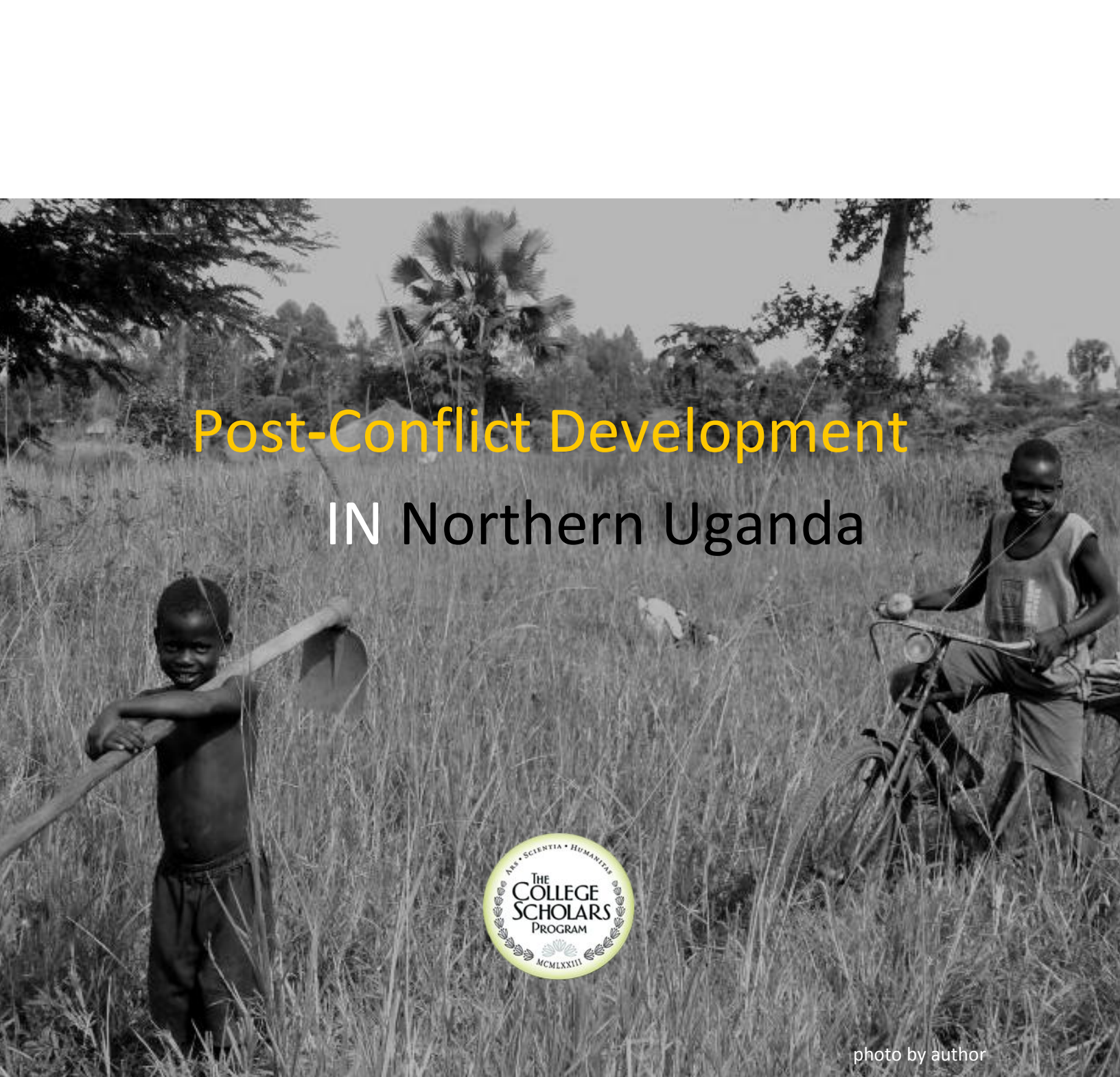




Post-Conflict Development IN Northern Uganda



photo by author

The Importance of Holistically Addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Hannah Elizabeth Durick

Hannah Elizabeth Durick

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2013

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University of Tennessee

Post-Conflict Development in Northern Uganda

The Importance of Holistically Addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence

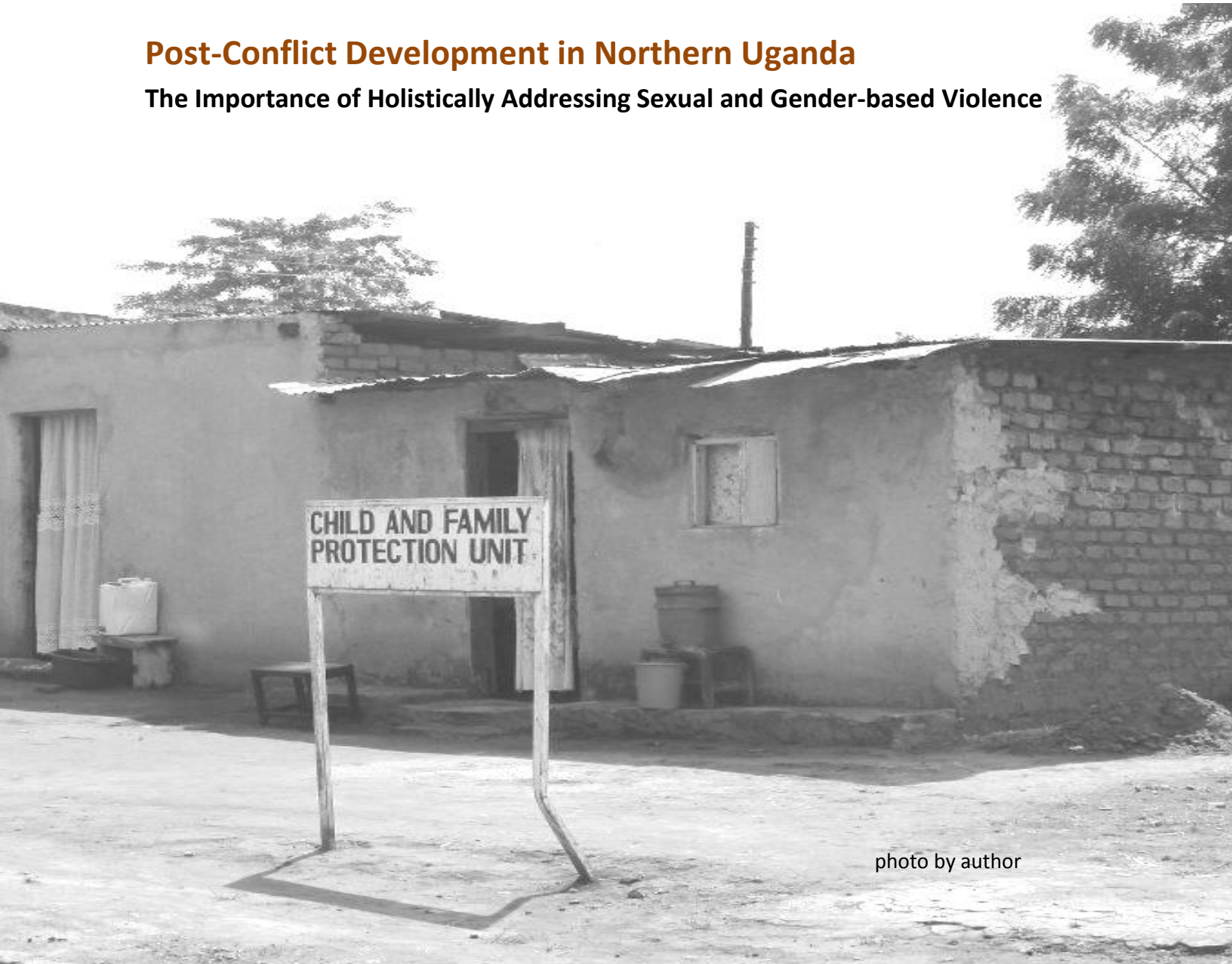


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College Scholars Thesis

Program Title: Population Displacement & Post-Conflict Development

Mentor: Dr. Tricia Redeker-Hepner

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iv. Abstract

From 1986 to 2006 daily life in northern Uganda was contextualized by war, trauma, marginalization and displacement. War-born mal-adapted behaviors compounded normalized gender inequalities, yielding the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) that afflicts the post-conflict society today. The absence of broad-based, comprehensive psychosocial support both during and after the conflict enabled violence and torture to remain entrenched in both the public and private, domestic life. Domestic violence was present before the war, often underpinned by patriarchal norms, values and social expectations, but it lacked the ubiquity of the contemporary problem. Northern Uganda's internal conflict splintered communal and familial ties and uprooted people from their land, robbing them of the foundations of their livelihood determination, support and dignity. Positive aspects of social and cultural life deteriorated, erstwhile structural inequalities and harmful behaviors were exacerbated, the latter frequently contributing to sexual and gender-based violence. Currently, sexual and gender-based violence is compromising the psychosocial and physical well-being of war-affected people and jeopardizing their prospects of achieving sustainable peacebuilding and human development. This thesis highlights the centrality of sexual and gender-based violence in perpetuating conflicts in an ostensibly "post-conflict" state. If northern Uganda is to lose the "post-conflict" prefix, sexual and gender-based violence must be addressed by prioritizing long-term investment in holistic community-based approaches.

