Internally Displaced Persons' Burials in Pabbo Town Council in Northern Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Hundreds of thousands of people were internally displaced in Northern Uganda during the war from 1986 to 2006. Tens of thousands of people died, and their bodies were buried in the displacement camps. Formerly Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have returned to their home areas and the region is recovering. The former IDP camp has been elevated from a Trading Center into a Town Council and the general socioeconomic improvement of people living in it is improving. All this progress is being slowed down by IDP burials that were left behind by family members who were in Pabbo IDP camp. To explore obtain this issue, I used ethnographic participant observation methods to collect and analyze data during fieldwork. I carried out key informants' interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 25 respondents to find out about their perspectives on burial, repatriation and reburial of IDP remains.

The narratives of the people in Pabbo who participated in the study show that the living relatives of those who were buried in IDP camps may experience bad dreams, develop physical and mental illness and sometimes death resulting from IDP burials related to the spirits of those who were buried in IDP camps. According to the research participants, IDP burials hamper the use of land for development purposes and the local government's ability to improve infrastructure. It may make it impossible for landowners to sell their land at high values. When the landowner or those who bought land want to construct a house for residence or business purposes, they sometimes have to spend extra money to support the families that are not able to finance the cost of reburial. Pabbo Town Council also faces problems of IDP burials in terms of spending a lot of money on IDP burials compensation to meet the cost of exhumation and reburial. The people in Pabbo suggest that the solutions to the problems of IDP burials lie with

the relatives of the deceased buried in former IDP camp and the landowners on whose land the IDP burials are located to finance reburial from Pabbo Town Council to their ancestral homes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
GoU	Government of Uganda
KY	Kabaka Yekka
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA	National Resistance Army.
NRM	National Resistance Movement.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Introduction

Forced displacement is an international problem that directly affects those uprooted from their homes, as well as the host community, governments and international agencies. Voluntary return to pre-war homes as a durable solution to displacement after war and human rights abuses is important. This research will contribute to anthropological research on the effects of displacement and return, and how to remedy them. The relationship between cultural and spiritual disturbances to the repatriation of human remains for migrants and displaced people have been less explored. It is hoped that the study will illuminate the significance of burial and reburials within the formerly displaced communities. Understanding the cultural and spiritual belief systems of the people in Northern Uganda regarding burials will help to identify more effective assistance policies on reburials.

Northern Uganda has experienced armed conflict for nearly two and half decades that aimed to overthrow the newly established National Resistance Movement (NRM) government from 1986 to 2006. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacked, killed, cut off hands, breasts, lips or ears, and abducted nearly 30,000 civilians who were forced to be child soldiers or sex slaves. At the height of the insurgency, 1.8 million civilians in Northern Uganda were forced to flee to Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps. Approximately 90 percent of the people in Northern Uganda were forced to live in over 200 IDP camps. The living conditions in these IDP camps were

unsafe, with congested settlements that lacked sanitation facilities, adequate water, and basic social services (Baines 2010; Branch 2011; Dolan 2009; Finnström 2010).

According to the tradition of the Acholi in Northern Uganda, a deceased family member is to be buried in his/her clan land around the family house. Unfortunately, during the years of conflict and forced displacement, displaced people were forced to bury their dead inside the over-crowded camps on land that did not belong to their clans. Burying the dead outside of clan land is a taboo in Acholi cosmology and is believed to aggrieve the spirits of the dead who cannot then join the ancestral spirits. Some former IDPs who have returned to their ancestral homes believe that the spirits of the dead who were buried at displacement camps and left behind are causing psychosomatic illness, material hardship, social conflict and spiritual disturbances among the living relatives.

During the insurgency, camps for internally displaced people, referred to here as Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps, were established by the Government of Uganda in the areas surrounding sub-county administrative and commercial centers. Because of the war in Northern Uganda, the development of the region lagged behind compared to other parts of the country, as it was impossible to invest in social infrastructure. Much research has been done on the IDP camp living conditions and the process of displaced peoples' return to their ancestral homes. Yet very little has been written on the impact of IDPs who died and were buried in camps. These burials, here referred to as IDP burials, directly affect former IDP camp landowners, local government, and the relatives of those who died and were buried in the camps. It is therefore important to study the cultural and spiritual well-being of the living relatives who have returned home after the closure of the IDP camps.

1.2. The problem statements

The civil war and displacement have several long-term socio-economic, environmental and political impacts that persist in post-conflict Northern Uganda years after IDPs camps were closed. When 1.8 million people left these camps, the IDP landowners were left with thousands of graves that are now hampering the use of their land for development purposes. IDP returnees are facing sociocultural, spiritual and psychosomatic problems due to IDP burials. This problem is particularly severe in Pabbo Town Council because it was the largest camp for internally displaced people in the Acholi sub-region and due to its rapid rate of development after IDP closure.

1.3. The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine how the graves of people who died while held in IDP camps have impacted both landowners and former IDPs who have returned to their ancestral land after the cessation of hostilities. This study aimed at discovering and documenting the negative effects of IDP burials, evaluating strategies that are being used to address these effects to determine if and why they are successful according to the targeted beneficiaries, and proposing/recommending solutions to these problems.

1.4. Objectives of the study

This study aimed at understanding the pattern of recovery and development of Pabbo Town Council after the devastating effects of conflict and displacement. In particular, it aimed to assess the impact of IDP burials on IDP landowners of the former displacement camps where these graves are located and Pabbo Town Council's ability to improve infrastructure. I explored the cultural and spiritual significance of burials, reburial, and the associated rituals performed by the elders and traditional leaders to avert the anger of the dissatisfied spirits of the dead buried in IDP

camps. I also sought to determine whether patterned relationships exist between IDP burials and spiritual disturbances, land use, and possibilities for recovery and infrastructural development in former IDP camps. This thesis was part of a larger, collaborative team research project focusing on the political, legal, and spiritual significance of improper burials in post-war Northern Uganda led by Dr. Tricia Redeker Hepner and Dr. Dawnie Wolfe Steadman at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

1.5. Specific objectives

i. To explore the implications of IDP burials on Pabbo Town Council landowners and infrastructural development of Pabbo Town Council.

ii. To describe how reburials can contribute towards addressing IDP burial problems.

iii. To ascertain the meanings, narratives and perspectives of the people in Pabbo Town Council on IDP burials and development.

iv. To establish the factors that contributed to the recovery and the development of the former Pabbo IDP camp into a Town Council.

1.6. Research questions

i. What are some of the factors that contributed to the recovery and development of the former Pabbo IDP camp into a Town Council?

ii. What are the narratives and perspectives of the people in Pabbo Town Council on post-displacement and development?

iii. What are the implications of IDP burials on Pabbo Town Council landowner's properties and infrastructural development?

iv. How can reburials contribute to addressing IDP burial problems?

1.7. Research hypotheses

i. IDP burials affects farming, land sale, house and road construction in Pabbo Town Council.

ii. IDP burials have psychosomatic consequences like the haunting of living relatives who have returned home from IDP camps.

iii. Strategies that include exhumation and reburials result in addressing the problems of IDP burials.

iv. Traditional rituals like performing the last funeral rites result in addressing the effects of IDP burials.

v. Reburials can contribute to the alleviation of problems associated with IDP burials.

1.8. Significance of the study

This project describes Acholi indigenous knowledge systems on the impact of internal displacement, post-conflict situations, and issues related to human remains. It is an ethnographic approach to perspectives of a displaced community and their hosts about recovery, development, IDP burials problems and how to remedy them. The research findings might be useful for the communities in which the research was conducted or communities that are experiencing similar problems. I hope the key stakeholders such as policymakers, area Members of Parliament, Local Councilors and civil society organizations working on post-conflict reconstruction can see IDP burials as a genuine problem that needs external intervention. The research findings and recommendations can be used by the affected communities for advocacy purposes and to inform programs to address issues of development, rehabilitation and psychosocial support in a post-conflict situation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are contributing to a global crisis, in terms of the increasing numbers of people displaced within the borders of their countries of origin due to unrest and war. Globally, conflict-induced internal displacement has resulted in 6.9 million new displacements in 2016. Thirty-eight percent, representing 2.6 million people, live in sub-Saharan Africa, making it the most affected region (IDMC, 2017). The United Nation Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were established in 1998 to ensure the rights of IDPs, and the responsibilities of the government and humanitarian organizations in facilitating IDPs return and recovery (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement 1998). Although they are non-binding, the guiding principles point to the needs and rights of IDPs, state responsibilities, humanitarian assistance, and the process of return and recovery assistance. In 2004, the Government of Uganda created a policy for IDPs as a formal state bureaucratic category in which IDPs rights and services were enshrined. Internally Displaced Persons are survivors who fled their homes but continued to stay within their country because of war, human rights abuses or disaster.

2.2. The history of war in Uganda

Uganda became independent in 1962 under the presidency of Milton Obote, who was of Luo ethnic origin from the Lango sub-region. Obote was the party President of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) whose support came mainly from ethnic groups in Northern Uganda. His government consisted of a coalition between the UPC and the Buganda kingdom under the Kabaka Yekka (KY) party. In 1966, after four years of parliamentary dispute between KY and the

UPC, Obote suspended the constitution in a bid for unchallenged national leadership. Troops loyal to Obote were sent to the palace of the Kabaka (Baganda king) who fled into exile in Britain. It was an event that initiated the use of violence and the use of the army against political opponents, something that has long continued throughout the later history of Uganda ("Uganda under Military Rule," 1973).

In 1971 General Idi Amin led a military coup toppling the Obote government. Amin's regime was marked by two major strategies. First, he instigated violence against all political opponents, especially Luo supporters of Obote in the army. This resulted in the reign of terror on Ugandans, especially on political opponents and Christians, as in the case of the killing of Archbishop Janani Luwum. He did this by overturning the rule of law by abolishing the Parliament and political parties. Several politicians and civil servants were killed by Amin while others fled to exile (De Berry 2001). Disappearance and torture became a common occurrence, something that made Idi Amin infamous nationally and internationally. In 1978 Amin was held accountable by an Amnesty International report on Human Rights in Uganda for the death of 300, 000 people in Uganda (Amnesty International 1978: 13). In addition, Amin directed the 'economic war' against Asians in Uganda. This culminated in 1972, in the forced expulsion of Asians from Uganda and the redistribution of wealth into the hands of Amin and his close political allies.

Amin was eventually overthrown in 1979 by the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) with the support of Tanzanians. The UNLA included former UPC soldiers that linked with Obote in Tanzania from 1971 to 1979 when he was in exile. The overthrow of Idi Amin led to the restoration of Milton Obote in 1980 as president for a second term. This term of office was characterized by military conflicts, for example from 1980 to 1985 when Milton Obote's army led battles against followers of Idi Amin. Milton Obote and his supporters also waged war against

Tito Okello, Bazilio, and their supporters mainly from the Acholi who opposed Obote. The same opposition was witnessed in Luwero between Obote and Yoweri Museveni. The latter led the National Resistance Army (NRA) with the support of the people of Buganda. This conflict saw the eventual defeat of Obote in 1985 through a military coup led by Tito Okello; however, Tito was also overthrown in 1986 by Museveni who has remained in power for the last 32 years (De Berry 2001).

2.3. Introduction to the war and Internally Displaced Persons' camps

The 1986-2006 conflict in northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and the Government of Uganda led to the establishment of IDP camps in 1996 by the government (Atkinson 2010: 297). Internal displacement in Northern Uganda affected more than 90 percent of the population in the Acholi sub-region who were displaced into more than 200 camps (ARLPI 2001: 39). The Uganda Peoples' Defense Force (UPDF) used force, order, intimidation, torture, and sometimes bombing and burning entire villages to move people to nearby sub-county administrative centers within a period of 48 hours following a radio announcement (Branch 2012, 92). IDP camps were established in locations where there were UPDF military bases away from the ancestral homes. IDP camps in northern Uganda were created to undermine LRA strategy which had become a threat to the state power and the people of northern Uganda. According to the government, they were intended to protect the people of northern Uganda from LRA attacks and to deny the LRA a resource base (Atkinson 2010).

