I told them that was paraffin. They suspected it to be waragi. One of them took it and started pouring it on me, he then picked a match box from his pocket, lit it to set me ablaze. I took courage blew off the fire, this act was repeated three times. He then walked out and pulled a handful of dry grass from the roof of my hut, lit it and came with it inside, one of them was standing at the door with a gun –thus preventing me from running out. The one with the torch of fire came straight to me. I tried to run but could not. He then set me ablaze and they all ran out.

My clothes and every part of my body that was soaked with paraffin caught fire. With closed eyes. I started feeling where the water pot stands and scooping water using my hands to pour on my body but it was instead increasing the fires.

I then ran outside rolled on the ground and poured sand on my body. That is what saved my life. I went back inside the house where my child aged two was screaming on seeing me. She started running to me so frightened because I was so much disfigured that she could only recognized me by my voice.

When the rebels, who were nearby realized, I had put off the fire, they came back and said they would kill me if I did not give them the money. I then told them it would be better to kill not only me but my child as well since my life was no longer worth living. I pushed the child towards them. They then walked out and ordered people whom they have captured to come and see what they had done to me and would continue doing to others if they were also uncooperative. The captives most of them were from our area and they all knew me, but could not believe what they were seeing”.

Yet another had this to say:

“On that fateful day (3rd August 1997) I woke up early and prepared food for my two children. Two days previously, rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) had raided and looted the small centre, sending all the villagers fleeing before they (rebels) retreated towards nearby Abera Forest. Calm had returned and after sending off my two children to school, I got a jerrican balanced on my head, There was suddenly a loud explosion. I found myself on my back on the ground, dazed and confused. People were running in all directions. I did not know what had happened. it was only when I tried to get up that I realized both my legs were no longer there. I do not remember what happened next because even as this realization hit me I fainted.

I regained consciousness in St. Mary’s Hospital Lacor, and after a series of operations, both my legs were amputated on 10th August, 1997. I stayed in this hospital for three months and was transferred to Mulago Hospital in December, where I was fitted with artificial legs and later discharged.

Life however, became a nightmare when I returned home. My husband, once so gentle and good, now became increasingly bitter and hostile. He would beat and insult me at the slightest mistakes. He made it plain that he was no longer interested in me in my disability. Three months later, he brought home another woman. I could not stomach anymore of their combined taunts and abuses and so fled back to my parents.

I now live with my two children at my mother’s home and my biggest problem is

how to educate them. I can't farm anymore and though I try to sell petty goods at the Trading centre, the money got is not enough to raise their school fees. The only help I get is from my mother. I feel as if the government and the community have forgotten me, as if they don't care anymore. Everybody is just so indifferent. It is only recently that I started getting some help from People's Voice for Peace (PVP). I now plan, with some assistance to expand my business and hopefully open a piggery farm that I may educate my children. They are now my only hope.

And as for the rebels, I can't forgive them. They ruined my life. They ruined my marriage. I hope and pray that one-day they too, may meet my fate and the fate of thousands of people they have maimed and killed."

A significant number of disabilities have been registered among the returnees from the Sudan who return with a lot of complications. These are mainly the abducted women and children who either escaped or have been released following negotiations between the captors and the government. Some have swollen feet and bodies while others have gunshot wounds or cuts and other injuries inflicted upon them using machetes. A good number have been blinded or gone deaf probably arising from the deafening sounds of bombs and artillery. Many have contracted HIV and have symptoms of AIDS or have terrible chest problems and general body weakness due to acute diseases, under nourishment and/or trauma.

The long walk back from captivity after escape often proved very traumatising. The victims underwent a lot of problems and suffering, as they mostly survived on roots and leaves of wild plants. One girl testified that she used to lick dew off leaves and had to tie her stomach tightly because of hunger. A respondent reported that some girls arrested from the LRA by Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) in Pajok in November 1995 were gang-raped by the SPLA before they were handed over to Uganda authorities.