Keywords: northern Uganda, sexual and gender-based violence, community-based approach, gender roles, Human Development, post-conflict development

v. Acknowledgements

My deepest regards go to Dr. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Head of the Department of Religious Studies and to her pupil, former College Scholar, GSSAP alumnus and UT Torch Bearer, Ms. Jayanni Webster, whose guidance and inspiration prompted my pursuance of the College Scholars Program; to Dr. Christopher Craig, former Program Director of College Scholars, who welcomed me into the program and supported my research endeavors; to Dr. Jeffrey Kovac, the current Director of College Scholars who has continued to enthusiastically support my studies; to Dr. Ronald Foresta, professor in the Department of Geography, for enhancing my understanding of the global economic frameworks underwriting approaches to international development; to my professors in the Peace Studies Program at the University of Bradford, UK, for introducing me to Peace Studies and International Development theories and practice; to my family and friends who have supported and enriched my undergraduate studies; and my utmost gratitude goes to Dr. Tricia Redeker-Hepner, my College Scholars mentor and Anthropology adviser, for the truism and amusing paradox, “not all things are possible at all times” —words spoken in an office brimming with floor to ceiling books, professional accolades, publications and tributes to her time and research abroad; thank you for helping me become a better scholar.

Dr. Rosalind
I.J. Hackett

Hannah
Durick



Jayanni
Webster

Dr. Tricia
Redeker-
Hepner

vi. Acronyms

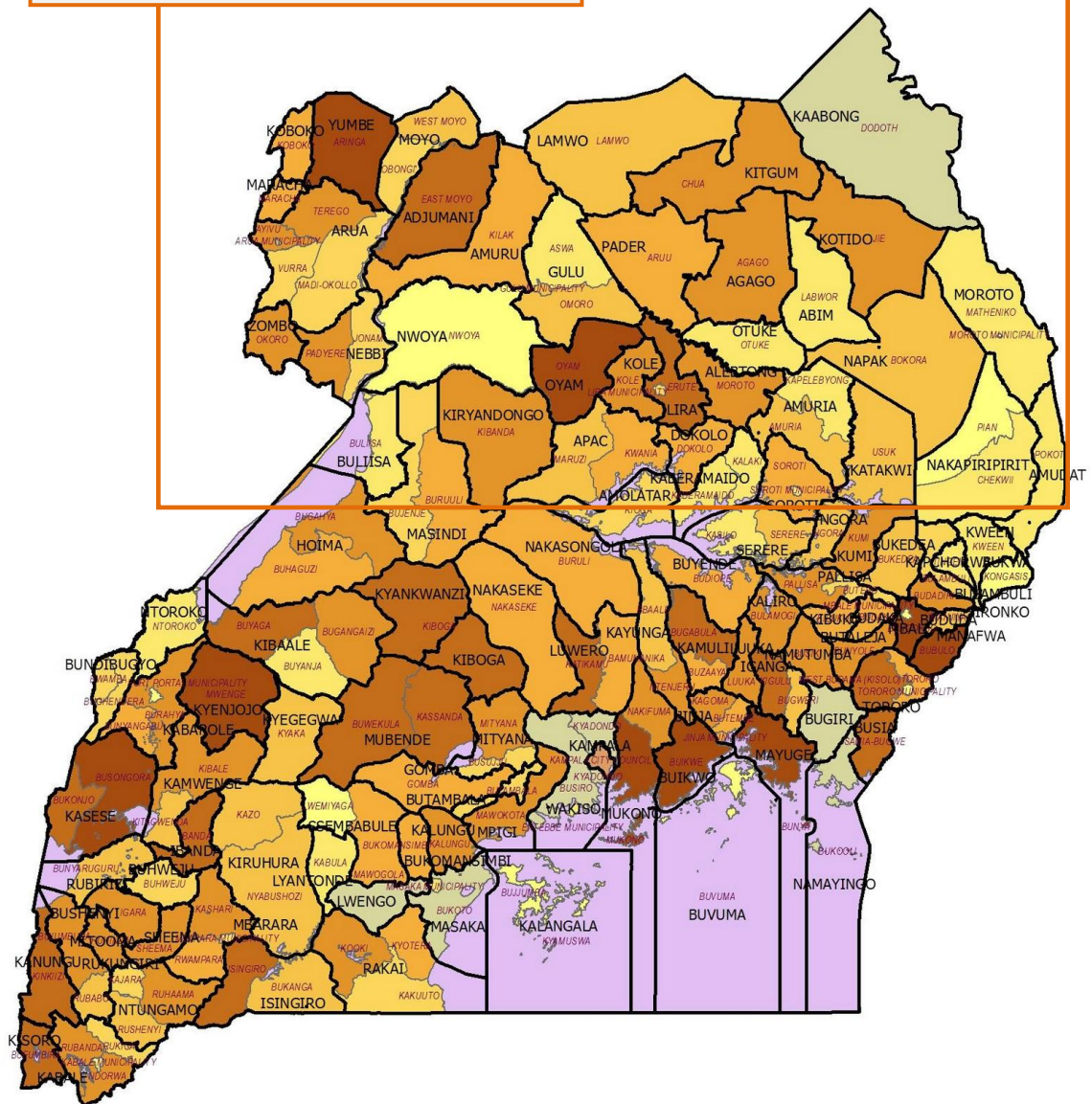
ACTV	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
CAT	UN Convention Against Torture
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRR	Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation
CSO	civil society organization
FFH	Female-Headed Households
GBV	gender-based violence
GoU	Government of Uganda
HDR	Human Development Report
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRSB	High Risk Sexual Behavior
HURIFO	Human Rights Focus
IDP	internally displaced person
IPV	intimate partner violence
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks: Humanitarian News and Analysis
Isis-WICCE	Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
KKA	Ker Kwaro Acholi
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MOLHUD	Ministry of Land and Urban Housing
NGO	non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

vii. Map of Uganda

Northern Uganda

Source:

<http://www.ugandapicks.com/2010/11/latest-map-of-uganda-with-all-the-new-districts.html> (accessed 21 Dec 2012).



1.0 Introduction

te okono pe kiputu

“The stump of a pumpkin plant should not be uprooted”
(Finnström 2008:205)

Since independence from Britain in 1962, the east African nation of Uganda has suffered the consequences of exploitative, divide-and-rule style colonialism. This approach left the nation riddled with grievances, identity crises and a multitude of different allegiances (Allen and Vlassenroot 2010). The colonial legacy fostered a society prone to provocation, evidenced by its prolonged history of insurgency (Bøås 2004). Historically, British colonialists exploited northern Ugandans’ reputation as warriors and contributed to the early stigmatization of the north as the nation’s barbaric backwaters (Allen and Vlassenroot 2010). Conversely, capital investment, economic and infrastructural development concentrated in the south, establishing its reputation as the “the Pearl of Africa” owing to its wealth of natural resources and proximity to the African Great Lakes (Ofkansky 1996:1). Uganda’s economic development trajectory follows the center-periphery model used in spatial economic geography. The central and southern regions siphoned off the north’s primary resources—land for agriculture and human capital for performing agricultural labor and soliciting for military service— and this supported economic growth in the south (Anselin and O’Loughlin 1992). This system of economic imbalance and exclusion helps to explain the situation of uneven development between north and south Uganda today. Uneven development lies at the heart of many of Uganda’s extant infrastructural disparities and its history of violence; it perpetuates economic, social and political inequalities today and helps to explain why progressive legislation adopted in Kampala fails to resonate north of the Nile.

. . .