The violence and displacement in northern Uganda have been described as "social torture" initiated by the government of Uganda where IDPs were tortured for over 13 years (Dolan 2009, 14). In covering the conflict in Northern Uganda, Dolan argues that the conflict was not just between the government of Uganda and the LRA, but rather a form of torture "being used as the

guise under which to perpetuate social torture" (Dolan 2009: 2). The social torture was perpetrated by many actors, including the government of Uganda and NGOs against the people of Northern Uganda. Over 1.8 million civilians in Northern Uganda were forcefully evicted from their homes into IDP camps. These camps were hazardous because of congestion, and restricted movement; IDPs became victims of starvation due to the harsh conditions. These conditions also resulted in social and cultural breakdown and disease outbreaks. In the camps, people continued to experience LRA attacks, resulting in killings, loss of life and the abduction of their children, because the military was unable to protect civilians from LRA rebels for over 13 years (Dolan 2009). The government of Uganda kept the population of Northern Uganda in IDPs camps for 13 years, even when the IDP camps were not providing protection to the civilians. This was aided by the NGOs that provided food aid to sustain the people in the camps without which the camps would have been closed because the government was not providing this assistance to the IDPs. The concept of social torture is relevant to the experiences encountered by the people of Acholi in the IDP camps in term of provision of social services and the effects of this displacement on individuals and the entire communities in Northern Uganda.

Sverker Finnström (2008: 133) notes that in 2005 the Ministry of Health Uganda estimated that 1,000 civilians died every week in the IDP camps, however physical violence only accounts for 11% of these deaths (UMH 2005). However, no burial grounds were set aside for those who died in the camps. IDPs were therefore left with no option except to bury their dead in 'the wrong soil' that is IDP landowners' properties because it was impossible to repatriate their dead and bury them on their ancestral land due to the insecurity of the war period (Jahn 2013). Most deaths resulted from curable and sexually transmitted diseases, alcoholism, drug abuse, malnutrition and

inability to protect civilians in IDP camps from LRA rebels who continued to attack, burning huts, kill and abduct children (Finnström 2008:133, Whyte et al. 2014: 603-604).

The Juba Peace Talks between the warring parties resulted in the peace agreement on 29 June 2007 which outlined strategies to redress the legacies of conflicts and displacement in northern Uganda. The parties negotiated issues of disarmament, reconciliation, and political change in northern Uganda. The signing of a Cessation of Hostilities in 2006 led to relative peace, and the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni declared the closure of all IDP camps in Northern Uganda by 31 December 2006. This enabled IDPs to return to their ancestral homes where they have started to rebuild their lives. However, the consequences of IDP camps persist and Northern Uganda continues to struggle to find durable solutions. The government and war survivors are facing challenges in rebuilding what twenty years of conflict have disrupted and destroyed.

Recovery efforts are underway to rebuild social and economic infrastructure; however, according to Meier (2014), the population in northern Uganda believes that there is no real peace notwithstanding the numerous government and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs since 2006. There is a dire need for economic and psychological rehabilitation of war survivors to address the impact of trauma stemming from the violent conflict and human right abuses. Post-conflict policies and interventions in northern Uganda aimed at rebuilding, empowering, peace building and reconciliation are primarily intended at improving infrastructure and economic development and as the result they offer little or no psychosocial assistance to the IDP returnees or provision of support to exhume and rebury the remains of those buried in IDP camps (Branch 2011).

2.4. Introduction to burials

In many African societies, including that of the Acholi, it is held that the dead do not vacate the realm of the living. They move onto an ancestral realm that remains part of the kin group and continues to be present among the living (Atkinson 2010). According to an interview with a traditional leader in Pabbo, "the body can die and it should be buried. For us in Acholi if an elderly person died, we celebrate, sing and dance because we know he/she has joined our ancestors. That also explains why we offer them sacrifice because they are not dead and if things are not well in the family we pray to them to intervene." Parker Pearson (1999, 5), in his study of mortuary practice, defined burial as "the act of disposing of the corpse in Western society … it is one of the many ways in which the dead are removed from the domain of the living." Human burial practices are an expression of respect for the dead and immense importance is placed on proper burial for the deceased. For example, archeological studies of burial can be interpreted to understand the diverse cultural practices associated with burial, views on death and burial, how death and burials affect people, and how a given society treats its members. Traditionally, for burials to be considered proper in most African societies, the dead should be buried in their ancestral land. Many communities in Africa place great emphasis on burial location as the basis for asserting land rights, origin, identity, and belonging. Burial location is a key determinant of belonging in Cameroon, for example (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000:435). In this regard, the proof of one's identity in each society is to show where one's ancestors are buried, and failure to provide such evidence demonstrates that one does not belong there.

2.5. Burials and ancestral land

Craig E. Pollack's (2003) study of post-conflict Bosnia established that repatriation and burials were fundamentally connected. Burial was considered an important reason for return to

Srebrenica, promoting repatriation, and homeland connections (Pollack 2003, 186). This study illustrates how burials of the dead facilitated the return and repatriation of the displaced Srebrenica Muslims in Bosnia after the attack in 1995 to their pre-war home. Harrell-Bond and Wilson (1990: 228 – 243) explored the social, psychological and economic aspects of death in exile as African refugees' family members face death. They acknowledged that many refugees from Africa invest in funeral rites, repatriation, and burial of their dead to avert the ghost of the deceased person affecting them and their relatives.

In northern Uganda, IDP burials are believed to be improper and impose several challenges to post-war recovery in the region. According to Acholi tradition, the living and the dead maintain ties and the dead are believed to play an active role among the living. It is for this reason that people in northern Uganda treat the dead with profound respect and their remains are accorded decent burials. IDP burials are considered improper and the spirits of the dead are believed to be angry and may punish the living with misfortunes that are harmful to the psychological and psychosocial health of the living relatives (JRP 2006b). These unhappy spirits are said to cause "disease, sickness, death, infertility, possession, nightmares, poor crops, and bad luck" (Kembel 2015: 6).

2.6. Burials and development in the former Internally Displaced Persons' camps

The development of the northern region of Uganda has been delayed compared to other parts of the country due to the termination of investment in social infrastructure like schools and hospitals on account of the conflict. In line with the changing situation after the cessation of hostilities, development partners have shifted from humanitarian assistance to long-term reconstruction and development assistance (Büscher, Komujuni and Ashaba 2018). War disrupted the development of northern Uganda, but with the return of peace, the majority of the former IDP

camps are being upgraded from a small Trading Centers with limited opportunities to Town Councils, which are a higher administrative structure that receives more government funding with the aim of attracting development, trade, and urbanization. This process coincides with infrastructural development; town boards are planning and demarcating plots of land for different urban activities, and both the private and customary landowners in former IDP camps are selling off their land to local, private developers and the government for its development plans.

However, due to the large numbers of IDP burials in the area many development activities like road construction or building houses cannot proceed in locations where there are graves. These IDP graves, therefore, need to be exhumed and the remains reburied by the living relatives. However, the burial exhumation and reburial process is very costly. It involves sacrificing a goat or sheep, exhumation and reburying, transportation of the remains, and sometimes payment of a traditional healer or spirit medium to call home the spirit of the dead, as well as food for the friends, relatives, and in-laws.

Landowners of the former IDP camps are battling with the burden of the IDP burials and are in search of solutions to these problems to promote the revitalization of IDP host communities. Due to the psycho-social problems and infrastructural development impediments caused by IDP burials following the return of peace, there is a need for the creation of policies for exhumation and reburial to be incorporated into the post-war reconstruction efforts in northern Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study area and population

To examine the consequences of IDP burials, I collected ethnographic data from camp landowners, family members of the deceased with IDP burials, and local government and non-governmental organization administrators involved with post-conflict reconstruction in Pabbo and the return site of Pawel. Pabbo Center, located in Amuru District, was selected for this study because Pabbo was one of the largest Internally Displaced Persons' camps in northern Uganda. Pabbo Center housed people from several districts and is now one of the fastest developing urban centers in the region. When I was 14 years old, my father brought me to Pabbo to stay with his cousins where he enrolled me in Pabbo secondary school in 1998. This school was by then also displaced in the Catholic Mission due to insecurity at the site from where it is operating today. It was common for the LRA rebels to attack the IDP camp, though sometimes it was hard to know that the rebels have attacked the IDP camp at night until morning when the news spread because the camp was so big. At night when you hear footsteps of IDPs running in from a certain direction, you will know that the LRA rebels have attacked the camp. Without asking questions everyone would run in the direction of the crowd and in most cases, IDPs run toward the sub-county office building because it was near Pabbo military barracks. The huge population in Pabbo IDP camp also provided the opportunity for businesses since there was a ready market provided by the IDPs. The central government's decision to elevate the former IDP camps into town councils or boards after the war, therefore, was to attract economic development and bring services closer to the people through decentralization (Whyte et al. 2013b, 2014).

Following the end of the conflict and closure of IDP camps, surviving individuals returned to their homes, simultaneously leaving the remains of their relatives behind in graves on IDP camp land. IDP burials have negative consequences for returnees, camp landowners, and general post-conflict reconstruction and infrastructural development. To understand the consequence of IDP burials from the perspective of these key stakeholders, data was obtained from research subjects that included families of the deceased buried in IDP camps, IDP camp landowners who have graves on their properties, the Town Clerk of Pabbo Town Council, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), who upon request from Ugandan government provided funds for the construction of Pabbo multi-purpose hall and staff quarters. JICA also provided funds for exhumation and reburial of IDP remains from the areas where the Local Government built Pabbo's administrative office block because the construction of the buildings would not proceed without reburying IDP remains.

3.2. Study design, sample selection, and data collection

I collected qualitative ethnographic data using semi-structured individual interviews, key informant interviews, and participant observation. Qualitative research methods have been adopted for this study because they produce rich data that are able to capture the perspectives of Acholi cultural tradition on burials, exhumation, and reburials.

To facilitate my entry into the community and build rapport with respondents, I first contacted members of the local community, and religious and traditional leaders before proceeding to data collection. I had meetings with these leaders to introduce myself and inform them about my research and requested their support, participation, and permission to conduct the study in their community. These preliminary conversations helped to establish a comfortable relationship that encouraged informants to talk freely and confide in me. I interviewed the local community leaders

including Local Council (LC) member who are the lowest elected leaders who administer a village; religious leaders from different denominations; cultural/clan leaders and the elders who are the specialists in Acholi cultural traditions.

These leaders were engaged to share their knowledge and understanding about problems associated with IDP burials and the impact on their community members. For example, they were asked to describe burial processes, procedures, and the associated rituals in Acholi tradition, explain how IDP burials are proper or improper burials, and, if they are improper, whether there were health, psychological and spiritual problems that can be attributed to these burials. They also provided information about what they think needs to be done and what has been done as a remedy for the IDP burial problems. Cultural and religious leaders were asked to describe the religious and traditional cultural ceremonies associated with burials, exhumation, and reburials of IDPs that died during the conflict and were buried in IDP camps.

I interviewed a combined number of 20 people from Pabbo Center for this study. I also interviewed a local leader known as Local Council (LC) 1 Chairperson of the Pabbo Kal Center where the research was conducted. LC 1 is the lowest administrative structure headed by the Chairperson and secretaries who constitute the council. They are democratically elected and are responsible for the leadership of a village. For any activity to be implemented in a community or village, it should be introduced to the local councils, who are required to approve it. Given that they are well informed about their community, they are always invited to meetings and are informed of any activity like death, burial or reburials. Therefore, the Local Council Chairperson or their members can provide relevant information on the consequences of IDP burials.

A religious leader also participated in the study because a religious leader is always invited to officiate at burial activities and because community members report to them incidences of

spiritual problems, like mental illness or bad dreams believed to be caused by the deceased, and request prayers of deliverance. A traditional leader from Pukwany in Pabbo was selected to participate in the study because traditional leaders are the cultural custodians and officiate traditional rituals, especially when it comes to reburials. Four elders were drawn from Pabbo Center because of their wealth of knowledge on Acholi traditions and their ability to provide useful insights on Acholi cultural traditions in relation to the subject of study. Pabbo sub-county administrators also participated in the study because they are involved in issues of compensation and reburial that arise when IDP burials are located during road construction in the Town Council. A staff member of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was also interviewed about their experience on funding reburials from the plot of land where they constructed the Pabbo Administrative building. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect biographical data for each respondent and recorded their personal experience with and perspectives on issues surrounding IPD burials. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 former IDP camp landowners with IDP burials. An overall total of 25 interviews were conducted that consisted of both men and women who were religious/cultural leaders, LCs, and landowners in Pabbo Center.

The respondents were selected with the help of the local leaders who have deep cultural knowledge and information about the people in their community. Interview participants were chosen upon meeting the criteria that they have IDP burials on their land in Pabbo Center so that they could share information on how the IDP burials affected them. Interviews were conducted at the homes of interviewees to avoid interference with their daily activities and the need to compensate them for their time.

The research respondents for interviews were selected using the purposive sampling technique to identify individuals who met the criteria of being a landowner in Pabbo Center. In

some cases, snowball sampling was also used. For example, the local leaders and respondents already interviewed were requested to refer the researcher to other potential interviewees who met the criteria and could contribute to the study.