4.9 Assistance and Social support mechanisms

Sixty-two percent of the women reported they received some support to overcome the war experience. Most support was in form of counseling (27%) and food (15%) as indicated in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Type of support received by household to mitigate war effect

Type of support	Frequency	Valid %
Counseling	40	61.5
Provided food	18	27.3
Donated blankets, utensils	10	15.2
Provided training	4	6.1
Clothing	2	3.3
Medical care	1	1.5
Other assistance	3	4.5

4.9.1 War rehabilitation

Only one quarter of the women (26%) reported to have got assistance for rehabilitation. Most of the assistance was in form of food. Assistance had been received from NGOs such as Red Cross, World Food Program and World Vision. While most of the women were appreciative of the assistance given, some felt that women were not adequately targeted, others reported that most of the assistance was given to the already well off. In order to improve on the method of assistance distribution the women expressed the need to:

- Increase quantities of food supplied to households;
- Channel the assistance through groups of about 10 people;
- Use women as distribution agents;
- Increase the frequency of assistance; and
- Frequently change those charged with distribution.



Women selling in markets to supplement the humanitarian rations

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN CONTRIBUTIONS TO AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES DURING THE WAR

5.1 Introduction

Among the major issues addressed by the research study was that of the role women played in the war process and how they coped with hardships encountered during and as a result of the war. Prior to the war the family support system was managed through a network consisting of a husband, wife, children and members of the extended family in cooperation with neighbors and friends. With the onset of war however, this system collapsed and the burden of supporting the family by the women increased many times over.

First of all, due to the forced migration families lost land and other resource bases used in the supporting themselves. Without any regular income and property most of the women had to depend on battering labour and at times, even their bodies for food to support themselves, their families and other dependants.

Secondly, older children that would have ordinarily contributed labour to help their mothers were either killed, were abducted or fled and went into hiding for fear of being abducted. Some were married off early as a means of safeguarding them against defilement and abduction; or had themselves been displaced to destinations inaccessible or unknown to the mothers.

The change of government in 1986 and the subsequent retrenchment of public servants by the new government combined with the collapse of public works sections due to war led to many job losses for the people of Gulu district. Many men who retired to the district not only failed to support their families but often became totally dependant on their wives for even the most basic household needs. Others were constantly in hiding or had been abducted to join the rebel ranks. In situations of displacement whether in the town or protected villages, men's farming skills became redundant and family survival rested squarely on women. The following extract is taken from women group discussions during the study:

“Women really suffered because the responsibility of feeding the children and the aged was left to them. Most men were killed or ran away”.

Fourth, the extended family system that had hitherto worked well to ensure support to all family members was either totally disrupted by the war or was suffering considerable strain due to the oversized families resulting from war displacement into relatively more peaceful areas. Thus not only were the women confronted with having to look after large families but also they had to do this without the means of the land and the support from their children, spouses and extended family members.

Obviously the women had to do this amidst the constant danger of exposure to torture and sexual harassment at the hands of government soldiers or abduction and extensive sexual abuse by rebels as indicated above.

5.2 Women in armed combat

Some women were forced to join armed combat primarily as a strategy for self or family preservation. This happened on both divides of the war. The extract below from an in-depth interview with a woman veteran fighter, who was married to a UNLA soldier and who herself later on joined the NRA, briefly illustrates the women's experience during and after the war as combatants.

Experience of a female Veteran

"In July 1986, I joined the rebels. I could not stand the life of hiding from NRA soldiers. In the bush, I met Robin of Atiak who took me to Okello Okeno and Alice Lakwena. I stayed with them for 2 years. I did not like the killing and how NRA soldiers were killing the soldiers themselves.

When the Lakwena rebels learnt that I had joined NRA, they killed my two brothers in 1998. They (rebels) insisted that they wanted their guns. My sister's husband was also killed this year (1999). I applied for voluntary retirement. Now I earn my living by growing cassava, potatoes, maize and rice.