From 1986 to 2006 the rural Acholi, Langi and Madi populations in northern Uganda suffered indiscriminately from the war crimes and human rights violations perpetrated by both the

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF). In 1996, the Government of Uganda (GoU) implemented its policy of mass internal displacement into government 'protected' camps. The UPDF afforded people less than seventy-two hours to relocate, quelling civilian protests by "bombing homesteads and villages, burning down homes and granaries, and launching a violent campaign involving arbitrary arrest, torture and murder" (Dolan 2005, cited in Branch 2008; Amnesty International 1999; ARLPI 2001; HURIFO 2002; Finnström 2008). Impetuous humanitarianism glossed over the illegality of government-sanctioned, forced displaced (Branch 2008), a situation that Dolan and Hovil (2006) liken to a Trojan horse of disease, death and discontent.¹ Upwards of two million people were internally displaced and lived within the confines of social protection until the mid-2000s, the realities of which were well summarized in the title of an article published in the *Smithsonian*: "Uganda: The Horror" (Raffaele 2005).² Internal conflict wrought the abduction of thousands of children who were forcibly trained to become child soldiers. For two decades, daily life was shaped by the prolonged or permanent disappearance of people into the bush, mass internal displacement, dispossession of land, lack of education, and a generation of youth born and raised in the camps—estranged from traditional social and cultural values, institutions and hierarchies of power (Blattmann and Annan 2008; Branch 2011; Dolan 2011; Dolan and Hovil 2006; Finnström 2008; HURIFO 2002; ICRC 2000; Muhwezi et al. 2011; OXFAM 2006; UNICEF 2005). Physical displacement was synonymous with the long-term displacement of human rights that led to the erosion of the socio-cultural, political, economic and moral fabric of society (Branch 2011).³

. . .

¹ Branch (2011) provides one of the most comprehensive and up to date analyses of the disastrously misguided humanitarian interventions and the government's possible ulterior motives in the displacement of the Acholi people.

² Informed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the UN defines 'protection' as "encompassing all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law: human rights, humanitarian and refugee" (2008).

³ Formerly abducted persons refer to their time/captivity with the LRA rebels as their time "in the bush." time in the bush.

In April 1995, a rebel group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) marched into the trading center at Atiak in Amuru District, Northern Uganda:

Hundreds of men, women, students and young children were then rounded up... [and] marched a short distance into the bush.... There, they were separated into two groups according to their sex and age.... [T]he LRA commander in charge ordered his soldiers to open fire three times on a group of about 300 civilian men and boys as women and young children witnessed the horror... then turned to the women and children and told them to applaud the LRA's work.... Before leaving, youth were selectively rounded up and forced to join the LRA to serve as the next generation of combatants and sexual slaves (JRP 2007).

In October 1996, the LRA abducted 139 school girls from St. Mary's College in Apac District (Temmerman 2001). For years to come, the night commuters—thousands of Ugandan children—would walk from their rural communities and IDP camps to Gulu Town so that they could sleep without the fear of abduction (Li 2005).

These are only two of countless atrocities that resonate with the experiences of millions of northern Ugandans and they have taken a considerable toll on society. The Acholi proverb, "The stump of a pumpkin plant should not be uprooted (*te okono pe kiputu*)" that opens this section, warns of the societal ills that arise when culture is uprooted:

Some commonly expressed aspects of the proverb are that one should not destroy Acholi traditions, and that one ought to respect the clan, relatives, ancestors, and their holy shrines.... As is the case with the roots of the pumpkin, so too the roots of culture (*tekwaro pa Acholi*) and friendship ought to be nourished. And yet the rebels, and at times also the army, seem to target precisely these traditional values (Finnström 2008:205).

During and after the war, people lamented the declining status of parents, elders and community leaders. Parents who formerly provided children with protection, stability and, sometimes, opportunities to receive an education could not do so during the war. Elders and community leaders were unable to exact justice for the mass injustice of forced displacement and the enduring situation of aid- dependency and vulnerability to human rights abuses. They were unable to protect children from being abducted during the war and abductees in the bush were long estranged from the control and leadership traditionally provided by a community leader or clan head (Finnström 2008:220).

Sexual and gender-based violence emerged as one of the most virulent consequences of the perversion of socio-cultural norms, values and institutions that occurred during war and displacement (Amnesty International 2010; Finnström 2008; De Berry 2004; Dolan and Hovil 2006; Kinyanda et al. 2010; Okello and Hovil 2007). Lack of access to comprehensive psychosocial support services both during and after the conflict enabled violence to remain entrenched in both public and private, domestic life. Today, arguments over fulfilling socially constructed gender roles (i.e.: unfinished chores, allocation of household incomes), alcohol addictions, land and property rights disputes, accusations of adultery and the stigma attached to infidelity and STD contraction are the primary culprits of domestic violence (Okello and Hovil 2007; Speizer 2010). Further to this, domestic sexual and gender-based violence often escalates to the level of torture, mirroring the sadism that pulsed throughout northern Uganda during its prolonged internal conflict.⁴ This speaks to a greater problem, that of a population at large that is not coping well with untreated, post-conflict psychosocial trauma and distress.

⁴ “Torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions— Convention Against Torture, Article 1.1

1.1 Post-conflict Violence:

The Significance of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Although the international community has recently begun to devote far more resources and attention to “women’s issues” in post-conflict reconstruction, very few have examined the broader social costs of SGBV... [I]t seems possible that other post-conflict and development efforts may fall short and peace may not last if the lingering ghosts of sexual and gender-based violence are not exorcised (Jacoby 2012:3).

The people of Northern Uganda are suffering, with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) perpetuating a system characterized by “suffering in silence” (UNICEF 2005). Studies conducted since the early 1980s have documented incidences of physical and/or psychological abuse “of women in intimate relations... in almost every culture” (Krane 1996:436). Moreover, this violent behavior commonly takes place after a period of violent conflicts (Barstow 2000; Jones 2010; Niyonizigiye 2010). In this regard, Uganda is no exception. However, nearly seven years have passed since the 2006 ceasefire and SGBV remains a disturbing component of people’s everyday lives. The legacy of internal conflict certainly contributes to the incidences of SGBV, but today’s problem has an increasingly compounded set of causal factors (Jacoby 2012; Kinyanda et al. 2010; Liebling and Baker 2010; Liebling-Kalifani et al. 2007, 2008). SGBV is integrally connected to other concerns salient to post-conflict development and peace-building, specifically the raging HIV/AIDs epidemic, on-going violence as a legacy of war trauma, the rash of land disputes and the socio-cultural barriers posed by traditional patriarchal social structures (Okello and Hovil 2007). Though an often overlooked aspect in the primarily economically-driven development framework, I argue that neither economic nor the universal tenants of human development will succeed in the north without comprehensively addressing SGBV—a problem that is ultimately highly personal and difficult to generalize.

1.2 Human Development: A Conceptual Framework

Owing to its emphasis on enhancing human quality of life and capabilities, the concept of human development is useful for theoretically framing the importance of including SGBV into development policies and planning (Mansuri and Rao 2004; Nussbaum and Glover 1995).

Human Development is defined as

a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.... Human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities such as improved health, knowledge and skills – and the use people make of their acquired capabilities - for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social, and political affairs
—Human Development Report (1990:10).

Pioneered by economists Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen, the concept of human development aims to codify human value—humans as ends in themselves, as opposed to utilitarian means to an end (HDR 1990; Sen 1999). It lays the foundations for flexible and broad-based systems for measuring the human capabilities that help determine a person's overall well-being and livelihood sustainability. To be operational, quantifiable indices are incorporated in the Human Development Index (HDI). These indices assess people's life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling and gross national income per capita (GNP). Their purpose is to capture individuals' real versus theoretical capabilities to capitalize on both innate abilities and the social, political, cultural and economic resources at their disposal in pursuance of a life "he or she has reason to value" (Sen 1999). This philosophy underpins Sen's Capability Approach (CA), wherein he identifies ten "Central Human Capabilities including Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, the Development and Expression of Senses, Imagination and Thought, Emotional Health, Practical Reason, Affiliation (both personal and political), Relationships with

Other Species and the World of Nature, Play, and Control Over One's Environment (both material and social)" to yield a creative and expansive framework for understanding what constitutes a human capability (Nussbaum 2007:21). This list encapsulates the topic of gender inequality, which Sen identifies as a significant, world-wide contributor to environments that diminish human capabilities (1999:87).

Socially and culturally sanctioned gender inequalities contribute to what the Acholi people call *piny marac*, loosely translated by anthropologist Sverker Finnström as, "living with bad surroundings" (Finnström 2008:4). But it is more than that. Gender inequalities contextualize environments of diminished capabilities, and they deprive society at large of a key driver of human development (Robeyns 2003). In Uganda, sexual and gender-based violence encapsulates a kaleidoscope of social problems (proliferation of HIV/AIDs, land disputes, psychosocial trauma and addictions) that contribute to northern Uganda's landscape of diminished capabilities.