Former IDP interviewees were asked open-ended questions, such as why a decade after returning from an IDP camp, they have failed to conduct the exhumation, repatriation, and reburials of their relatives who died and were buried in Pabbo IDP camp. They were asked if IDP burials burdened them, and if so, in what ways, as well as for their opinions about how these problems with IDP burials can be addressed. Landowners were asked to describe how IDP burials have affected their land, land use, and infrastructural development in their land; how they have been able to handle the issue of IDP burials; and what they suggest can be done to address the problems of IDP burials in their land/property.

Additionally, I used ethnographic structured participant observation of events in processes of community-driven exhumation, repatriation, and reburials in the former IDP camp of Pabbo to gather information about intangible practical factors such as what is involved in burials or reburials, how they are conducted and the rituals that are performed. I participated in a preparatory family meeting for exhumations and reburial of my father's cousin. Follow-up interviews were supposed to have been conducted to find out what changed after a reburial to ascertain if such rituals addressed spiritual disturbances.

A detailed record of both objective observations and subjective interpretations in field notes were kept in a safe place. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Keywords or key concepts such as "bad dreams" of the dead person buried in IDP camps, unexplainable health problems that the doctors cannot diagnose, accidents, mental illness of living relatives,

graves interfering with farming and building or selling their piece of land at a low price were arranged in themes.

Written and oral informed consent was obtained from each informant who participated in the study. Formal written informed consents were obtained for meetings with the Local Councils, cultural/clan and religious leaders, representatives of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Town Clerk of Pabbo Town Council who oversees planning and administration. Oral informed consent was obtained from the participants under semi-structured interviews because most of the community members are illiterate. Interviews were carefully documented with the permission of informant to supplement my field notes.

3.3. Analysis and data management

The study adopted an inductive analytical approach to analyze the data collected from the field study following the different objectives of the study. It summarized and linked the field notes and interviews to the research data that were collected and transcribed to the research objectives. I transcribed and reviewed the data collected from the field to generate categories and themes. These themes helped the study develop meanings from the interviewee's responses and attitudes, and in comparing their responses in relation to their counterparts' responses. Themes and patterns on the challenge of IDP burials were summarized and tabulated. The data were annotated and described in detail according to the themes generated in the analysis.

A unique identification number was issued to all respondents' interviews, transcripts and field notes for anonymity. The handwritten field notes were converted to a Microsoft Word electronic format, while audio-recorded files and transcript interviews are protected in a secure file on a laptop and a copy stored in a password-protected file on an external hard drive. Handwritten

field notes from interviews and observations including written informed consent were kept in a secure locked separate file.

No identifying information like names or anything that can be used to identify a research participant was recorded. An informed consent form was read to eligible participants to agree to before interviews were conducted. Participants were informed of the possible risks associated with the study such as emotional responses of survivors when talking about their relatives who have died and were buried in IDP camps. Participants were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the interview process anytime they feel discomfort.

This project on IDP burials fits into a larger ongoing team research project on the agency of the dead. Working collaboratively with my advisor, Dr. Trish Hepner, and other faculty and graduate students, I have participated in an extended inquiry into the perspectives of the war victims on the effects of forced displacement and violence during the war. IDP burials are just one example of the improper burials in northern Uganda. The perception of war survivors on IDP burials and the way the problems of IDP burials have been handled can make a contribution to the general understanding of and response to improper burials. This thesis project showed that those who are economically well off in society has been able to conduct reburials from IDP camps to the ancestral home. It has also demonstrated that those who are economically powerful landowners and the clan support systems among returnees enabled some people to conduct reburial of remains. With over 200 camps and 1.8 million displaced, there must have been thousands of burials in IDP camps taking the World Health Organization mortality estimates of 1,000 deaths per week for 13 years. Among these, there are many IDP burials that have not been exhumed and reburied in the ancestral village.

As an Acholi who conducted the project at a place where I have lived for several years, and where I have relatives and friends, I was overjoyed at the end of the war because I thought a new day has dawned. Growing up in a war-affected generation that has never had the privilege to acquire in-depth knowledge of Acholi oral traditions, through this research project I learned about several Acholi cultural practices and their significance. However, I have also come to realize that the problem is not over as the long-term effect of the war is still holding our people captive. I felt the pain they were going through; they were not just research participants, because our story is alike. It was heartbreaking to leave the participants the way I found them without giving them the answers they long to hear.

The problems encountered in the field included translation of some of the concepts from English to Acholi and from Acholi to English. There were also problems with community mobilizers who at times selected the research participants without adhering to the set selecting criteria. After asking questions about the problems related to improper burial some interviewees would ask for financial assistance to help address the problems they had been talking about. It is unfortunate for them to hear that this is an academic research project which is unable to provide short-term solutions. There were several informal interviews I conducted with friends and relatives in the research area that I did not record and transcribe yet they turned out to be useful in the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDP BURIALS IN POST-CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

4.1. Overview of Pabbo Sub-county

Pabbo sub-county has a total of 41,811 people and 8,362 households. According to the land use data of this sub-county in 2005, most of the area was covered with woodland and grassland and bush with woodland accounting for 469 km^2 (62%), grassland and bush for 200 km^2 (27%), and subsistence farming for 85 km^2 (11%). In addition, the community forest reserve lies to the west of Labala parish, and the area accounts for 123 km^2. The landscape of the sub-county is basically hills and small mountains with undulating plains. In the far western part of the sub- county, especially Labala parish, the land is relatively mountainous with scattered natural forests. There are two major rivers in the sub-county. Ayugi River runs for about 192 km, dividing the sub-county into western and eastern parts, and the other major river is Ceri River, which is at the border of Pabbo and Adjumani districts. In addition, part of Unyama River also crosses the eastern part of the sub-county before reaching into Atiak according to the Report on Project for Rural Road Network Planning in Northern Uganda (JAICA 2012, Final Report Vol.1.

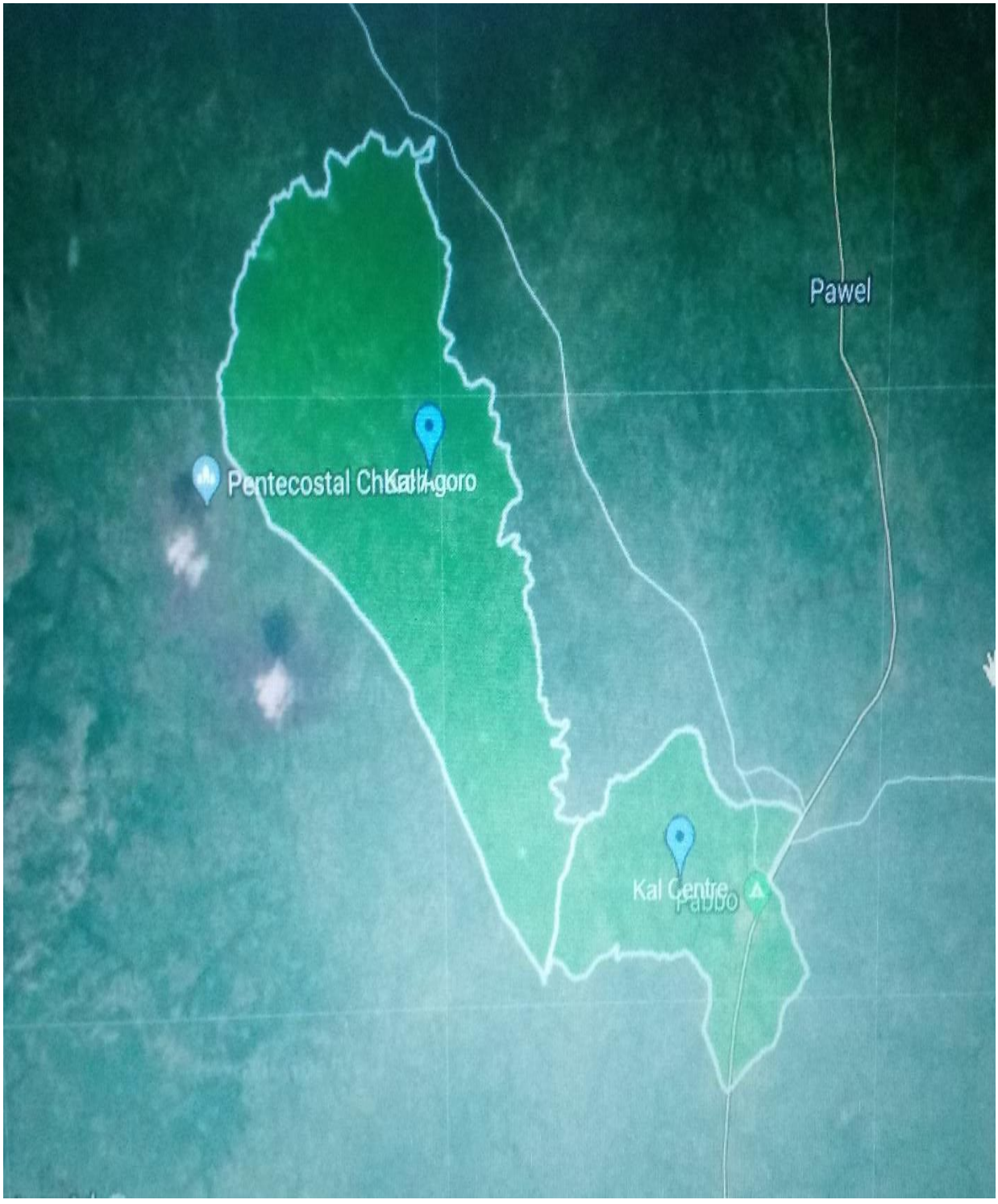


Figure 1. Map of Pabbo. Showing the area where the study was conducted

The climatic condition of Pabbo is closely categorized as a tropical dry climate, with hot temperatures and a long dry season. The rainy season extends from April to October, and the duration of the dry season is between November and March. The topography of Pabbo sub-county consists of a complex, low landscape with relatively uniform relief. Regarding land use, a huge part of Pabbo is covered with grassland and bushland. The area is covered by forest, grassland, agricultural land, and a good percentage of the area is covered by bushland.

Pabbo sub-county's administrative unit consists of parish, village, and sub-village locally known as *Tee Rwot Kweri*, implying a chief. The Pabbo local administration is comprised of political and administrative units. Under administration, there are various departments such as production and marketing, finance, community development, health, and education. The political unit includes Local Council (LC)III, LCII, and LCI in descending order of hierarchy, each of which consists of 12 to 20 members, including the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and clerk. The major roles of the councils are to approve a development plan, budget, protect human rights, attend various meetings, and monitor activities of the local government.

There is a traditional leadership that consists of clan leaders in the Acholi sub-region. In general, the responsibility of traditional clan leaders of the Acholi sub-region is mainly the mobilization of the community for cultural and development activities. However, they play a significant role as an interface between the sub-clan chiefs for undertaking reconciliation in case an internal dispute arises within sub-clans. They have also played important roles during peacebuilding processes, especially in conducting traditional ceremonies in the burial of the remaining bodies after the end of an insurgency that lasted for two decades (Lenhart and Whyte 2016).

4.2. The cosmology of the Acholi

Before colonial times, Acholi cosmology was marked by God on high, *Jok madit*, whose power was beneficial because the supernatural force could avert sickness and disasters. Those who befell such calamities appeased the spirit at altars in the home known as *abila*. It is believed that below the highest god, *Jok madit,* are the spirits, *jogi,* who inhabit the spiritual world. These spirits include those of ancestors who possessed their living descendants when dissatisfied regarding the attention given to their graves by their descendants. The ancestral spirits of the dead hold influence in Acholi social life. It is believed that some of these spirits are "free spirits," *ayweya*, who lived in lakes and streams and who might be summoned through witchcraft, *ajogi*, by either a "witch doctor/healer for beneficial purposes or by a "wizard" for evil purposes, *lajok* (Odoki 2007).

Post-colonial cosmology in Acholi holds that the supreme spiritual being is the protector and controller of fortune and the source of knowledge and ideas. After colonialism, Christianity was adopted by many of the people in Acholi. The spread of Christianity has had a profound impact on Acholi cosmology. This change is evident in the beliefs professed by people today and the few numbers of shrines *'abila'* within households. Instead, a higher percentage of the population goes to their churches for prayers. The introduction of Christian beliefs has led to perception of the Devil, '*Jok',* as a moral evil whose jurisdiction is both in events, calamities, and sickness and in the actions of people. *Jok* is said to have a major influence on people through their dreams. By putting "bad" dreams into the minds of people, *Jok* is said to predict any harmful action and can determine forthcoming events of death and suffering (Odoki 2007).