Government does not appreciate what some of us have done. I was an intelligent, its true I did a lot for the Government and now see what I am".

5.3 Coping mechanisms strategies and Humanitarian Assistance

Though separated from their means of livelihood while in the protected villages, the population had to provide for their basic needs most of the time. Some NGOs such as World Food Programme (WFP) provided relief food. World Vision sank boreholes for water and provided medical facilities. Though welcome, these provisions were quite inadequate. Pabo camp with a population of 33,000 for instance was reported to have had only 2 boreholes and lacked adequate sanitation facilities. Women reported adopting strategies like going out for casual labour to supplement what was being provided by the aid agencies.

The first main coping strategy adopted by women was the creation of women's associations or groups to replace the defunct extended family system structure of social support. Near Lacor camp for example, Christian Relief Services (CRS) encouraged community to work in groups of ten people. They were to plough four acres between them. The organisation provided seeds (beans, maize, and groundnuts). During the period of cultivation, relief food was provided to enable the participating families have the energy to work. This "food for work" arrangement was highly appreciated by the displaced in Lacor camp and around Lacor Mission as a number of families realised very good harvest from the communal plots.

World Vision and Action Faim set-up programmes which targeted mothers in order to reduce malnutrition in children. The services consisted of training mothers in the right type of feeding suitable for growing children and supplying them with food stuff (beans, groundnut, millet, fish and soy-beans).



In internally displaced camps, women and girls initiated survival strategies

5.4 Contribution towards ending the war and resettlement

There are cases in which the Gulu women's participation in the public sphere became pronounced as a result of the impact of conflict on them. One such example was the formation of Gulu District Women Development Committee (GDWDC) in 1989. This committee played a crucial role in bringing some relative peace to the district. This group developed locally and staged a peaceful demonstration to demand an end to the fighting. The impact of mothers weeping and mourning while begging both the rebel groups and government soldiers to put down guns and use negotiating the table was very influential. Many rebels at that time gave up and the government side also saw the need to change its approach to the war.

The government set up a Ministry for Northern Uganda with a resident minister of State based in Gulu. Ms Bigoombe, a woman originating from the area was appointed to the position. The contribution of this minister to the search for peace through organizing negotiations between the rebels and government forces was remarkable and resulted in an interlude of peace in the area in 1993. This lady later became the Chairperson of the Acholi Pacification Committee (APC) which worked hard to try and change the armed - conflict situation.

In June 1997 some of the Concerned Women Association members led by Sister Rachele Fassera, Deputy Headmistress of St. Mary's School, Aboke met with LRA Commanders in Juba to seek the release of their abducted children. Campaigns on abducted children and the women victims of war have helped to influence the behavior of LRA and UPDF leading to reduced levels of violence against civilians. They have also helped to break the isolation of northern Uganda from the rest of the country and to demonstrate that the war is a national issue and not just an Acholi problem.

Some Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Local NGOs founded by women and involved in supporting and delivering a variety of programs aimed at peace building and reconciliation have been established. These include the Concerned Parents Association, Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) and People's Voice for Peace (PVP). The work of these women's organizations at the community level, including the provision of medical and psycho-social rehabilitation care for abducted children and women victims of war, has provided in-roads for NGO intervention to rebuild the shattered lives of the population in Gulu. In addition the women through their organizations and groups have lobbied for community support to the disadvantaged people in the community, sensitized others about dangers and costs of war, undertaken participatory research projects and initiated various peace activities within the community that have led to the resettlement of the population. Despite all these initiatives towards ending war in Northern Uganda, the war still lingers on.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

The war in northern Uganda and Gulu in particular has had a devastating effect on the lives of the people and the economy of the region. People got separated from their economic base especially the poor women peasants who relied on the land for daily sustenance. Agriculture, on which they used to survive, suffered severely and household food security was threatened. Property was looted, destroyed or suffered neglect due to the forced displacement of the population.