Key players in the international development community, namely the United Nations and the World Bank, have adopted the human development framework to influence policies that promote "development with a human face" (HDR 1990; Mehrotra and Jolly 1997). The World Bank in particular has, at least discursively, reframed its traditional economic approaches to development (i.e. pure aggregates of GDP growth) to reflect the Human Development mantra that "people are the real wealth of a nation" (HDR 1990:9). Further to this, the World Bank shares Sen's acknowledgement of the counter-productivity of unaddressed gender inequalities, highlighting the promotion of gender equality as "smart economics" because it expands people's capabilities to freely engage with the market (Heath 2012)—something people in the north (men and women) have been denied since colonial times.

Focusing on people's real capabilities—what they need to pursue better, more sustainable livelihoods—helps to illuminate the inter-causal relationships between contested socio-cultural norms and values, the prevalence of SGBV and other sources of violence that challenge

sustainable peace in the north (Brocklesby and Fisher 2003; Dréze and Sen 1995; OXFAM 2007; Sen 1999; Sengendo and Sekatwa 1999; UN Women 2012). The problem, however, lies with the dearth of actors present, willing and/or capable of operationalizing a human development framework. In light of the November 2012 donor pull out, wherein the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark withdrew their financial support owing to the Government of Uganda's (GoU) corruption, the GoU is likely to remain an unreliable source of financial support for programs that provide psychosocial support services (Goldberg 2012).⁵ Consequently, SGBV must be prioritized at the grassroots level if the north is to see a reduction in domestic conflicts and sexual and gender-based violence.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are:

- 1]** To illustrate the current web of causes and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence in northern Uganda;
- 2]** To highlight the merits of community-based and community-led approaches to resolving sexual and gender-based violence through the lens of one grassroots organization, the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation (CRR) operating in Gulu, Uganda;
- 3]** To argue that long-term investment in organizations, like CRR, promoting positive socio-cultural change is needed to ensure sustainable human development;
- 4]** To illustrate the importance of bringing sexual and gender-based violence to the forefront of post-conflict development strategies.

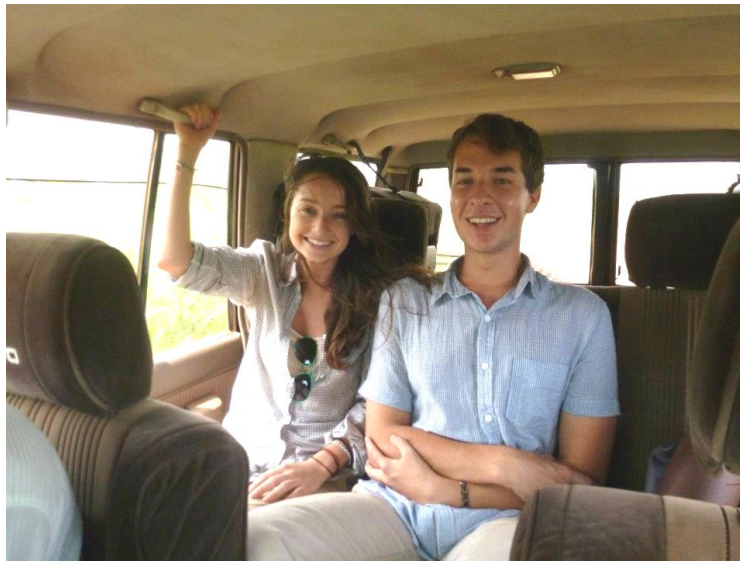
⁵ Phase I of the GoU's Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) allocated a nominal 2.7% of its aid budget to psychosocial support services—that was with significant international donor support (Bertasi 2013:52). Now that the PRDP is in Phase II and their government lacks external funding support, one can reasonably assume that little to no money will be invested in psychosocial services which include, among other things, programs that address trauma, sexual and gender-based violence and structural gender inequalities.

1.3 Research Questions

To meet these objectives, the following questions framed this study:

- 1] How is the Ugandan national legislature addressing sexual and gender-based violence? Is this approach sufficient or insufficient?
- 2] What are the key contributing factors to SGBV today?
- 3] How are organizations in northern Uganda addressing the problem of SGBV?
- 4] How is the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation addressing SGBV?
- 5] How do current, national and grassroots development approaches to sustainable peacebuilding and human development include, or fail to include, SGBV?

1.4 Methodology



[Photo: Hannah Durick and fellow CRR intern, William Shows]

This research employed qualitative methods, which are particularly useful for understanding the ways in which sexual and gender-based violence is perceived, responded to and/or

neglected in a given society (Maxwell 1996; Jocelyn et al. 2012). This study's methodology is primarily based on a review of primary and secondary literature, complemented by participant-observation field work conducted in northern Uganda July through August 2012. I conducted field work while interning at the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation (CRR), a local grassroots organization in Gulu, Uganda. The internship coincided with the University of Tennessee's Gulu Service and Study Abroad Program (GSSAP), co-led by Dr. Rosalind I.J. Hackett and Dr. Tricia Redeker- Hepner, with courses and guest lectures held at the Gulu University's Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS). Additional research material was gathered while studying at the Peace Studies department at the University of Bradford, United Kingdom, Jan.- May 2012, Sept.-Dec. 2012.

2.0 Literature Review

There is a tendency to view conflict as an event that disrupts a people, culture and place that are a-historical and a-contextual—in one word, static (Finnström 2008:21). The reality, however, is that all people, societies and cultures are dynamic (Nanda 1991). They have checkered pasts and presents, imbued with the “good” and the “bad”—notions which are themselves socially constructs molded to the socio-cultural beliefs, rules, ethics and practices of the times (Ibid). Culture is neither halted nor suspended by the onset of war; it does change, however. Pre-existing socio-cultural systems, practices, norms and beliefs may help or hinder people's ability to negotiate “bad surroundings,” and they will change depending on their real or perceived utility. In Acholiland, culture has been significantly influenced by violence, displacement, the enduring presence of international humanitarian aid networks, religious and secular change, both for better and for worse. On the one hand, it contributed to the Acholi's increased valuation of and desire for better education, sanitation and access to professional healthcare. On the other hand, it fostered a culture of dependency, rife with alcoholism, pornography addictions, high-risk sexual behavior (HRSB), and sexual and gender-based violence.

Sexual and gender-based violence affects men and women alike, but women comprise the overwhelming majority of SGBV victims/survivors (Isis-WICCE 2011). Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines SGBV as

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or physiological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life—
DEVAW, Article 1, informed by CEDAW, GR No. 19.

Although SGBV is a serious problem today, it should not be understood as a war-born phenomenon. Domestic violence was present in Uganda before the war. Intimate partner violence, in particular, was prevalent in Uganda from the 1940s-1960s, and was not uncommon for domestic violence to result in homicide (Krane 1996:441). The primary contributors of SGBV today have little changed from those cited over fifty years ago; the “motives rang[e] from sexual infidelity, financial disputes, and chronic drunkenness, to suspicion of witchcraft” (Mushanga 1983:139). What distinguishes the present context is the manner in which SGBV continues to erode the psychosocial and physical health of war-affected people, and its centrality to resolving other problems that undercut post-conflict development and peacebuilding.

The changed nature of sexual and gender-based violence is rooted in Uganda’s history of internal conflict. It is not my objective to re-trace this history, but rather pinpoint some of the origins of the mal-adapted social practices and behaviors that set the stage for the interrelated twin engines of SGBV and land disputes, which are disrupting life in Acholiland today.

2.1 Seeds, Weeds, and Social Disease

When a field intended for planting is slashed and burned and then, unexpectedly abandoned, weeds quickly creep in and sink roots. Weeds are resilient and invasive species, quick to proliferate and difficult to remove. So it is with mal-adapted social behaviors when allowed to become socio-culturally embedded and normalized. Violent conflict sowed the seeds of fear, distrust, abuse, socio-cultural insecurity, and economic uncertainty and isolation. Displacement allowed for the dissolution of traditional cultural practices and norms, creating mass social anxieties.