The most common cosmological belief held by people in Pabbo is that people could either live in a positive state of peace, health, and well-being or in the negative state of suffering, sickness and disturbance. These conditions are held to arise from the powerful supernatural force that can

control people's well-being and any disturbances they may have in their life. The states of an individual's well-being or disturbances in one's life are influenced by spirits and by people more closely linked to the spiritual world like "healers" who administer traditional medicine to cure sicknesses and "wizards," *lujogi*, who practice sorcery against their enemies and those they do not like so that something bad would happen to them.

Jogi are the spirits believed to be involved in both peaceful and disturbing situations. They may possess people, causing them to become ill, but if the victim appeases the spirit, they will not disturb them through the mediation and divination of *ajwaka*. *Ajwaka* is healer; he/she can restore the health and peace to a person that has disturbances from the spirits. However, *ajwaka* can also be contacted for evil purposes, for example, when people have bitterness or jealousy and want to inflict misfortune on a rival or enemy through witchcraft. In that case, they can provide "poison" that could be placed in the food or the home of the victim to cause illness and sometimes death. Wizards can also use bodily substances like hair or feces stolen from the victim to cause harm to the victim.

4.3. The Acholi burial ceremony

The dead are said to act on the living since they are superior to the living. The dead live in the world of the dead and occupy the divine realm, whereas the living realm is mortal. To the Acholi, rites of death are considered very important. The souls of those who die join the ancestors, and they are believed to become spiritual. The physical presence of burial at home, therefore, signifies that the dead person is ever-present among the living. According to the interviews, in the Acholi tradition when somebody dies, several activities are performed to fulfill cultural norms and avoid the deceased's spirit from returning to haunt the living but to ensure that the deceased rest in peace. These activities begin with sending announcements to friends, relatives, and in-laws who

then report mourning the death. The first signal that is peculiar to death in a village is the wailing of mourners especially women and children as described by interviewees.

In the Acholi sub-region, the deceased are buried near their huts or within the compound as opposed to graveyard burials. The elder would select the burial site and the youths are responsible for digging the grave. The burial site is always known: for a child, the corpse is buried near the house and for an adult; the corpse is buried in the compound with the head facing the direction of the door to the main house. Another consideration for choosing the burial site and direction of placing the corpse in the grave is the cause of death. If a person died because of injuries or violence from an unknown person, the corpse is taken home, but it is not allowed to be taken in the house. The corpse is placed somewhere on the compound before burial because according to Acholi tradition, the person must have died with a lot of anger and he/she should be given time for revenge. If the corpse is taken in the house, it is believed that there will be a recurrence of such a similar nature of death. To avert this, a traditional ritual is performed that involves killing a goat as a sacrifice is performed. An Acholi chief is buried with a leopard hide and in the burial ceremony; it is a common practice for mourners to see some spears and traditional Acholi regalia on display. An Acholi chief is buried with a leopard hide and in the burial ceremony; it is a common practice for mourners to see some spears and traditional Acholi regalia on display.



Figure 2. Photograph showing Acholi home with burials in the compound

A grave is dug in which the body of the deceased person is placed lying on its side, and it is filled and covered with soil. Burials are built on the side of the house depending on the sex of the person: women are buried on the side where the kitchen is located, whereas men are buried on the right side of the main house. However, it was also noted during the research that several burials were also found placed next to one another in the compound. Some of the graves were covered with cemented concrete marked with names and dates of birth and death, while most of them are covered with soil above the casket. The body of the deceased to be buried is placed facing the location from where the person's mother was married from, *paneyo.* The men who bury a deceased person undergo a cleansing ritual of killing a goat. The blood of the goat is sprinkled on the grave; the meat is cooked and eaten by those who conducted the burial. The tools used in the process of burial, like hoes and spade, are also ritually cleansed.



Figure 3. Photograph of a grave with the dead person in a casket

According to Acholi tradition, a traditional ceremony called *fuyu lel* is performed after burial, three days for a male or four days for a female person. The tradition also requires a goat or a chicken sacrifice, and the blood is sprinkled on the grave. The meat of the goat is cooked and given to those who helped to bury the corpse and other mourners who also bring food and local brew. The grave is smeared with black soil *ofuyu* and the tools and materials used for the burial of the dead person known as *oruk* are taken away from the home and laid by the roadside. A date for the last funeral rites locally known as *guru lyel* is communicated to the mourners if the deceased was an adult.

Guru lyel allows relatives, friends, and in-laws who live far away to come to mourn the deceased. These rituals are a form of mourning and remembrance in Acholi as a confirmation of the relationship between the living relatives and the dead. This involves religious activities like prayers and organizing last funeral rites for the dead. This is a necessary process from the time a person dies and after the burial of the person. As Sophie Hooge Seebach point out: "from the separation at the physical death, the liminal time the spirit spends roaming, till it is finally incorporated into the mass of ancestors at the last funeral rite" (Seebach 2016, 6). Different rituals, ranging from rites of passage and funerals, must be performed at different times to mark an end to the mourning process and for healing purposes.

4.4. IDP burials and disturbances

The consequence of the long-running conflict in Northern Uganda has negatively affected the very fabric of cultural life that is directly targeted in the kind of civil conflict played out in Northern Uganda. It has been argued that structures of meaning - social, conceptual, institutional and emotional - might be the very items lost or destroyed during turbulent historical events (Simpson 1997: 475). For thirteen years, for example, the people of Pabbo lived in settlement

camps and were disenfranchised from their homes, land and normal pattern of social relationships. Post-war recovery in Pabbo is about repairing the cultural fabric that was so grievously damaged. Chris Dolan argued that the IDP camps in Northern Uganda helped "cultural debilitation" and the overcrowding facilitated "vectors for social breakdown" (2009:168-69) something referred to as "cosmological crisis" (Finnström 2008: 160).

I have considered the ways in which Pabbo has managed to recover and rapidly develop from the material impact of the war and displacement. Returnees also must recover from poverty, the emotional and psychological impact of the war, and displacement. The processes of post-war recovery and development are as much about addressing the ongoing emotional impact of people's experiences as well as constrains of material impoverishment. During my time in Pabbo, it was evident that people continued to grapple with the memory, emotional impact, and psychological consequences of these experiences. It should be recognized that the post-conflict recovery needs involve the processes of healing and recovery from the emotional impact of conflict and displacement.

My principal concerns, however, are the impact of improper burials on returnees, landowners in Pabbo Town Council, and the Town Council with reference to the cultural and historical context and to local ideas of what it means to have an IDP burial. I incorporated the subjective meanings attributed to IDP burials and how they should be managed. In return sites where a massacre by the LRA took place, people reported the existence of corpses and human bones and the appearance of evil spirits, which was a threat to the resettlement of the people. In such an area, rituals for the burial of bodies and bones and dispelling of evil spirits were conducted to promote return.

The supernatural world is believed to be inhabited by the spirits of ancestors who can also "disturb" their descendants if they were not properly buried. They would come and possess those in their home. There were many stories of possession reported during the fieldwork in Pabbo: for example, an interviewee narrated the story of his neighbor: "the spirits of those who were innocently killed or improperly buried can also cause madness. For example, there is a boy here called Olango, the son to one Lenu, one of his children was a soldier but was killed in Atiak. The spirit of the son who died sometimes possesses Olango and caused him to wander about without any reason." Another example was a fifteen-year-old boy who became ill with convulsions and often collapsed. He was taken to an *ajwaka* who diagnosed that the spirit of his father was complaining that he had been buried and left in an IDP camp. Another story was about a young man, aged thirty, who became increasingly thin, woke up screaming in the night, and was considered "mad or mentally sick," or *lapoya*. He was divined to be possessed by the spirit of his mother, who died during the displacement and was buried in a Pabbo camp, but she was not exhumed and reburied at home. His mother was said to be complaining that her body had been left behind. In each of these cases, exhumation and reburials in their respective ancestral land were held, and the victims suffered no further illness.

I personally encountered IDP burial experiences comes from a relative with whom I stayed with while I was taking my secondary school education. Although this interviewee was not selected to participate in this study, I decided to share it because the IDP burials talked about were the people close to me and they took care of me for three years. This also illustrates how IDP burials seem to be common problems to a large population of IDP returnees, it is impossible not to hear the experiences of families struggling with IDP burials. During that time, I lived and went to school in Pabbo (1998 – 2000); I lived with the family of Tobia, who is a cousin to my father.

When I first moved to Pabbo, it was still a small trading Town Council that had been turned into an IDP camp. The family continued to live in the camp until the end of the conflict and return to peace. During 1997, however, Tobia died while the family was still in the IDP camp. He was buried in Pabbo Mission, within the senior quarter where the mother of the deceased lived, and the eldest brother was a school teacher in Pabbo Primary School. After the camp closure, the family went back to Pagaya to rebuild their home; and during my research study in 2017, Mama Tobia, who is like my biological mother, joyously welcomed me at home in Pagaya. I intended to visit them and take some material gifts to Mama Tobia, who is approximately 85 years old. At her age, she is unable to farm, yet the deceased son and her daughter Christine left her with orphans to take care of. She told me that the orphan to her daughter is not performing well in school, something she attributes to the impact of burying her daughter in the IDP camp and above all failing to exhume and rebury her at home. This has not only affected the child's performance at school, but the child also reports having frequent bad dreams in which her mother would appear in her dream at night. According to her grandmother, her dead daughter is not happy; she needs to be exhumed and reburied at home for the grandchild to experience peace of mind. I share this story to illustrate how my own experience, and that of my relatives, has also been affected by the problem of IDP burials.

4.5. IDP landowners' perspectives on IDP burials

A small section of people interviewed in Pabbo consider that burial in the IDP camps have been properly conducted, but the only thing is that they were buried in a place that does not belong to their ancestors. However, the fact that those who died during displacement were not buried in their ancestral home and according to Acholi traditional rituals makes IDP burials improper. Those who died and were buried in IDP camps were considered "bones in the wrong soil" according to

Jahn and Wilhelm 2015 because they were buried in the wrong place or location which is their ancestral land (Jahn and Wilhelm 2015:183). The right location for burial in Acholi tradition is the paternal ancestral home, especially for children and men. However, according to some elders, the only location accepted under certain circumstances for burial in case of death is at maternal home. Married women are to be buried in the clan they were married in and if she died before getting married, the husband will be forced to marry her before burying.

IDP returnees and landowners of former IDP camp sites believe that IDP burials cause problems to the living relatives who have returned to their ancestral home. The spirit of those who died and were buried in IDP camp are believed to cause diseases like mental illness or a severe headache that modern medicine cannot cure. If a dead person has mentioned in their wishes before they die that his/her remains should be reburied at their ancestral land and not abandoned in the IDP camp, then their spirit may cause disturbances. Some people interviewed believed that the spirit of such people, who made their wishes to be reburied at their ancestral home known, may be associated with disturbances to their relatives if their wish is not obeyed. The wishes of the dead are taken seriously in Acholi, so at the time of returning to their ancestral homes people remember that the wishes must be followed. Some interviewees also believe that some accidents and injuries are caused by the unhappy spirits. The spirits of those who died and were buried in IDP camp, but were not reburied at their ancestral home, have been seen as unhappy and that is why they may cause disturbances. It is believed by the people interviewed that if these unhappy spirits are not appeased, they may cause death among the living relatives. According to an elder, "if a dead person was not buried in their home it will cause problems because the spirit will say it has been abandoned."

Although many people believe that spirits of those buried in IDP graves may disturb their relatives, everyone interviewed in Pabbo Town Council believes IDP burials do not cause diseases, mental sickness, accidents or death to the landowners and residents. The unhappy spirits of those buried in IDP graves would only cause those problems to the living relatives as a reminder for them to exhume and rebury them at their ancestral home. However, the presence of IDP burials is reported to be causing fear among the landowners in Pabbo Center. This fear is related to infrastructural development and agriculture, specifically, digging out the remains of IDP burials when plowing their land with a tractor, digging a pit latrine or digging a foundation for a house. The person who accidentally exhumed remains of a buried person is expected to alert the people in the area and the incident will be immediately reported to the sub-clan, traditional leader (*Rwot moo*) who understands the tradition and officiates the reburial of the remains. An example was given of a tractor driver who unknowingly opened a grave and the remains of the person buried in it. According to Acholi tradition, I was told the person that dug it up with the help of the landowner who hired him provided a goat for a ritual and the remains were reburied. An elder told me that "it is not proper to leave human bones in the open and when that person who unearth the human remain fails to rebury the bones he /she risks developing mental sickness."