There were changes in household labour patterns forcing women to cater for an increased number of young children and orphans without the necessary means and security to provide for them. In other instances economic needs and the need for food and security drove many women to desperation which made some of them to enter into unwanted relationships with soldiers.

The war brutalised women with rampant cases of rape, sexual slavery, other forms of sexual harassment, genital mutilation and unwanted pregnancies at the hands of both government soldiers and the rebels.

Women's health was negatively affected by the prevalence of ailments and ill health resulting directly from the war experiences. These included the increased incidences of STI, AIDS, many forms of physical disabilities, deafness, trauma, stress and other forms of mental disorders. Destruction of the health infrastructure and lack of manpower and drugs in the few surviving health units made the situation worse.

6.2 Recommendations

The war in Gulu like other civil conflicts has had far reaching effects on women. The long duration of this war and the brutal character in which the belligerents especially the Lord's Resistance Army rebels have conducted this war have also added a unique character to this war. The healing process will be long and may take several generations. However the following needs to be done by all stakeholders in the well being of Gulu as a district and Uganda as a nation.

1. No effort should be spared to end this war even if it means sacrificing of some principles on the part of government or the rebels.
2. Full stock of the war must be taken and this should be engendered to ensure the healing process does not omit effective strategies for the different needs of survivors.

3. A truth commission about the brutal acts that were meted out to the population in this region will go along way in re-assuring the population of Gulu and neighboring districts like Kitgum that there is a rule of law that applies to all equally.
4. The government needs to carry-out internal checks on the army to ensure the return of faith in the population towards this important institution charged with the responsibility of protecting the lives and property of the citizens of this country.
5. There is a need for a regional economic and social rehabilitation plan and commitment of resources. Such a plan should be participatory and involve the population in the area especially the women
6. Organizations which have proved effective in empowering poor communities should be given all the necessary support at all levels (policy formulation, planning, allocation of resources and implementation), to provide guidance to the rebuilding process. The role of private initiative in all these aspects should not be ignored.

There are a few positive aspects emerging out of this war such as the increased realization of the need to empower women economically to sustain society through difficult times. Such aspects need to be built on in all future government development plans of resolving the effects of this war.

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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH TEAM

RESEARCH CONSULTANT

Prof. Victoria N. Mwaka; Phd- MP (Luwero District) Member of Parliament representing women in Luwero District. She holds a PhD in Economic Geography and Development Studies. She has experience in gender and was the first head of the founder and founder head Women Studies Department, Makerere University.

ISIS-WICCE TEAM

Isis-WICCE staff who assisted in data collection included:

Ms Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng; the Director/Information and Documentation Coordinator, Isis-WICC, holds an MA in Communication Policy Studies and B.SC in Information and Communication. She also holds a Diploma in Librarianship.

Ms Jessica Nkuuhe; the Associate Director/Exchange Programme Coordinator, Isis-WICCE, holds an MA in Literature, a BA in Literature and History and a post Graduate Diploma in Education.

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APPENDIX 2
MAP OF GULU DISTRICT

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE

EXPERIENCES DURING THE ARMED CONFLICT IN GULU (1986 -1999)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INDIVIDUAL SURVIVORS

100. IDENTIFICATION

Form number _____

101. Name of village of current residence(LCI) _____
102. Parish _____
103. Sub-county _____
104. County _____
105. District _____
- 106: Sub-county of residence before the war _____

200. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVIVOR

- 201 Name of Respondent _____
- 202 Sex: Female = 1
Male = 2
203. How old are you? (completed years) _____
- 204 How old were you at the beginning of this war? _____
205. What is the highest level of formal education you have attained?