SGBV in northern Uganda today has two key components—one is rooted in the north's history of conflict, and the second is rooted in the contemporary, strident sanctioning of traditional gender and patriarchal power-dynamics in an a post-war society that is less community-oriented than it was before the war. Two decades of war, displacement, and differentially motivated humanitarian emergency relief aid deeply upset traditional Acholi family values, cultural frameworks for monitoring social behavior, gender roles and power relationships, claims to land and individuals' agency in pursuing economically viable livelihoods (Dolan 2011; Finnström 2008; OXFAM 2007). Further to this, the population became conditioned, if not somewhat desensitized to rape (Akumu 2005), a common characteristic of sexual violence perpetrated during all of the internal conflicts that have taken place throughout the Great Lake region of Africa (Niyonizigiye 2010). Women's bodies, via rape or defilement by the LRA and UPDF alike, were reduced to objectified weapons of war (Turshen 2000). An environment characterized by such uncertainty, hardship, abduction, displacement and normalized violence saw the gradual supplanting of community-focused motives and decisions with individually-oriented ones. After the war, this individualism serves to further alienate people from their community-oriented culture, and it sharpens the inequalities inherent in patriarchal systems that dictate people's access to resources. Although women were subjected to culturally constructed inequalities before the war, the war made these inequalities more pronounced by eroding the positive community structures that formerly protected women from being

altogether excluded from secure livelihoods (Asiimwe and Nyakoojo 2001; Knox et al. 2007; Tumushabe 2001).

Many traditional reconciliation ceremonies, as well as socio-cultural norms that protected women and children (even if they were disempowered in other ways such as the lack of control over property ownership) lost their foothold in society during the internal conflict. Weakened ties to traditional socio-cultural institutions frustrated people's ability to cope with social problems that lack correlates to the pre-war environment. One common source of mass anxiety was the displacement of adults' and elders' roles as revered and empowered members of the community. Displacement robbed adults of the ability to provide secure and stable environments for their children and children, raised in an environment of dangerous uncertainty, grew up without adult role models. Today, youth are a source of high social anxiety owing to their lack of respect for their elders (Finnström 2008:222). Other sources of anxiety include, but are not limited to the challenges of negotiating dual identities (i.e. victims-and-perpetrators, children-and-soldiers, women-as-mothers-and-soldiers) and the inversion of traditional gender roles, specifically, the emergence of female-headed households and its impacts on men's "collapsing masculinities" (Dolan 2002; ICRC 2000). As a result, the Acholi engaged alternative ways of coping in a landscape rife with anxiety, trauma and abuse. If the coping mechanism(s) that enabled people to "live with bad surroundings" were in and of themselves bad and unhealthy (i.e. exerting excessive control over household interactions, asserting masculinity via sexual harassment or abuse, becoming alcohol dependent or engaging in transactional, or, "survival sex") a new set of social problems is likely to emerge in the post-conflict environment when these adaptive strategies are no longer needed or beneficial—and this is exactly what happened. The trauma of government-induced displacement was complemented by the equally traumatic lack of government-assistance in post-conflict resettlement.

Displaced people were not bereft of traditional means of coping with adversity. Indeed, many people resorted to traditional beliefs systems to negotiate their traumatic experiences (Annan

2007; Blattmann and Annan 2006; Harlackner 2009). The conflict, however, was so traumatic on some many levels and for such a long time that former socio-cultural institutions which could not provide protection, comfort or control lost their value and there was nothing to take their place (IRIN 2005). When the camps were disbanded and the people dispersed, they took this legacy of physical and psychosocial trauma away with them (Blattman and Annan 2006; Boyden 2002; IRIN 2008; Kizza et al. 2012; Liebling-Kalifani et al. 2007, 2008; Muhwezi et al. 2011; Ovuga et al. 2008).

2.2 Roots of Psychosocial Distress: Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Trauma

Although there is heated debate regarding the cross-cultural applicability of assessing war-affected persons for signs of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), theoretical discordances run the risk of missing the broader point: trauma is trauma (Agaibi et al. 2005; Boyden and Mann 2000; Bracken 1998; Summerfield 1995).⁶ When trauma starts, critical thinking stops; normal functioning of the frontal cortex—the seat of reasoning and judgment—ceases and all cognitive processing enters fight-or-flight mode, which is very present tense and externally focused (de Zulueta 2007). This makes it difficult to visualize a future for oneself or focus on anything apart from meeting basic needs and people do what they must to cope.⁷

Like plants, people need the material staples of clean air, water, nutrients and soils for growing roots. As even the most fertile grounds cannot protect a plant from the swing of a sickle or the turnover of a plow— people are not invulnerable to threat or destruction. Of course, people are not plants. Plants, for all their persistence to live, are unconscious of their mortality; the lone flower that survives the slash and burning of its field is unaware of its solitude. They can be transplanted into healthier soils or more suitable climates and thrive. It is not so easy with people. We have an emotional complex. We feel terror, anger, grief, panic, empowerment,

⁶ For a delineation between the multivariate indicators of stress and PTSD see Wilson and Keane (2004).

⁷ Coping mechanisms are learned, adaptive, behavioral responses to stress or adversity that people rely on, consciously or not, because they enabled personal consolation and/ or survival (Oliver-Smith 1996).

excitement, loneliness and/or pain in the face of adversity, and the connections between sexual and gender-based violence, trauma, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are well-documented (ACTV 2013; Agaibi et al. 2005; Fukui 2010; IRIN 2008; Liebling-Kalifani et al. 2007, 2008; Oyuga et al. 2008). Our bodies record physical trauma and our minds record the memories of events, both of which can have enduring impacts on physical and psychosocial health. As one witness-survivor of the massacre at the Atiak trading center notes twelve years later, “all of us live as if our bodies do not have souls” (JRP 2007:1). The level of social disturbance and trauma is disconcerting because, if unaddressed, it has the potential to jeopardize the mental health of the next generation (de Zulueta 2007). The contemporary scourge of SGBV is a critical case in point because many acts of sexual and gender-based violence are founded in people’s experiences with trauma and violence.

War and displacement marked a “situation of profound social and moral distress.... [M]any child rebels were forced to kill family members” (Finnström 2008:220). A study conducted on the effects of trauma on youth in the IDP camps revealed that “80% [had] been exposed to gunfire and over half witnessed someone being killed. A large percentage has had a friend or family member abducted (67%) or killed (56%) [and] of the abducted, a small but tragic percentage (8%) reported being forced to torture or kill a friend or family [member]” (Annan 2007:110). Further to this, alarmingly high rates of SGBV in the IDP camps prompted the formation of the 2004 Gulu District Sub-Committee on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Their research revealed a high incidence rate of rape and marital rape. Child defilement, incest, sexual abuse, “survival sex” (prostitution of women and young girls) and wife battery were closely tied to male alcohol abuse and culturally ingrained ideas of male dominance and women’s submissiveness (Akumu et al. 2005). Outside of these “protection” camps, female abductees were used and abused as sex slaves and coerced into being co-wives of soldiers and military commanders (Shanahan 2008). The preponderance of male-perpetrated SGBV and high-risk sexual behavior (HRSB) resulted in social support services that predominantly assisted women, thus contributing to another source of psychosocial distress. For example, aggressively

condemning SGBV introduces more shame and guilt into an already stressed environment and this has the potential to provoke more anger and violence (Cleaver 2002).

Gender and Development (GAD) is a hot topic in international development discourses and it has spurred a lively debate on issue pertaining to the under or over-emphasis on either “men’s” or “women’s” issues.⁸ Motions to address gender inequality prompted the subfield known as Women in Development (WID) to hone in on eliminating violence and discrimination against women. Men, however, have often felt marginalized by these development projects—especially those, who have also suffered tremendously from a conflict. It is no accident that the more recent discussions about men in development yielded the acronym MAD (Cleaver 2002). In the case of Uganda, displaced women and children were identified as the most vulnerable group in the population and they received the bulk of the food aid, displacing men’s primary gender role as breadwinners and as head of the household. This bred resentment and a demoralizing loss of utility, resulting in an “identity crisis [that] manifested most destructively in the high level of alcoholism in the camps” (Okello and Hovil 2006:442). Men felt ostracized and abandoned by an aid community that seemed to disproportionately prioritize women’s issues. As one Acholi Elder in Gulu described:

Traditionally an Acholi man would be the last person who would be happy seeing his wife being abused or his daughter being abused. The way the women... [and] daughters were raped in the presence of their parents [caused] the men [to be] very very hurt.... [T]he man was useless, because the impossible could happen in his presence. So... women should not take it that men didn’t suffer, psychologically men suffered worst (Shanahan 2008:20).

⁸ There is a more recent trend in the Gender and Development debates, which may help design better human development policies in the future. It favors an epistemological shift away from reactively combating gender violence and inequality, toward servicing more proactive sustainable approaches to community development that more subtly encourage gender equality (Sweetman 2012).