The landowners also reported living in fear of unknowingly building a house on top of graves washed away by rains that could not be seen. Most of the IDP graves were temporary because the majority of IDP's were poor and the relatives could not afford a cemented grave. Unfortunately, after years of IDP camp closure, some of these IDP burial sites have been washed away by erosion. According to them, some IDP returnees are coming from their ancestral home to exhume and rebury their relatives who died and were buried in Pabbo IDP camp but have failed to locate their graves. A case in point is an interviewee who told me that "it happened here in my

home. There was a grave over there when the land was plowed we failed to trace the grave. When we failed, we remembered where the grave could have been buried using certain trees, so soil samples from the area were collected and taken for burial as the remains of the deceased, the goat ritual was performed to complete the reburial process." This symbolizes the importance of ritual and the soil that represents land from which the human body is made of and buried in it when they die. The presence of a deceased person is associated with the burial location, especially improper burials or site where the person was killed and by taking the soil sample for reburial, it would, therefore, represent the remains of the deceased.

It is believed that if someone builds on top of a grave, the inhabitant of the house will always have bad dreams and may hear voices of invisible people in the house. An example was given of Pabbo Health Town Council III: "when the wall was built, it seems it was built on a grave because at times people in the area would hear voices of people they cannot see and at times people would see imaginary/strange people. A traditional ritual of slaughtering and sprinkling a goat's blood [to] cleanse the place was performed in the area and some soil was collected and buried in another location to signify reburial and the occurrences stopped."

Landowners in Pabbo Town Council argue that IDP burials lower the value of their land in case they want to sell it. The problem of IDP burials "also poses an obstruction to post-conflict rehabilitation and land commercialization as development initiatives in former camp sites increasingly target soil laden with the remains of unknown dead, and political contestations over the removal of such bones and graves have become part and parcel of reconstruction efforts" (Jahn and Wilhelm 2015, 183). An interested buyer may refuse to purchase land which has many IDP burials or may purchase the land at a lower price. This is because the buyer wants to build a house, he/she must bear the burden of financing exhumation and reburials of the graves in the plot of land

he/she wants to develop. The person who bought the piece of land in collaboration with the landowner who sold the piece of land has to make arrangements to connect with the relatives of the deceased buried in Pabbo Town Council to exhume and rebury the remains of their dead in their ancestral land. A friend of mine with whom I studied in secondary school, bought a piece of land that had five IDP burials. Before he could begin constructing a house on his plot of land he spent two million Ugandan shillings (approximately $570) to buy goats for reburial and transportation of the remains for reburial. This is 15% of the cost he paid for the piece of land.

In a conversation with a Pabbo sub-county official, I learned that the Town Council has already planned different development activities. One main activity the Town Council has taken is to open an access road directing and guiding urban development in Pabbo. The Town Council has come up with regulations for development activities as per the urban plan. Landowners and investors going to Pabbo Town Council, for example, are not allowed to build huts but only permanent houses. Those that do not have the capacity to build permanent houses or develop their land have been advised to sell their land to those who are able to invest and put some infrastructural development in it. An interviewee that was affected by this decision said "Government has stated that people should build permanent houses, if one is not able, you have to sell portion of the land and build or you use the money to relocate, so if the time comes it will happen that way." The amount given for reburials of remains would have been used to open more access roads in the Town Council. In the process of opening access roads, the Town Council is spending a lot on exhumation and reburials. The Town Council also has to compensate people for the graves on their properties before an access road or a house is constructed. According to the sub-county official interviewed, "landowners with IDP graves were paid UGX 150,000/= per grave, and millions of shillings were spent on compensation." However, some people interviewed in Pabbo complained

that the sub-county only gave UGX 20,000/= per burial, which cannot even buy a goat necessary for the IDP reburial process. This means that the people affected by the opening of the access road had to raise more money to meet the costs for exhumation and reburial. They claim that their land is being forcefully taken away by the town clerk with the claim that they want to use for development. A respondent who complained about land grabbing by the government official claimed that "part of my land has been taken by the road and there has been no payment. Part of the remaining land is being forcefully demanded by the town clerk with the claim that they want to use it for development because it has been planned as a location for a bus park." IDP remains with unknown relatives are often reburied on the same plot, but on a space where the land that is not affected by development activities such as road construction or building a house. In such cases, the Town Council and landowners take the burden of exhumation and reburial of IDP remains with unknown relatives.

Most Christians, especially Pentecostals (according to non-Pentecostals interviewed) believed that the Devil was the source of "bad" dreams, as experienced by those who report dreaming about their dead relatives buried in an IDP camp. They contend that dreams from God are sent to create a positive influence and changes in an individual person; such dreams contain predictive knowledge, foretelling events and calamities. However, in both ways people believe that dreams are a window through which supernatural powers exert their influence on the world. Many elements of pre-colonial belief systems remain meaningful to people in Pabbo. Yet, it is important to point out that the beliefs of different people in Pabbo evidence the fact that the extent and range varies from those who believe in Acholi traditional beliefs, Christianity or those who practice both. Form the field study, it was common to hear respondents saying that they are Catholics but at the same time the majority of these respondents acknowledge that reburials are

mainly due to their beliefs in Acholi cultural tradition. Some IDP returnees with strong Christian beliefs are said to have exhumed and reburied IDP remains without performing the traditional rituals of Acholi cultural tradition. To illustrate this, a respondent stated that "there is a mixture of Acholi tradition and Christian practices. Prayer can also be organized immediately to mark final burial of the dead person, it is happening especially these days because people feel that organizing the last funeral rite may take so long and the spirit of the dead person may begin to disturb people, so it is better to conclude it with prayers at once so that the spirit does not cause any harm."

The emotional impact of IDP burial experiences, as understood by the relatives of those who were buried in Pabbo IDP camp, were reportedly manifested through memories of loss and suffering, as well as disturbing bad dreams, *lek marac*, when some IDP returnees sleeps at night. Most respondents interviewed reported that whenever they remember living in an IDP camp, it triggers anxiety, memories of suffering, and the horrific conditions of their relative's death. The continuous experience of psychological intrusion is due to what they call *tam totwal,* meaning "too much thinking," which can incapacitate the living relatives. According to some people in Pabbo, this comes with a sense of guilt because the living relatives have failed to conduct reburials of those who were buried in an IDP camp. Bad dreams that point to the need for reburials may be in the form of the deceased person appearing in a dream to the living relative the deceased loved most. If this kind of dream is shared with elders, they will interpret the meanings of the dream or consult mediums *Ajoka*. An interviewee explained, "What I see is that if the dead person was not buried in their home it will definitely cause problems at a point in time because the spirit will say it has been abandoned. That is why it is very important to transfer the remains. When things associated with spirits like people could have heard voices of people who died sometime back or dreams begin to occur, people begin recalling. For us here in Acholi we consult the witch doctor,

who might tell you about how a memorial funeral was not organized for the dead and what needs to be done."

In the course of my fieldwork, people in Pabbo Town Council stated that IDP burials have consequences for the processes of recovery both economically and psychologically. The loss of family members when they were in camps is a post-war experience that they continue to struggle with for an extended period of time. During the war and displacement, family members who would have made vital contributions to the recovery and development of their home in the post-war period died. In Pabbo, people claim that the dead have sought the living relatives; there were reports of cases in which people had dreams and had been possessed because actions were not taken to address the needs of the spirits. The family and clan provide structures of organization for emotional and financial support as described by a respondent "the spirit does not die, it sees everything that is going on and if it feels abandoned, it can bring dreams and sometimes it can cause a person to have mental illness. That is why the clan have to come together and initiate reburial and mobilize financial contributions to avoid bad things." Several interviewees believed the dead buried in the IDP camp instead of their ancestral home would appear to their relatives so that they could be exhumed and taken for reburial on their homeland. The spirit of the dead voice their concerns through possession or dreams, ancestors express a desire for their bodily integrity to be maintained within the home. In acting upon such prompts, their descendants ensured that past members of the family, victims of the war, would too be included in the post-war recovery of homes.

Spiritual interpretations may be useful in providing meaning and prescribing a form of social action to be taken. This is the case with the ethnographies of the people of Pabbo who have lived through war and conflict. People in Pabbo turn to various religious leaders or institutions for

solutions to the problems they encounter depending on their beliefs. Several interviewees recounted stories of either consulting traditional mediums or taking their family members to church to be prayed for if they were suffering from spiritual disturbances. A devoted Catholic shared with me a story about spirits that used to attack pupils at the Pabbo Primary School which is a Catholic funded school: "It was tormenting students at one point in the area near the mission. The students would sleep, but then they would feel as if people are moving into their rooms in the night, sometimes it appears as if someone is talking to the students but when in reality there is no one. Prayers were conducted and it stopped." The area Counselor III of Pabbo Kal described how "during the war everything was not easy, some people could not decently be buried. They just hurriedly buried people here in the camp, I also remember one of my uncles was abducted and we heard that he was killed in a distant land and the remains have not been recovered up to now. Last month the elders gathered to consult the spirit about his whereabouts, the spirit did not disclose the whereabouts of his remains. Some traditional rituals were performed to appease his spirit since the spirit was bringing diseases. Normally the spirit of the dead keeps haunting the living by bringing diseases or bad dreams so the elders consult the witch doctor. Afterward, the spirit of the dead is consulted the spirit possesses someone it likes most in the family and will speak its demands through that person. The demand could be in terms of food or the need for retribution. He continues to note that these days religious practices are overpowering the traditional practices because most of the youths who have the money have embraced religious practices. The religious institution has money and they can easily mobilize whereas the cultural institution is incapacitated." The table below provides an overview of the rituals conducted to avert spiritual and emotional disturbances related to improper burials to facilitate IDPs return to their ancestral homes.

Table 1. List of Traditional Ceremonies

Name of ceremonies	Activities of ceremonies
Moyo Cere: Ceremonies for area cleansing	Digested foodstuffs are removed from a goat's stomach by elders and are spread in areas where massacres occurred to purify such areas. *Moyo Cere* was practiced by *Ker Kwaro*, which is the cultural institution in the Acholi region together with *Rwot Moo*, who is the clan leader. *Rwot Moo* are in charge of the various sub-clan in Acholi.
Moyo Kum: Ceremonies for elimination of ghost	In case someone finds the unidentified victims, it is said that someone or his family will be possessed by an evil spirit in the Acholi region. In such instance, *Moyo Kum* ceremonies are practiced to purify an evil spirit and to mitigate the departed souls together with immolating goats.
Gamo Oruk: Ceremonies for reburial ceremony	In case the remains of bodies are found, or bodies are buried by others, the bereaved family performs the *Gamo Oruk* ceremony with traditional elders. In a *Gamo Oruk* ceremony, goats are sacrificed to mitigate the departed souls. If the deceased is a male, a male goat is sacrificed; and otherwise for female.
Yiko Cogo: Ceremonies for burials	In case remains of bodies are found in a hut or a house, the remains are buried together with sacrificed goats to mitigate the departed souls.

4.6. Reburial ceremony in Acholi

Jahn and Wilhelm argue that "the study of the ritual action of reburial offers a unique perspective into the ways in which cosmology enters into the politics and practice of the post-conflict period" (Jahn and Wilhelm 2015, 184). This is well evidenced by an Acholi elder who asserted, reburial is a recent invention that has become common due to the violent conflict and displacement in the Acholi sub-region. In the past when a dead person is buried outside their ancestral land, their remains are not exhumed and reburied. In Acholi tradition, the only category of people exhumed after their burials were *lutino jok*. *Lutino jok* are children born with unusual conditions, a term commonly used to refer to twins. The tradition requires that when these individuals die, they are supposed to be buried temporarily. At an appropriate time, their remains are expected to be exhumed and placed in a pot and carried to the riverside. The pot is placed by the river banks where the water can carry it away. For this ritual to be conducted a sheep is sacrificed before the remains are exhumed. However, all the landowners interviewed in Pabbo Town Council maintained that the remains of IDP burials must be exhumed and reburied at their ancestral homes. Here is what an interviewee had to say: "People were buried in the camps simply because of insecurity. In the camp, dead people were buried in squeezed areas and now that people have returned home the demand is that people exhume the remains of their relatives. Some landowners want to sell their land and the land buyer may want to construct houses, so the relatives must exhume remains and rebury in their own land."