(Please circle only one answer)

- None = 1
- Primary/junior = 2
- Post primary(TTC) = 3
- Secondary = 4
- Post Secondary = 5
- University = 6
- Other (specify) = 7

211. How many people do you live with in your immediate family? (include boarding school children) ?

Time period	Number of boys (biological)	Number of girls (biological)	Dependants/ Adults	Dependants/ children	Total
Before the war					
During the war					
Currently					

300. ECONOMIC STATUS

- Property owned before, during the war and currently

Property/Assets owned	Time Period		
	Before the war	During the war	Currently
1. Land: Estimated size			
2. Major crops grown			
3. Animals reared (state number) e.g. - Goats - Cows - Sheep - Pigs - Chicken - Others			
4a. Living house: - Permanent - Semi-permanent - Not permanent - Other(specify)			
4b. Ownership - Personal - Rented • Given •			
5. Main sources of Income (e.g. if cultivator;			

400. PRE-WAR EXPERIENCES

- 401. When did the present war start in your area?
- 402. How did the war start?
- 403. How did it start?
- 404. Who started it?
- 405. What were the causes?
- 406. When you saw that the war was coming, what did you do? (e.g. did you think it would be serious, preparedness in relation to safety of family members, animals, property, and food)
- 407. What did the warring groups expect from you (e.g Lakwena, LRA, NRA, UPDF)?
- 408. How did you respond to those expectations or demands made by the warring groups?
- 409. What are your views about each of the warring groups?
- 410. Give reasons for your views

500. WAR EXPERIENCE

Physical contact/treatment or handling by warring parties

- 501. What did the various warring groups do (state both positive and negative things):
 - (1) to you?
 - 2) to your family members?
 - 3) to your property ?
- 502. What was your response and why? Explain (e.g. what did you do to recover abducted family members or stolen property?).
- 503. What role have you played during this war?**Sexual harassment (ask this question to everybody)**
- 504. Are there any instances when you or any of your family members were abused sexually? (e.g. forced marriage, rape, sex comforter to warring forces, genital mutilation).Indicate relationship of person to you and nature of abuse.

Sexual harassment (ask this question to everybody)

- 504. Are there any instances when you or any of your family members were abused sexually? (e.g. forced marriage, rape, sex comforter to warring forces, genital mutilation).Indicate relationship of person to you and nature of abuse.

Relationship	Nature of sexual abuse
<i>e.g. daughter</i>	<i>raped</i>

Experiences during flight /hiding

- 505. Did you have to leave your home at any given time?
- 506. Where did you find refuge/security?
 - 1. Indicate sub-counties/ counties and districts in which you stayed during flight. (*Where possible estimate distance from original home.*)
 - 2. Indicate nature of hiding place (e.g. bush, home of relative)
- 507. How many major stops have you made so far during your flight?
- 508. With whom did you run?
- 509. What properties did you take with you?
- 510. How did you decide on what to take and what to leave?

Sex of Child	Age of child
Boys (Initials of their names) 1. 2. 3 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. Total boys =	
Girls (initials of their names) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8 Total girls =	

525. What risks were/are encountered by you and the children (boys and girls) while looking for:
- a) water?
 - b) cooking fuel?
 - c) food?

Life in Camps/military detaches

526. Have you ever lived in camps or military detaches?
- Yes = 1
No =2 [if no, skip to question 600]
527. How did you end up in camps/detaches?
528. What are the names of the camps or detaches you lived in? (probe for exact location e.g. sub-county)
529. For how long did you live in the camp(s)/detach(es)?
530. Did you ever change from one camp to another? why?
531. What did you get when staying in the camps? (e.g. food, security, relief services)
532. What problems and/or risks did you find when living in camps?
533. What assistance (if any) did you get while in the camp(s) (e.g. food, medical care, security, water, rescue services, education, shelter, agricultural implements, household property, sanitary towels, family planning services, beddings). Explain from where, and by who.
534. How appropriate were/are the methods used in distributing relief aid to individuals? (e.g. timeliness, adequacy, regularity, fairness in distribution).