The need for development programs that encourage the joint participation of men and women is widely recognized in international and local development dialogues, but there is still a sore lack of such programs on the ground (Barker et al. 2007; Brocklesby and Fisher 2003; Bujra 2002; Chant and Gutmann 2000; Cleaver 2002; Kizza et al. 2002; Odame 2002; Sweetman 2012).

2.3 Helping People Cope in Acholiland

Long praised for its development of a progressive legal and human rights framework, the Government of Uganda (GoU) remains an ostensible beacon of democratic progress in the East African community (Oola 2012; Ojambo 2012). Indeed, some of its more progressive and active legal outfits focus on the promotion and protection of human rights and, specifically, women's rights, ratifying legislation in line with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁹ This includes the Maputo Protocol (2003), the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children (2006), the Goma Declaration on Eradication of Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity (2008), the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and

Uganda has also put up a national action plan to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which specifically addresses rights of women in conflict settings. In these declarations, countries agreed to prevent violence against women, fight impunity and also provide support to survivors of sexual and gender based violence (Isis-WICCE 2011).

However, a sophisticated legal framework alone does not guarantee that a society is equipped and/or willing to recognize, respect and protect human and civil rights (Allen and Vlassenroot

⁹ Uganda ratified the convention on 22 July 1985 (UN Dept. 2009).

2010; Amnéus 2011; Branch 2011; Mwenda and Tangri 2003; Tripp 2004;). Uganda is no exception. The brilliance of Ugandan laws is dimmed by governmental corruption, failure to monitor or implement the laws ostensibly endorsed by the Government of Uganda (GoU). As Stephen Oola of the Refugee Law Project explained, Uganda is a country that excels with adopting laws and policies that have little to no purchase in people's daily lives.¹⁰ He cited the GoU's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for northern Uganda (PRDP) as one of the more blatant examples of governmental failure. Compared in its early stages to the Marshall Plan that successfully implemented reconstruction projects in Europe in the aftermath of World War II, the PRDP failed to catalyze post-conflict infrastructural development and peace-building.

The general population is largely ignorant of their legal rights and responsibilities and, to add insult to injury, laws promoting gender-sensitive policies fail to resonate with some key, patriarchal cultural institutions. In spite of being problematized by internal and external humanitarian agencies, legal framework, the body-politic of the GoU and, most importantly, by community members throughout the districts in the north, sexual and gender-based violence remains a pervasive and largely unchecked problem retarding peace and development in the north (Amnesty International 2010; Finnström 2008; Jacoby 2012; Kinyanda et al. 2011; Okello and Hovil 2007).

2.3.1 Resiliency

The resiliency of individuals, society and culture in the face of adversity became an interesting point of discussion among researchers. Blattmann and Annan (2006:1-7) published a comprehensive assessment of the state of war-affected youth in northern Uganda (SWAY) just as the internal conflict was drawing to a close. Noting that, "in spite of war, poverty, displacement, and abduction, male youth in Acholiland are strikingly resilient: only a fraction

¹⁰ This Information was delivered in a lecture by Stephen Oola for GSSAP students at the Gulu University Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies. Phase I of the PRDP (2009-2012) was crippled by governmental corruption, failed to complete projects and never met its stated objectives (Marino 2008; Ojok 2012).

experience serious emotional distress; sociability is high; and violent and aggressive behavior is minimal,” they surmised that male youth in the post-conflict setting “would benefit more from broad-based education and employment programs,” rather than from the “explicitly psychosocial ones.” This optimistic report was tempered, however, by acknowledging the need to provide people with “the most extreme levels of emotional distress or social functioning... [with] more specialized interventions, as these cases seem to need more than the wide scale community-based programming that have been taking place” (ibid). Additionally, it is extreme importance to note that resiliency among male youth was not concurrent with a reduction of SGBV in the camps; violence toward women was often construed as an important “disciplinary measure” and expression of masculinity, rather than an obvious source of psychosocial distress (14).

2.3.2 Pentecostal Christianity

Pentecostal Christianity has played an interesting role helping people to negotiate extreme adversity and uncertainty. Its popular adoption by a society possessing a kaleidoscope of self-destructive behaviors is as strange as it is logical. Christianity has remained an interesting and important component of Acholi life since its first introduction through Western colonialism.¹¹ The contemporary popularity of Pentecostal Christianity is in large part due to its service in filling the void left by the disintegration of pre-war socio-cultural and religious institutions, lending the Acholi people a new sense of community, identity, and a way to express shared anxieties and to cope with personal psychosocial distress (Annan et al. 2007; Finnström 2008; Harlackner 2009).¹² Many people concede that the adoption of a new religion or the fusion of different elements taken from Christianity and traditional Acholi beliefs has helped them negotiate the adversities of the past and the present, but the unabashed continuation of SGBV suggests it has done little to resolve SGBV. Pentecostal Christianity often attracts Acholi

¹¹ For a more thorough analysis on the confluence of Christianity with traditional cosmologies and religious beliefs. see Adyanga (2011).

¹² While I was in Gulu, celebrity-evangelist, Daniel Kolenda, held a five day Jubilee Crusade. See Hackett and Hepner (2012) for a detailed account of the event.

followers because its practices of excising evil spirits is loosely correlated to traditional beliefs in *cen*, or, spirits of the dead that haunt the living (Finnström 2008:34). Apart from providing people with a means of coping with psychosocial distress, this Christian denomination offers little in the way of resolving issues of structural violence. Other Christian dominations, however, namely the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative and Anglican Diocese of Northern Uganda, are more actively engaged in community-based approaches to SGBV resolution.¹³

2.3.3 Community-based or Participatory Approaches

“Community-based” or “participatory” approaches emerge as popular buzzwords in the literature. There is a clear emphasis on a “return to the local,” or “grassroots” approaches to resolving conflict in the pursuance of sustainable human development (Blattmann and Annan 2006; Leal 2007; Mansuri and Rao 2004). The inability of local communities to comprehensively address SGBV is addressed via the “community-based approach” to development, which hinges on soliciting local participation for projects of external design (Mansuri and Rao 2004:6). Programs specifically targeting SGBV commonly invoke a two-step process aimed at 1) “sensitizing” communities to the problem and 2) training community members to “mobilize” in the prevention of and response to SGBV (Care International 2012; Raising Voices 2003; UgandaFund 2009; UN Women 2011).

However, the broad-based education, employment and comprehensive psychosocial support programs recommended prior to the post-conflict transition never came to fruition. Consequently, the people of Acholiland substituted one kind of social torment for another. As Benjamin Alipanga stated, clinical psychologist at Gulu University's psycho-traumatology division stated, trauma and PTSD have been endemic since 2006; “[t]he magnitude of the problem is so high,” he said, “but we have only three psychiatrists serving the entire war-affected northern Uganda” (IRIN 2008). In the aftermath of what UN Humanitarian Coordinator,

¹³ The Anglican Diocese of Northern Uganda operates a program called, Rocokwo funded by Care International Uganda that specifically targets SGBV in the context of building sustainable livelihoods.

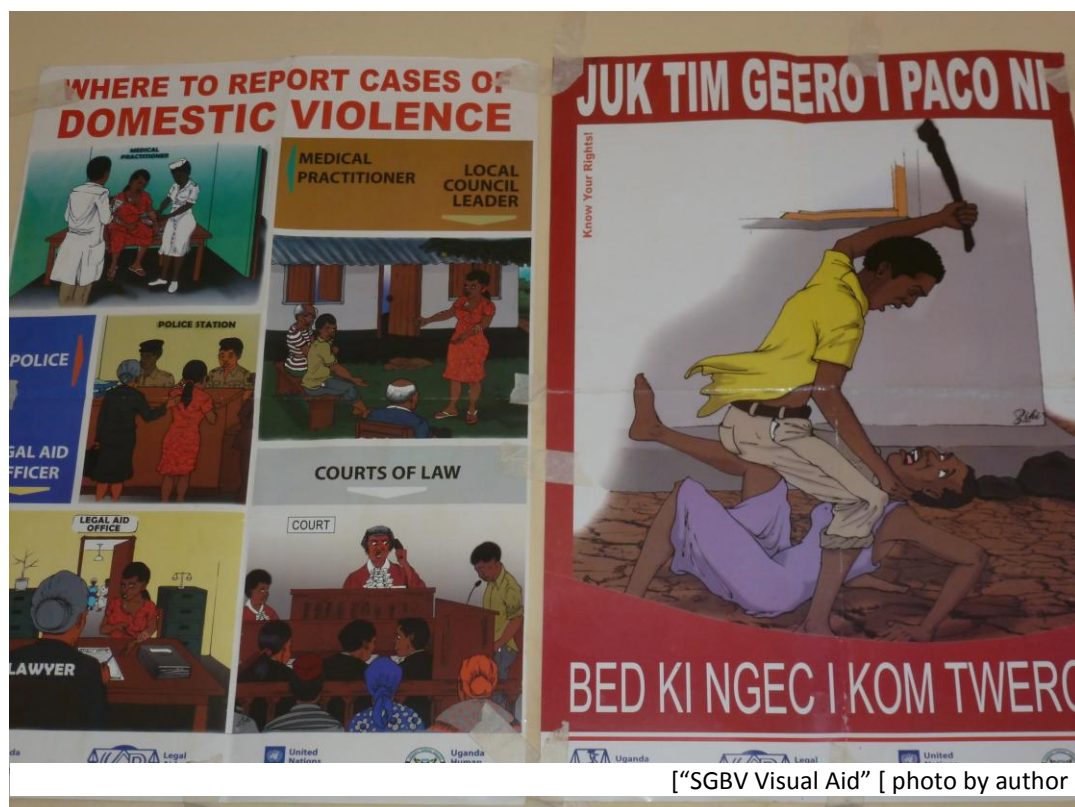
Jan Egeland, infamously identified as the “world’s worst forgotten humanitarian crisis,” (UN News 2004) northern Uganda had three trained psychiatrists at the service of some two million traumatized people. That left each psychiatrist as case load of roughly 666,666 people.