Figure 4. Photograph of IDP burials in Pabbo Town Council

i. Initiation of reburial

If a living relative is constantly haunted by the spirit of the dead in the form of diseases or bad dreams, the elders consult a witch doctor, or *ajwaka.* The witch doctor will consult the spirit of the dead to tell the family members why they are experiencing certain problems like disease or bad dreams, why their ancestors are unhappy, and what they demand to be done about it. The unhappy spirit of the dead will talk to the witchdoctor through a family relative he/she loved most and outline his/her demands through that person. These demands could be in terms of reburial, the food the deceased loved the most, or the need for retribution if the deceased was violently killed, to appease the spirit of the dead.

The family members will convene meetings over the reburial plan to raise resources and will then communicate these plans to relatives and in-laws. The family notifies the landowner where their deceased was buried in the former IDP camp in Pabbo and informs them about the date to conduct the transfer. There are instances where landowners in the former IDP camp initiate the process of reburial. These are common in cases where the landowner needs to use the piece of land where IDP burials occupy for house construction; sale or Pabbo Town Council wants to construct access road. In this case, the landowner or Pabbo Town Council will identify the relatives who have buried their dead in that piece of land. A letter is written to the living relatives through the sub-clan leader, *Rwot Moo,* to come, exhume and rebury the remains of their relatives. Upon failure to determine the relatives of the deceased, the remains can be exhumed and reburied within the same land that the landowners are not interested in using. The LC III Councilor mentioned that the Town Council in their plan is in the process of acquiring land for a cemetery where IDP burials with unknown relatives will be reburied in future.

ii. The process of exhumation and reburial

For a better understanding of reburial rituals, it is important to study the social processes and actions to understand post-conflict reconstruction according to Baines (2010) and Finnström (2010). The reburial process begins with family meetings initiated by elders in the family and attended by relatives and clan members. At this meeting, the dates for exhumation and reburials are agreed on and communicated to the landowner where exhumation is expected to take place. Invitation letters and sometimes radio announcements will be sent to relatives, friends, and in-laws about the reburial program. The meeting will also resolve how resources will be mobilized through financial and material contributions from the clan members, friends, and in-laws. The resources mobilized will be used to buy a goat or sheep for the reburial ritual of a 'common person' and twins respectively, a coffin for the remains, drinks, and food to feed the mourners and to hire transport means. As one elder explained, "for a reburial, a family needs a sheep or goat that will be slaughtered and the blood is sprinkled on the grave ritual, an elder *lamu doge* by saying today we shall transfer all to the right place where you should have been buried. The goat is slaughtered, part of it is roasted and eaten by elders involved in the traditional ritual, the grave is dug, and the remains are removed and covered properly with bed sheets before wrapping in a papyrus mat or placing it in a coffin. As this process takes place, the grave where the remains will be reburied is made ready. The grave from which the remains were exhumed is not filled with soil, it is soil washed by rains that fill it and the remains are taken where it is to be reburied." This is the general picture of the process involved however, different sub-clan may have some variation and it is also largely dependent on the beliefs systems in the family. For example a respondent said "most born-again Christians conduct reburials without following the traditional Acholi ritual. For them they only rely on prayers." This relates to Baines findings that acknowledged the need for greater attention to the role of spirits in aiding or impeding reconciliation and social reconstruction in Northern

Uganda. Reburial as an issue in post-conflict reconstruction and development is a form of symbolic reparation that comes with material and cosmological cost. As Baines (2010) argues, reburial originates from cosmological idioms of different area/clan in Northern Uganda and they are not constant.

4.7. The importance of reburial in the ancestral home

According to the Ker Kwaro Acholi book (June 2008) called the "Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure in Acholiland," customary land tenure is a traditional land-use system that operates on a sub-clan basis, and the land can be inherited by families who belong to each sub-clan. This land ownership accounts for more than 90 percent of land with boundaries marked by rivers, roads, and tall trees. Customary land is owned by the head of the household and is distributed to other family members. According to the constitution of Uganda however, there are three types of land ownership systems in Northern Uganda. Freehold land ownership refers to the land that can be used on an individual basis, and the land is used mainly for public facilities. Leasehold land is land that can be used by investors for a certain period. Land among the Acholi is owned by the members of one patrilineal lineage that stems from the men who originally settled on the land. According to research conducted by Oxfam on Women's land rights in Northern Uganda "men dominate the majority of decisions related to land use and management, and the security of women's land tenure can be tenuous" (Burke and Kobusingeye 2014: 2). The male descendants, who are members of one lineage, are free to live on the land claimed by their forefathers. Members of the lineage live on this land in separate and dispersed households, households that consist of members of an immediate family. In principle, households are formed around a single married couple and their children, with young men forming new households upon marriage following a principle of the system of patrilocal residence. In practice, the actual composition of households in Pabbo varies between households. Family members of a household

share the same compound; they cleared a space amongst fields and the bush where the houses are built.

Physical location of the place of origin is an important consideration for reburials because place relates to one's cultural identity. The ancestral land is a pivotal focus of life in Acholi. The importance of the home was clearly shown during the return from IDP camps and by those that were displaced in towns like Gulu, Masindi, and Kampala. It is said, "East or West home is best." For the Acholi, the ancestral home is a key locus of personal identity and the connection between past, present, and future. Processes of exhumation and reburial from former IDP camp to the ancestral home are central to post-war recovery and the continuity of Acholi cultural practices. Reburial in the ancestral land is important because ancestral land is a place of their birth and marriage, and where their ancestors were buried. There seems to be a spiritual connection between where a person and the land from which the person was born and raised. Reburial of those buried in IDP camps is indeed critical for the wellbeing of living relatives. This is something I only realized and appreciated during the research process, especially when I visited my grandmother. She demanded to know the details of my research study and to my surprise, she told me that it was something she also wanted to discuss with me. My grandmother started talking about my mother, who was displaced in Gulu Town; unfortunately she died and was buried in 2002. She was buried where she was renting in Gulu Town because her body could not be taken to our ancestral land due to the insecurity. My grandmother asked me if I want the remains of my mother to remain where she was buried in Gulu Town. She reminded me that being the first born child of my late mother make me the one responsible for the reburial of my mother. This revealed to me how important it is for those buried outside their ancestral land to be reburied.

The importance of reburial in the ancestral land as the last resting place is an important practice, even after the war in Northern Uganda. To emphasize this, an elder told me "I think for

us in Acholi, reburial in ancestral land is about showing unconditional love to our loved ones who have gone to be with our ancestors. Burying or reburying in ancestral home is having the deceased around us forever. Ancestral home is where one is born and grew up from, in case of death he/she should be buried next to the remains of his family. Every time you see their graves, you get reminded of their wonderfulness. How can we show our children their grandfather's or grandmother's grave if they are not buried in the ancestral land?" According to one respondent, even when an Acholi dies on another continent, country or even urban Town Council, they should be repatriated and buried in their ancestral land. According to a landowner, "when people were in IDP camp, the population were forced to bury here because the boundary for movements was restricted, and they feared being abducted and killed in the process of repatriating their dead relatives from the IDP camp to their ancestral home."

The location of burials in the ancestral land among the Acholi is symbolic and used as an indication of belonging and identity with a family and a common ancestor. It is evidence that the descendants can claim the plot of land, inherit, and have the right to own it because of the burial of their parents or ancestors. The land where the burial of your ancestors is located is symbolic of one's belonging. Due to displacement and burials in IDP camps, some landowners in Pabbo Town Council have reported conflicts over land with the former IDPs. Some landowners have claimed that some IDPs who have not returned to their ancestral land are now claiming ownership of the piece of land that they were given to settle in during displacement simply because they buried their relatives in it. These cases have been reported to the local authorities at various levels, beginning with the lowest, and when the accused or the complainant is dissatisfied with the ruling he/she can appeal to the higher court. During the land conflict, the respected persons of the community, or *Rwot Kweri*, and LC1 work as intermediaries to solve the problem through consultation. When it cannot be solved at the community level, the matter will be referred to the

LCII Councilor, Parish Chief. If it is unsolved, the issue will be presented to the Area Land Committee of the sub-county and put on trial at LCIII. The solution of the problem is finally determined by the trial at LCV. As one informant explained, "A certain man started a conflict with us by claiming that a certain land where he buried his relative belongs to him, and yet this land had only offered him during the camp. The case is still in court up to now. It was the traditional land court that tried to solve it, the LC1 also tried, it went up the LC 3, but it is not sorted out much as it was clearly found out that he did own the land."

4.8. Reasons for non-reburial of some IDP remains

The people interviewed in Pabbo Town Council, all agree that every IDP returnee with IDP burials would like to rebury the remains in their ancestral home. They all argue that the only reason why IDP returnees have not exhumed and reburied the remains in their ancestral home is poverty. It is asserted that the reburial of IDP remains is a costly undertaking in the Acholi tradition. In his own words, a landowner stated that "the process of the exhumation and reburial is not easy. All the requirements must be in place, so the process is not easy; they must have goats, sometimes the place for reburials could also be very far. All these expenses involved make it very difficult for IDP returnees to rebury those they have buried in our land when they were still in IDP camps." Large proportions of IDP returnees are poor and cannot raise the requirements for necessary for reburial. A majority of the IDP returnees cannot meet all their family basic needs like the education of their children due to resource constraints.

There were many external entities like the Refugee Law Project, Catholic Relief Services, Justice and Reconciliation Project and Northern Uganda Transition Initiative (NUTI) funded by USAID that supported Acholi traditional leaders to bury scattered bones and to cleanse areas where violent killing took place and are now associated with spiritual disturbances. Several projects were initiated by development partners to support IDP returns into their ancestral land.

Most of these projects related to the reintegration, memorialization, reconciliation, land conflict, cultural revitalization, and provision of psychosocial support. This was mentioned by a respondent who said, "there was an organization called NUTI that was requested to help in the IDP exhumation, but the request was never successful. There was one leader called Otim Orach who came up with a concept paper to seek support from the organization."

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT IN POST-DISPLACENT

5.1. Current situation of the administrative sector

The Pabbo sub-county does not have a space for a major gathering for their meetings or office space, which negatively affects the administrative service delivery to the community. The office in the Pabbo sub-county had many challenges such as a shortage of staff housing, meeting rooms, and office supplies. As a result, the sub-county office could not provide proper public services commensurate with the people's needs. According to the sub-county official, in July 2008, GoU requested Japan to aid with IDP return and resettlement programs. Responding to this request, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) conducted a survey in 2009 and confirmed that support to returning IDPs is of high priority as per the Project for Community Development for Promoting Return and Resettlement of IDP in Northern Uganda Monitoring Report (JAICA 2011).

According to the JICA report on the Project for Community Development for Promoting Return and Resettlement of IDP in Northern Uganda, "infrastructure, development, and livelihood improvement of the former IDPs, and strengthening the activities of the public/social services to the community were two urgent post-conflict needs in the district of Amuru. This led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between JICA and the GOU on the 24th of April 2009" (JAICA 2011: 1). Thus, Amuru district local government, with the funding from JICA, had to construct a Pabbo public service hall that had the capacity of accommodating 150 people for various kinds of meetings and gatherings, like full council meetings and events, and 8 staff quarters for the sub-county officers with the aim of improving the working environment of administrative officers and developing a system to provide people with basic administrative services.



Figure 5. Photograph of Pabbo Town Council building funded by JICA

The current sub-county office by then was not equipped with a large conference room because there was not enough workspace for the sub-county officials; for example, community development and agricultural development officers lacked a working space during their daily activities. Expansion of the workspace thus helped to create a close relationship between community members and the local government. There were no staff quarters, and the construction of staff quarters enabled staff to work longer and have more contact with local people.

5.2. Post-conflict recovery and development in Pabbo Town Council

The town Council is an urban administrative unit that falls immediately below constituency-level municipalities in the Local Government administrative structure. According to the government establishing a Town Council helps to take services closer to the people and create jobs like Assistant Town Clerk and an Elected Mayor, who leads technical and political staff. The main considerations under the law for the elevation of a place to a new district or urban administrative unit include population, physical area and local revenue and range of economic activities.

After the Juba peace negotiation in July 2006 marked the beginning of peace, IDPs started to return to their villages, and economic recovery began. After the closure of the Pabbo IDP camp, IDPs returned directly to their respective villages after confirming the stabilization of peace and order. Several high-ranking members of the LRA had surrendered or had been captured. The Uganda People's Defense Force's (UPDF) presence in Northern Uganda was substantially reduced, with only one large barrack remaining in the region. As people began to leave the camps, the process of re-building homes began. Most of the returns to the original village were during the dry season, because it is the time when the grass for making their huts has matured.

People throughout Northern Uganda were free to leave the camps and return to their village lands. Theimpact of conflictin the area had been resounding: the destruction of infrastructure, schools, churches, clinics, And roads; the collapse of markets and businesses; the loss of community patterns and trust. Hundreds had been killed, and thousands of cattle lost. Consequently, agriculture was deeply affected, and the agricultural base was rendered vulnerable. Those who returned to their lands faced immense challenges of rebuilding and recovery.