600. IMPACT OF WAR ON (WOMEN’S) HEALTH

601. What were/are the illnesses commonly suffered during this war by:
1. Boy children?
 2. Girl children?
 3. Self
 4. Elderly dependents?
 5. Spouse/partner?
602. How were/are such illnesses treated/handled?
603. Have you ever got any of these illnesses/conditions during this war?
- vaginal ulcers/wounds, swellings in the private parts, itches, discharges, pelvic inflammatory diseases? pains during urination? How did you get them?
604. Have you ever got problems during your menstrual periods? (e.g. irregular, heavy, light, or no menstruation periods?)

605. How did you get rid of those reproductive health problems mentioned (in 603 and 604)?
606. How were you managing your sex life? (privacy, regularity etc)
607. Have you ever got pregnant during the war? Or did your wife ever get pregnant during the war? How many pregnancies?
- [skip question 608 if respondent or wife of respondent did not get pregnant during the war]*
608. What specific problems have you experienced with pregnancy during the war?
609. What were the outcomes of the pregnancies? (normal deliveries, still births, premature births, abortions, and neonatal deaths - deaths at birth or within the first 28 days after birth)
610. Have any of your girls ever been abused or taken away by the warring groups? What were the consequences of the abuse? (e.g. pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, early marriage, death)
611. How do you compare the health problems of girls and those of boys during the war?

Trauma/psycho-social problems

612. People are usually affected differently during and after crisis periods. Can you explain how you were psychologically/ mentally affected because of the experiences you went through?
613. Have you experienced any of these conditions? (circle all that apply to respondent)
- excessive fear, panic, heart attacks, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, psychosomatic conditions e.g. loss of appetite, poor sleep, headaches, stomach aches, withdraw, dislike of people and environment, dislike of socialisation and work, stroke, epilepsy, etc.
614. Do you still have any of these conditions now?
615. Were any of your children forced to do anything harmful to another child or adult? Explain.
616. Are there people /friends, groups, who have come to your assistance to overcome these bad experiences e.g. the religious bodies, leaders, NGOS? - mention them
617. What did they do for you?
618. Who has been giving you the following medical services?
1. antenatal care
 2. immunisation
 3. family planning
 4. maternity care
619. Did you acquire any permanent illnesses/injuries/disabilities which have incapacitated you up to now? Which ones?
620. Have any of your relatives who had disappeared been found? Where were they and how were they found? By who?

621. Have you lost any member of your immediate family because of the war?(killed, disappeared, natural death etc). How many? Indicate relationships.

	Number	Relationship
Family member who died		
Family member who disappeared		

(get more information on deaths)

Relationship to Respondent	Nature/Cause of death
e.g husband	Gunned down

700. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- 701. Have you ever received any assistance to rehabilitate yourself and family? What assistance did you receive and from where?
- 702. How appropriate are the methods used in distributing assistance and how were the women targeted?
- 703. What improvements can be made in the delivery of humanitarian assistance?

800. GENDER RELATIONS DURING THE WAR

- 801. In your household, what are the responsibilities of men, women and children - in the home and in the gardens?
- 802. Have these roles changed because of the war? Explain how
- 803. What activities does your partner perform which he never used to do before the war started?

b) Why has this change taken place?

- 804. What lessons have you learnt from this war?
- 805. What role do you see yourself playing in bringing peace to this area ?

806. Do you have any questions to ask me about what we have been talking about?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR SPENDING YOUR MOST VALUABLE TIME TO TALK TO ME AND FOR THE NARRATION OF YOUR EXPERIENCES DURING THE WARS!!