. . .

Gulu is the nation’s northern hub of commerce, bisected by the primary road to Juba, South Sudan. Gulu Town is a bustling oasis in the otherwise rural north; it is full of life, music, banks, offices for foreign money exchange (FOREX), internet cafes, hair salons, schools, churches and shops that sell everything from local honey and packaged ground nuts to pay-as-you-go-phones, top-up cards, the latest models of cheap plastic consumer items (knick-knacks, sunglasses, etc.) pirated DVDs and alcohol. It owes acknowledging that the nicest establishments—the only establishments with polished windows and fashionable architecture—are the banks, foreign owned enterprises, hotels, big name NGO headquarters and the homes of Western NGO employees or Gulu’s most successful entrepreneurs. All other shops are lined side-by side in painted cinder-block buildings, or in open-air stalls in the markets or are characteristically mobile as women come to town in the evenings with their produce and take up residence along the dust-covered streets of town where people buy and sell potatoes, cassavas, avocados, herbs, tomatoes, beans, fried ground nuts, bananas, pineapples and dried Tilapia and silver fish in the dark. Children in school uniforms walk to school in the mornings, men and women in business attire flag boda bodas to take them to work. For all intents and purposes, despite the widespread relative poverty, it looks like markets are functioning. It is as if victims and perpetrators alike, formerly abducted women and children, former sex-slaves, porters, scouts and soldiers have learned to slough off their histories of violence and re-assimilate to the tune of motors, generators and sewing machines (in town) and agricultural labor. The hum of generators in town is an omnipresent reminder of a place in transition—of a people whose peaceful human development seems a natural derivative of economic growth. When you smile, people smile back. One would not suspect that many of these people are HIV positive and/or suffering from AIDS, or that substantial portion of the children on the streets are being raised by someone other than their parents. One ignorant of the region’s history

would not suspect that the boda boda drivers were former child soldiers and rebel commanders or that many of the young men and women in the town committed and suffered war atrocities. The people are impressively resilient and eager to move forward with their lives, but a war wages on inside the homes—in people’s private lives. In some ways this is worse than the situation of internal displacement, because the problem is no longer concentrated, people are distanced from the support services that decry SGBV and a larger percentage of incidents involve intimate partner violence (IPV) as opposed to neighbors, policy and military personnel.

3.0 Triggers of Sexual and Gender-based Violence Today



["SGBV Visual Aid" [photo by author]

On 25 July 2012, the UN celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Convention Against Torture (CAT) by sponsoring a stakeholders’ dialogue in support of survivors of torture in northern Uganda. Attendees included victims/survivors of torture who provided personal testimonies, the Regional UPDF Commander, representatives from the Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights (OHCHR), the Local Council V (LCV) representative for Gulu District, the Regional District Commissioner (RDC) for Gulu District, and representatives from the UN Human Rights Council (UHRC), the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) and Human Rights Focus (HURIFO).

When the honorary speaker, the Resident Judge of Gulu, rose to address the audience, he proceeded by describing two cases over which he presided in Spring 2012, introducing an unexpected topic of discussion. Both cases involved domestic disputes that ultimately resulted in homicide. The violence that unfolded in each case qualified as torture under the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Bill, 2010, passed into law 26 April 2012 (ACTV 2012). The Resident Judge advocated strengthening the capacity of the human rights mechanisms in place, calling for increased vigilance amongst local leaders and law enforcement personnel in preventing and responding to known cases of sexual and gender-based violence. His broader point, however, was to draw the audience's attention to the link between domestic violence in the present context and torture. Further to this, he highlighted some of the current gaps in social protection (i.e. courts' inability to enforce reparations payments to survivors or provide adequate victim and witness protection). The presented were as follows:

- [1] *A husband and wife got into an argument over money. The wife wanted to negotiate with her husband a budget to curtail his expenditure of household income on alcohol and gambling. As the head of the house, the husband was enraged by his wife's insolence. In Acholiland, it is customary that the male head of the house alone decides the allocation of household income. This prompted a domestic dispute that resulted in the husband beating his wife to death. In a frenzied state, he proceeded to tie her body to the back of a boda boda [motorcycle-taxi] and dragged her through the streets. People witnessed the crime and the man willingly confessed his guilt. He was sentenced to many years in prison, but his time was significantly reduced because, the community determined, it was better that the children are raised by their father instead of becoming orphans.*

While the expunging of the man's legal sentence may be interpreted as a sign of tremendous fallibility in the legal system, it is a decision that is strongly influenced by culture and community concerns. The decision to leave the children in the custody of their father, in spite of killing their mother, is a testament to the gravity of community concerns over orphaned children. Uganda has the "highest proportion of AIDS orphans worldwide," (Save the Children 2011). According to a Congressional Research Report on the current crises in northern Uganda, there are "over 1 million orphans from the AIDS crisis," the majority of whom are in the north (Dagne 2011:16). There is high community anxiety over who will assume responsibility for taking care of orphaned children—a responsibility that may overwhelm families that are already economically strained. Orphans face diminished chances of receiving an education and, otherwise, accessing the materials they need to lead healthy lives (Oleke et al. 2007). In the aforementioned case, the community viewed the uncertainty of securing orphaned children's livelihoods as a greater concern than the danger of leaving the children in the custody of their father. This is a critical observation for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the influence of culture on judiciary decisions which aim to address the concerns of communities. Secondly, it underscores another devastating consequence of sexual and gender-based violence: orphans who face livelihood insecurity.

[2] *A man came home and accused his wife of adultery (very common thing to happen here). She denied the accusations and they started fighting. The fighting escalated with the husband setting his wife's private parts on fire before hacking her to death with a machete. The man's two children, having witnessed their father murder their mother, ran to their uncle's hut and relayed the events. In order for the courts to convict their father of murder and sentence him to life imprisonment without parole, thus leaving them orphaned, the elder child had to testify in court. He was six-years-old.*

Rather than the silencing effect I anticipated—indeed, it seems the Resident Judge anticipated—the room bubbled with men's laughter. The police, UPDF soldiers and security forces in attendance laughed as the judge described the details of the second case. The part

about setting the wife's vagina on fire was particularly funny. One man in the row in front of me leaned over to his colleague and chuckled, "And that is why you should not cheat on your husband." The Resident Judge was not laughing; the women in attendance were not laughing—all victims themselves of sexual and gender-based violence; men in attendance there to provide testimonies as survivors of torture were not laughing. The laughter that uncomfortably divided the room made clear the discrepancies between the signing of a UN Convention and its meaningful translation into social protection.