During the peak of the war in Northern Uganda, the region saw the largest number of humanitarian organizations. However, after the closure of Pabbo IDP camp, the emergency aid agencies such as the World Food Program, the Red Cross, UNCHR, NRC, MSF, among others, that were providing emergency relief left the region, and development agencies stepped in. The closure of IDP camps shifted the reconstruction programs from food security to capacity-building and development projects. The agencies that continued to operate in Northern Uganda were those that were implementing development programs. These agencies stepped in to rehabilitate the destroyed infrastructures, schools, health centers, Town Councils, roads and provision of water system. Economic recovery to deal with the collapsed markets, businesses, and the loss of property like cattle the most treasured sources of wealth in Acholi became a major agenda for the government and NGOs operating in the region.

At present, some of the people who remained in the former IDP camps are those who are running businesses such as retail shops or restaurants or are working as bicycle repairmen, blacksmiths, and those who do not want to return to their villages due to the opportunities in the Trading Center. In addition to the above, there are some people who purchased land and settled in the former IDP camp of Pabbo because the social infrastructures are readily accessible. A

percentage of those who purchased land in the former IDP camp was due to land issues in their original home villages. It is also important to note that there are people who remained in Pabbo Town Council because they could not return to their ancestral land despite their wish. Many of them are widows and orphans who cannot receive any support from their families or relatives. The main impediments to returning for the widows and orphans are that they cannot secure land in their home villages and build huts unless they receive support from their male relatives.

The development vision of Pabbo sub-county after the closure of the IDP camp is to achieve stable income generation, provide basic public services, and improve social infrastructure. The sub-county had the plan to expand Pabbo Town Council into a central town by developing businesses and social services. To achieve this, the sub-county established Production and Income Generation, Water, Education, Health, and Livelihood sectors. These were to achieve improvement in income for the people that have gone back to their original villages, and to activate commerce and trade in the former IDP camps. To promote self-sufficiency, the Pabbo sub-county promoted agricultural activities, like the production of cash crops, and encouraged the diversification of agricultural products with economic activities for people resettling in their homes.

i. The Role of the central government

Since independence, internal conflicts have been a common phenomenon, from Milton Obote and the military coup by President Idi Amin in 1971 to 1979, to the conflict in Northern Uganda from 1986 under President Museveni. These internal conflicts resulted in stagnation of the economy; however, Uganda's economy has progressed under President Museveni irrespective of the challenges of poverty and geographical disparity in the social, economic development brought about by corruption.

To improve public social services which are needed for vibrant economies, there have been formal development and reconstruction initiatives in Northern Uganda. The Government of Uganda has extended and formalized its administrative infrastructure throughout Northern Uganda. These development goals are all aligned to the Uganda National Development Plan (UNDP) with the aim of transforming the country from a peasantry to a modern prosperous country and with the quest of reconstructing Northern Uganda.

To achieve these goals, the government created the Ministry for Northern Uganda and, through the office of the Prime Minister, has designed multiple economic reconstruction and rehabilitation projects to fund projects such as the rehabilitation of schools, clinics, water systems, and roads. For example, the GoU created the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) in 2007 with the aim of promoting development in the region. PRDP objectives include consolidating Ugandan state authority, rebuilding and empowering communities, revitalizing the economy and achieving peace building and reconciliation in Northern Uganda. PRDP was funded through grants, project funds for Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and Agricultural Livelihood Recovery Programme (ALREP) for Northern Uganda. PRDP projects have contributed to the increase in infrastructure in schools, health facilities and the construction of roads, bridges, boreholes, protected springs, piped water and also helped in the resettlement of people from IDP camps.

In the agricultural sector, many projects are carried out by donors or various support programs. Among them, NAADS (National Agricultural Advisory Services) activities are playing the biggest role. NAADS supports farmer groups in improving various assistance for agriculture, covering a wide range of areas from the distribution of seeds, seedlings, livestock, and apiculture materials to agricultural training and the processing of agricultural products. Some humanitarian

agencies operating in the region also provided seeds and tools, and a few offered extension services aimed at increasing productivity. However, there is a need to deal with systems and structural problems, the late procurement of inputs, and the quality of extension services in the implementation of these projects.



Figure 6. Photograph of mango tree seedlings distributed by NAADs

The Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Water and Environment through the Water Sanitation Development Facility North is implementing a 4.4 billion Uganda shillings Water Supply and Sanitation System at Pabbo sub-county offices. The project undertaken by MUPA construction Limited is expected to serve 20 villages with over 25,000 people with 1000 service connections. According to Pabbo Sub-county official interviewed, "the Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme in Pabbo consists of 4 borehole pump stations, 2 guard houses, transmission line, reservoir site works 250 cubic meter steel reservoir tank, chemical chlorine house, distribution pipeline, 05 water kiosks, 13 stances public toilet, 05 eco-san toilets and a 48-stance school toilet." These were among the development projects funded by the GoU that the community in Pabbo regards as a sign of development in their region.

At the national level, the government of Uganda prioritized improvement in road transportation and trade with the emergence of the East African Community. Northern Uganda benefitted from these projects for example, the construction of Gulu-Atiak-Nimule Road, which links Uganda to South Sudan. This major road passes through Pabbo Town Council, and it has helped to boost the business as long trucks to and from South Sudan make their stoppage in Pabbo for accommodation and restaurant services. Pabbo Town Council has also benefited from the opportunity of doing business with the people in South Sudan who provide markets for the agricultural products. Pabbo is well known in the region for rice-growing; and the harvest, which is sold by farmers, provided the capital to invest in businesses.

ii. The role of agriculture

Throughout Acholi-land agricultural practices form the basis of community life and have provided security in times of upheaval. The population depends on agriculture as a source of subsistence and income from food crops through trade. People in the parish stated that their greatest resource

for their economic development has been and will be the land. Since the return to the ancestral land, wealth has relied on the sale of excess food products from household agriculture. There are those who have become rich from agriculture and trade; they are the ones who have been able to build permanent houses in Pabbo. In an interview with a small business owner who deals in produce buying and selling, he narrated to me the story of how he ventured into business. According to him, "people stayed in the IDP camp for a long time before returning home. For us, we returned in 2006 that was the time people began returning to the villages. Unlike when we were in IDP camp where we entirely depended on food donations, after we returned to our village we started farming. The land that we abandoned for our security when we were in IDP camp regained its fertility and we were able to reap a good harvest after planting crops on it. The proceeds from the agricultural products provided some of us with capital to start business, buy land and build."

It is, however, evident that there is increasing income differentiation between households in Pabbo. This is because those with access to surplus money can hire laborers for agriculture, unlike those who cannot. This relates to the capitalist structures in which the households with access to external sources of capital through employment are the ones who can multiply such capital through investment in agriculture. There are those who have achieved their wealth and influence by holding positions in wage employment from other sectors. It has also to be noted that a section of those who have invested in development projects in Pabbo Town Council are those who had access to external resources and capital. The wealthiest in the Town Councils are those who had access to salaries through teaching and administration and entrepreneurs who had made money from business opportunities during the conflict and post-conflict periods.

The development in Pabbo Town Council can be attributed to opportunities for trade of agricultural food crops. On the smallest scale, households sell their weekly surplus of crops in the

local market. In more recent years, households have taken to stockpiling surplus crops for sale until after the low prices of the harvest months have passed. On a larger scale, crops like groundnuts and rice were grown specifically for sale to middlemen who came from Gulu town, Elegu Market at the South Sudan border, or from South Sudan. For those with excess capital, oxen, and access to large land, rice had become a major cash crop. I was told that a farmer in Pabbo could harvest 50 sacks of rice, and if it were sold, it would be enough to begin building a brick house or educate his/her children. For others, the money earned from rice-growing provided the capital to start retail shops and businesses. Traders from Gulu drove to the rural areas to buy and transport the sacks of rice to town stores.



Figure 7. Photograph showing Pabbo Town

iii. Trade and business

Most of the people in Pabbo make a living from agricultural activities. However, the economic activities in Pabbo Town Council are not just based upon the possibilities for the trade of food crops. Equally, Pabbo Town Council has several small businesses, ranging from the trade of consumer goods to small hotels and shops. In Pabbo Town Council, there are many flour and rice mills, where farmers process the grain that they have harvested and sell it at a public market. In Pabbo Trading Center, small-scale businesses such as repairing, carpentering, blacksmithing, and tailoring are being established. People remarked on these businesses as a major innovation. The high need for small-scale business in and around the Trading Center is the reason for its development into a town.

iv. Income generation and livelihood sector

The study of Pabbo can provide data on post-conflict recovery and infrastructural development. Private entrepreneurship largely accounts for the rapid recovery and development in Pabbo and not necessarily government policy. It can illustrate how resilience and grassroots approaches can contribute to their own development without entirely depending on the government as war survivors cope with the impact of violence and displacement. The local recovery mechanism is largely due to the social capital initiated for entrepreneurship purposes in the community known as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) '*boli cup.'* As the war survivors returned to their homes, they started to earn at least some income, but lacked knowledge of savings, micro-finance management, and investments.

VSLA members benefitted from training in this Association; selection, planning and management of income-generating activities, business skills, and agricultural skills provided by

humanitarian agencies. VSLA helped them in raising resources to engage in economically viable activities, and some people were able to begin income-generating activities (IGAs). In an interview, one of the former camp commandants in Pabbo stated that VSLA has noted that, by gaining access to financial services, members have been able to improve the general well-being of the group through increased assets, especially liquid savings; the ability to purchase assets and property with money borrowed; improved household cash management; and, consequently, reduced vulnerability and increased ability to deal with unforeseen circumstances. A widow told me how she was able to survive and was able to support her children through their education after the death of her husband who was a Primary School teacher because of the support she has been getting from the VSLA. "When people were returning to their villages, I was not allowed to go back to my husband's village due to land dispute from the brother to my late husband who claims that I do not have any right over land of my husband because my husband is already dead. I was empowered when I joined VSLA, it gave me the opportunity to borrow money, which I used for buying and selling vegetable in the market."

I was also interested in knowing how people in Pabbo Center have rejuvenated the economic activity of their households since the end of the conflict and return to ancestral land. This has a lot to do with agriculture, trade and development of the Town Council. Agriculture in Pabbo is organized on a household-basis in which labor is provided by the husband, wife and children. In Pabbo agriculture was consolidated by the impact of rice growing, the use of ox-plows and sale of harvest in the Town Council. The profits from rice-growing, in turn, are used as capital for investments in businesses and setting up buildings for hotels, accommodations, rentals for the shop and residential purposes in the Pabbo Town Council. Returnees can now buy material goods after the end of conflict and displacement. An elder observed that "the re-emergence of bicycles,

radios, mattresses, clothes, and other consumer goods indicated the process of return to pre-war levels of wealth." The presence of consumer goods in the households of returnees indicates recovery and a progress towards development in Northern Uganda. These post-war improvements are indicators of progress towards development for people in Pabbo. Several interviewees in Pabbo talk about development in terms of the new road systems, the buildings, and the growth of the Trading Center into a Town Council.



Figure 8. Photograph of a Story building in Pabbo Town Council

5.3. Narratives of and perspectives on recovery and development in the former internally displaced persons' camps

Narratives of IDP camp memories have been referred to by the people in Pabbo as "days of survival, suffering, and poverty," "the days of the rebels," "the days of running," "the dangerous days," "the days of dangerous hunger," and "the days of death, abnormality and fear." For the Pabbo residents, the end of the conflict marks the beginning of another period of history, one that has been referred to as "a dream." Return to the ancestral home was described as a deeply emotional and joyful experience, especially after displacement and violence. The return marks the movement from dependence to independence; consequently, the post-displacement is a time of growth, development and catching up with other parts of the country. The closure of Pabbo IDP camp and return home represents the freedom to travel without fear of ambush and it marked the restoration of social life before the war and displacement.

People in Pabbo used a specific vocabulary to define and describe the end of the conflict and displacement. "Relative peace" has been used to describe the current state in Acholi compared to the times the region was in conflict. Peace was the basis of the return to the ancestral home, recovery and the beginning of development in Northern Uganda. It is understood that development could only be achieved if peace prevailed; the war and displacement were destructive and retarded any initiative for growth and development in Northern Uganda. Some people in Pabbo assert that it was because of the war that the sub-region is now seen as "backward" and not "up to date" compared to the development of Uganda as a whole. However, it is worth pointing out that the majority of the interviewees feel that the peace and the development in the region are not a true representation of the majority of the people. A respondent had this to share "it is true we left IDP camp and went to our villages because peace was restored unfortunately, there are alarming cases

of land conflicts that is tearing apart families." On development, the Parish Priest of Pabbo Church of Uganda said "when you are in Pabbo Center, you see several buildings, businesses, electricity and the good road but in the return sites the majority of the populations are poor and they are unable to educate their children after primary school."