Name of interviewer _____ Time the interview started _____
 Time interview ended _____
 Date _____

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ACRONYMS

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation in Research and Development
APC	Acholi Pacification Committee
AVSI	International service Volunteers Association
CPA	Concerned Parents Association
FEDEMU	Federal Democratic Movement
GDWDC	Gulu District Women's Development Committee
Isis - WICCE	Isis-Women's International Cross Culture Exchange
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organisation
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PVP	People's Voice for Peace
SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation army
UPDA	Uganda people's Democratic Army
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
URT	Upper Respiratory Tract (Infections)
UWONET	Uganda Women Organisations Network

PREFACE

The people of North and North-Eastern Uganda have suffered unacceptably long periods of insecurity. Rebel groups in parts of Gulu, Kitgum and other parts of Northern Uganda and the activities of the Karamojong cattle rustlers on their neighbouring districts have collectively made the people in these areas despair as they see their human rights become meaningless privileges in the face of perpetrators. The most precious and fundamental human rights to life and property are no longer as fundamental and basic as everybody would want them to be.

Attempts by the government to curb insecurity in these areas has also raised new human rights problems. People are displaced from their homes and subjected to pathetic life in internally displaced persons camps (IDPCs). The displacement of people has negatively affected the socio-political, economic and cultural conditions in the North. Education, health care, shelter and other rights like privacy, property, movement and other freedoms have been negatively affected. The Ugandan economy has lost out on the contribution of the people of these war ravaged districts, owing to disrupted economic activity.

More affected however, are the rights of those vulnerable groups like women, children, elderly and differently able. These categories of people have undergone triple suffering. They first suffer as human beings displaced from their habitual residences mostly as innocent casualties of insecurity, secondly they suffer as easy targets (vulnerable) by the perpetrators because they in majority of cases are unable to run as fast as the machine men when they are chased. In camps these groups are not safe either. This report has stories of young and older women. These stories however devastating they are, prove one major point, that there is need for extra protection of women in these areas.

The study was particular to Gulu district alone but the experiences in this report can be duplicated in other areas of insecurity like Bundibugyo, Kasese in the West and Katakwi in the North East.

Women and their bodies have been violated from time immemorial. The 21st century is a century when woman hood was beginning to be celebrated. Women's liberation and women's rights are now internationally recognised and those who still look at women's bodies as objects of experiments to be raped, harassed and mutilated should be condemned by every right thinking mind.

We applaud the efforts of Isis-WICCE for documenting these experiences of women in Gulu. Those experiences would serve as learning experiences for future generations in order to protect the vulnerable members of society from abuse and exploitation in terms of upheaval. The experiences should be used as a tool of empowering the vulnerable members of society not only to protect themselves in such turbulent times, but to stimulate them to contribute by all means available to curb similar perpetuation of war and violence.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission will continue to do whatever is in its power to campaign against all forms of violence including violence and harassment of women of all forms.

The government, international partners and civil society should take up the challenge of working together to build peace in the culture and minds of people for the peaceful development of all people of Uganda.



Margaret Sekaggya (Mrs.)

CHAIRPERSON

UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“ We are spiritual beings living pro-active and value centered lives that are expected to contribute meaningfully to building societies”.

This was the strength behind all those who were involved in the accomplishment of this research.

Isis-WICCE would therefore like to earnestly acknowledge all those who played the various roles in this project. We wish to particularly thank Heinrich Boll Foundation and EZE for their financial and material support.

We recognise Prof. Mwaka's (the consultant) expertise in assisting in the development of the instruments and the training of research assistants; Ms Rosalba Oywa for her tireless dedication in coordinating the data collection and the translation of the data from Luo to English language; Mr. Joseph Tumushabe for the long hours he put in to analyse the data and the compilation of the report; and the Isis-WICCE team for the commitment and hard work demonstrated both in the field and during the report production.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the research assistants, the political and civil leadership in Gulu for their positive response to the study despite the insecurity that continued to linger on.

To the respondents, we say thank you for voicing out the injustices. This demonstrates the power in you which looks at what lies behind and before you, as tiny matters because you believe in what lies within you - to break the chains of violation of your Human Rights.

GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU.

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the memory of those women and girls who fall during wars and those who continue to suffer after the wars are over.

It is also dedicated to all the women and men all over the world fighting for women's rights.