Some described the post-conflict and displacement period as a time for healing, "picking up and moving on," as the beginning of a process that still has a long way to go for the people of Northern Uganda. It is represented as a period of healing because, in Pabbo IDP camp, they were like someone who was sick and down with an illness; therefore, post-conflict and return is like a return to health. People in Pabbo particularly associated the years in the IDP camp with epidemics, sickness, and death, which were the order of the day.

A new beginning to describe the post-war and displacement period is seen as better than what existed before, as a time of improvement, of renewed potential and possibility. In this sense, the war and displacement were the definitive moment separating the past and the future. Former IDPs and landowners in Pabbo understand post-conflict, displacement and recovery as a physical process of recovering possessions they lost during the war and dealing with the emotional impact of the suffering and loss brought by war. This is depicted in an assertion from a respondent who said "we lost all we had as a result of the war, the government promised resettlement package to help us in the return process to our villages but they never delivered those promises. When we returned home, we had nothing and we started from scratch. The good thing is that we have gone back to our homes where we can now produce our own food". The incentives to move out of camps and to re-settle into their villages before they were forced into crowded IDP camps were because the return would make agricultural labor far easier. Return to ancestral homes provide

opportunities for the household to live within their ancestral land where they can cultivate crops, rear and graze animals in the villages.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The role played by the different stakeholders in the administration and management of exhumation, repatriation, and reburial from a former IDP camp to the ancestral land are all important and need to be consolidated. It is important to overcome the inability to provide the resources necessary for the rituals in the process of exhumation, repatriation, and reburial due to the significant financial demands. The role of social institutions like the family and clan in the management of death is critical. It is on this kind of occasion that the relatives who might not have visited the sick person in the hospital or even contributed towards hospital expenses can show their solidarity with the family. Whenever the person dies or there is need for reburial or funeral rites, an invitation is extended to clan members, friends, and in-laws to make generous contributions towards giving a decent burial or reburial. The deep social nature among the Acholi is portrayed during death and burial in which both the rich and poor in the community are expected to contribute towards burials and funerals. This is what a respondent had to say about the role of the family and clan members in the administration of death, burial and circumstances that require exhumation, repatriation and reburial from former IDP camp to the ancestral land "When a person dies, traditionally it is automatic that family and clan members convene a meeting on how to raise resources and plan for the burial. People contribute in different capacities and kinds to help the family to meet funeral expenses like providing foods, beers, and local brews to those who have come to give their respect to the dead person. It is a common phenomenon among Acholi community that people contribute for the burial or reburials of a person. Mourners also have to go with something in their hand to help the family of the deceased to cater for the people who will came to remember and comfort the family that lost their member."

It is also becoming a common phenomenon where IDP landowners partner with family members as well as their clan to arrange for reburial. This is the case when landowners are rich, the landowner needs to build a house, or the land has been sold to a private developer. In a situation like this, the landowners provide items necessary for exhumation and reburial. The most common items to be provided are goats or sheep for the rituals, transportation, and feeding of those who will help in the exhumation and reburials. A case in point is when Maxwell Obita (not his actual name), who was a civil servant working in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, retired and came back to his ancestral home in Pabbo Kal after the war and displacement. He wanted to invest his retirement benefit by setting up a bar and lodging businesses on his ancestral land; unfortunately, the plot of land where he wanted to build had fourteen graves of former IDPs that he had to exhume and rebury before the construction of his house could take off. He had to buy fourteen goats for the rituals, as well as plan for transport and food for the mourners before exhumation and reburial could commence.

Several people interviewed in Pabbo highlighted the role of JICA, which provided logistical assistance for the exhumation and reburial around sub-county headquarters during the construction of administrative block and staff quarters. This was important because it illustrates how "the entanglement of the politics of reconstruction and local cosmology is perhaps most powerfully symbolized by the construction of a new sub-county hall in former Pabbo IDP camp in 2009 funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under their Reconstruction Assistance Program in Northern Uganda" (Jahn and Wilhelm 2015, 195). The portions of those who have failed to exhume and rebury their dead in their ancestral land are mostly those who are poor. Even when they want their dead relatives that were buried in a former IDP camp, they cannot afford the cost associated with exhumation and reburial. Therefore, a similar kind of funding to

facilitate exhumation and reburial will solve the problems associated with IDP burials. According to the LC III Counsellor, the Local Government has planned and gazetted a location in the Town Council for a mortuary. It is expected that the IDP burials with unknown relatives can be exhumed and reburied in the mortuary by the landowners and the road constructors opening access roads in the town Council.

In conclusion, it is difficult to draw a line between the end of the war and the recovery period from the study conducted in Pabbo Town Council. Economic activities, including trade, continued throughout the time when people were in an IDP camp; however, people who were gathered into the camp were unable to practice agriculture. The economic base of the culture was thus seriously undermined and marked the collapse of the food production base in the area. In addition, the frequent ambushes on transport vehicles meant that the people of Pabbo were isolated from economic networks. Trade in remote and inaccessible areas like Pabbo was handicapped because of poor roads, inadequate transport, and the vulnerability of vehicles to ambush. Return to ancestral land enabled the population to access their homelands and resume agriculture and trade.

Several IDP returnees have exhumed and reburied remains of those who died and were buried in Pabbo IDP camp; however, large sections of the population have not reburied the remains of their relatives buried in the former IDP camp. The failure to do so is not because former IDPs in Pabbo are not interested to rebury their dead buried in IDP camps. The only reason given is that reburial requires a lot of money that poor families who had been displaced cannot afford. This challenge has been overcome by clan members coming together to raise funds or landowners in Pabbo Town Councils financing reburials to give way for development on their properties. A

section of the community also benefited from JICA funds that financed reburial in the process of building Pabbo Sub-county Main Hall.

This, however, has not solved the problems of IDP burials. It is something that both IDP returnees, landowners and Pabbo Town Council will continue to wrestle with. Respondents suggested that reburials would address the psycho-social needs of the living relatives aid the society in reconstruction, recovery and development. The majority of the respondents acknowledged the role of cosmology and religion in processes of reconstruction in Northern Uganda. A combination of spiritual and human intervention is recommended for the healing of cases related to ‘disturbances’ brought by the IDP burials.

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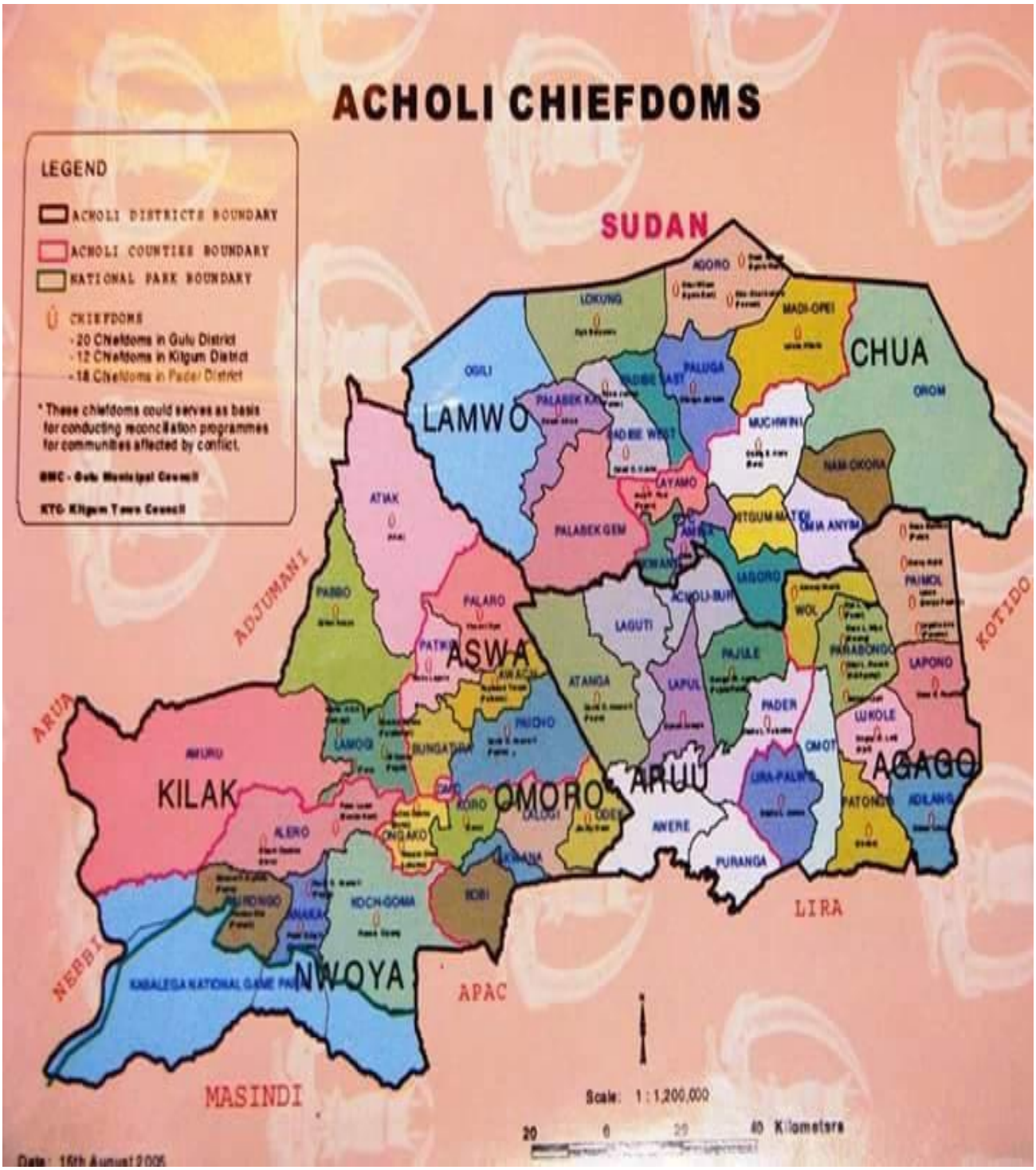
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APPENDICES

A.1. Map of Uganda showing different regions



A.2. Map of Acholi chiefdom



A.3. Semi-structured interview questions

Questions for IDP returnees

Sex, age, clan, religion, residence, and role in the community

Do you have any relative who was buried in the former IDP camp in Pabbo and has never been reburied? What caused his/her death?

Do the IDP burials burden you and in what ways? (Are you experiencing any health, psychological or spiritual problems that can be attributed to IDP burials? How are these problems addressed)?

What would be your proposal to local, traditional, religious and national leaders to solve the perceived problems associated with those who were buried in IDP camps?

Questions for landowners in Pabbo Center

How did your land come to host IDPs? (How was your land acquired to host IDPs).

What was the outcome of hosting IDPs on your land?

How many burials do you have on your land and how many are IDP burials?

Describe how IDP burials are affecting you?

Has there been IDP burial exhumation for reburials? How many and who initiated and provided the resources to facilitate them?

Is there anything the government or NGOs have done to address IDP burial problems?

What do you propose should be done to the IDP burials not yet reburied?

Key Informant Interview unstructured interview guide

What are the burial processes, procedures and associated rituals in Acholi tradition?

What happens when a family or clan member is buried outside their ancestral homes? Would that burial be considered proper or improper and what will be done to make improper burial proper?

Are IDP burials proper or improper burial? What are some of the reasons as to why IDP burials are considered improper?

Describe the religious and traditional cultural ceremonies associated with appeasing the spirit of those who were buried in an IDP.

What are the traditional rituals, processes, and requirements for reburials?

After a decade of return from IDP camp, why do you think some former IDPs have failed to conduct reburials?

What measures can be taken to address the needs of those who have been unable to conduct IDP reburials?

VITA

Wilfred was born and raised in Gulu district, Northern Uganda a region that has undergone nearly 21 years the insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony. He attended Makerere University Kampala Uganda, where he received a BA in Social Sciences majoring in Sociology and minoring in Public Administration in 2010. After his graduation, he began his journey with an internship as a mentor to students with Invisible Children Uganda and he worked with the Diocese of Northern Uganda a Faith-Based Organization in partnership with the Trust Fund for Victims rendering assistance to victim of the conflict in northern Uganda for three years.

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