Although few perpetrators of war crimes have been brought to justice, both the LRA and the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) frequently committed war crimes against the civilian population—a fact not forgotten by people today (Branch 2011). Many survivors of torture in attendance at this event claimed they were abused, beaten, tortured, raped or otherwise violated by UPDF soldiers. Such claims may be substantiated by investigations into the nature and causes of violence within the IDP camps. For example, in a UNICEF report on sexual and gender-based violence in Pabbo Camp, Gulu District, "rape and marital rape perpetrated by UPDF, husbands and strangers" were listed, in order of frequency, as the three most commonly cited causes of sexual and gender-based violence. That said, it is difficult to accuse the government and its defense forces of crimes they committed with impunity for decades, particularly when they maintain positions of power. Although this "dialogue" provided a forum to voice such accusations, UPDF officials scoffed at their accusers, denied the accusations and belittled survivor's testimonies for being embellished or untrue. It caused a raucous in the room after which there was no more dialogue—the speakers spoke, the audience listened and the tension was palpable. The laughter of officials indicates the continuation of an atmosphere of impunity as well as a diminution of the significance of violence against women. One could reasonably conjecture that the passivity, however uncomfortable, of the audience toward the laughter of the military, police and security personnel reflects the uncomfortable tolerance of institutionalized violence toward and discrimination of women by Ugandan military, security and police.

Cultural beliefs permeate social, political and judiciary processes, which in turn inform cultural processes. Patriarchal norms and beliefs are an important constituent of culture in the north and they often serve to mute the voices of survivors of torture or SGBV. As many survivors explain, reporting an incident can be very shaming, stigmatizing and, sometimes dangerous in the absence of social protection (Krane 1996; Mushanga 1983). Moreover, the downplaying of survivors' testimonies by people (usually men) in positions of power—as occurred at the stakeholders' dialogue—is likely to intensify feelings of shame and humiliation (Krane 1996; Mushanga 1983). Owing to the dominance of patriarchal systems in the north, women and men alike know that most people in a position of political, legal or cultural power are likely to privilege the experiences and opinions of men. This poses a significant challenge to comprehensively addressing SGBV.

The following sections highlight five commonly identified and interlacing contributors of SGBV today: patriarchal ideologies, alcoholism, pornographic film watching, land disputes and HIV/AIDs.

3.1 Patriarchal Dynamics

Although the GoU is often praised for its inclusion of women in politics, governmentally endorsed concepts of women's universal political and social rights rapidly dissipates beyond the city limits of Kampala. Certainly, they have less purchase in the more adamantly patriarchal communities in the north. This is one of the hallmarks of Uganda's normalized system of gender-based violence, defined as

violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders within the context of a specific society (Bloom 2008, cited in UBOS 2012:228).

Patriarchal norms and constructed gender-roles are culturally ingrained, but they are ingrained in different ways. Some Ugandans have an educated awareness of gender inequalities that negative contextualize women's interactions with the social, cultural, economic and political spheres and they advocate for change. A good example of this the case study presented in section 4.0 on an organization launched by four, female, Ugandan lawyers. Other Ugandans, usually those belonging to the lower rungs of socio-economic status have different perceptions and opinions of constructed gender roles which may range from agreement and acceptance to disagreement and feelings of being stifled. For example, wife beating is actually condoned by many men and women alike, depending on the situation and this directly reflects culturally ingrained values and beliefs. According to Uganda's 2011 Demographic and Health survey, "about six in ten women (58 percent) believe that wife beating is justified for at least one of the [following] specified reasons" (UBOS 2012:230): "if she burns the food, if she argues with [her husband], if she goes out without telling [her husband], if she neglects the children, and if she refuses to have sexual intercourse with [her husband]" (228). Although this survey does not reflect the opinions of all Ugandans, it does highlight some extant perceptions of GBV that present some obstacles to recalibrating more equitable gender relations. Further to this, it often precludes women from seeking necessary medical attention for themselves or their children (229).

The entrenchment of patriarchal ideologies is illustrated by the official cultural institution of northern Uganda, Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA). The local newspaper *Acholi Times* ran an article accusing Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA) of hypocrisy. Ostensibly in support of the modern embrace of equal gender rights and equality, the KKA said that they attributed "the high rate of domestic violence in the region to the high level of alcohol consumption and [the] distorted dogma of women's rights empowerment being practiced" (Owich 2011). KKA's program coordinator, Santo Okema, agrees that gender inequality is in part to blame for the level of domestic violence; but then undermines this agreement by saying, the women are "equally to blame" for their involvement in and misinterpretation of "women's emancipation and women's rights... which is the main attributing factor to a lot of conflicts and break-ups in families as they no

longer give respect not only to themselves but to their husbands” (ibid). In his study on the “Political Economy of Marriage and HIV/AIDs” in Uganda, Parikh (2007:1204) interviewed one man in his late 60s who echoed the sentiments of Ker Kwaro Acholi:

Women [in the past] had good discipline. They were not behaving like today’s young wives. There was a lot of respect given to the husband. If the man said, “I want to find such a thing done [when I return],” that would be final and by the time he came back, the thing would have been done. The wife would not have any complaint or anything to add. Marriage then was good, although there was a lot of wife beating.

3.2 Alcoholism: *Waragi*— War Gin

Alcoholism persists as a virulent coping mechanism that is on the rise among former LRA abductees and (IDPs), many of whom are attempting to suppress memories of war-induced trauma (IRIN 2008). Alcohol is consistently cited as a leading cause of SGBV for three primary reasons: 1] it is a depressant, 2] it reduces individual inhibitions and the ability to think rationally, often resulting in violent or reckless behavior and 3] it reduces a person’s functional capacity to work and provide for the family. In the latter case, men’s expenditures on alcohol drain families’ already nominal financial coffers, adding another layer of shame for men who, once again, fall short of their socially prescribed expectations as “managers of the land” and providers for the family (Adoko 2012; Asiimwe and Nyakoojo 2001; Obbo 1989; Tripp 2004). As a depressant, alcohol intensifies people’s feelings depression, anxiety, fear and hopelessness. Since 2006 alcohol abuse has been implicated in an estimated “68% of [male] suicides in northern Uganda” (Kizza et al. 2012). Although there are no official statistics, “unemployment or underemployment in the north it is said to be extremely high, even by Ugandan standards—which has a youth unemployment rate nationally of over eighty percent!” (Branch 2012:22). Alcoholism among the unemployed male youth is particularly disturbing. They can be seen lounging around Gulu Town, sitting on street corners in groups drinking the local brew, *waragi*, known as “War Gin,” popular because it is cheap and always available (Roberts et al. 2011).

The other, perhaps more dire implication of alcohol addiction and/or dependence, is its role in enabling people to mentally disengage from other people and, more generally, become desensitized to the world around them.

3.3 Pornography: Dehumanization, Desensitization, and Re-Victimization

Apart from the physical and psychological injuries sustained by individuals following the initial traumatic experience, the society at large suffers from another type of trauma—that of disassociation. Faced with marginalization, cultural and moral fragmentation, estrangement from family and community and diminished agency, entrapped in an environment of war, trauma and disease, people turned to substance abuse as a form of escapism. Alcohol afforded men in the IDP camps a way to pass the time and temporarily disassociate from “the horror,” but alcohol was not the only form of escapism. Perhaps more disturbingly has been the onset of pornography. Pornography, introduced into the IDP camps by smugglers and illicit traders (UNICEF 2005) is now a problem amongst men, particularly in town. Like alcoholism, watching pornographic films is an activity that puts people in a dissociative state. In the post-conflict context of pervasive sexual and gender-based violence, pornography addiction is the ultimate home-wrecker because it not only depersonalizes, but condones the violent objectification of women. As Catherine MacKinnon asserts in the 1989 article, “Sexuality, pornography and method: Pleasure under Patriarchy,” published in *Ethics*:

Pornography is a means through which sexuality is socially constructed, a site of construction, a domain of exercise. It constructs women as things for sexual use and constructs its consumers to desperately want women to desperately want possession and cruelty and dehumanization... from pornography one learns that forcible violation of women is the essence of sex (327-29).

The combination of some of the lowest forms of pornography (i.e. filmed rapes and other forms of sexual torture) with the men’s post-war psychosocial distress is a recipe for domestic

violence and SGBV. Taking it one step further, as the aforementioned cases presented by the Resident Judge of Gulu, it is recipe for homicide. Speaking to its ubiquity amongst men in town, James Oballim Ocaya, the Project Manager at the Diocese of Northern Uganda (DNU) and former Program Officer and Coordinator of the Lira Concerned Parents Association (CPA) explains “it is destroying moral values and contributing to violence in the homes”(Ocaya 2013).¹⁴

3.4 Land Disputes

Men’s physical displacement corresponded with their psychological displacement from their sense of masculinity (Finnström 2008; Oxfam 2007). Apart from losing the mainstay of rural Acholi livelihood, the inability to access and exert control over the land left the Acholi people bereft of their primary way of marking a boy’s transition into manhood, and thus publically acknowledging his respectability as a family provider (IRIN 2007:73). Moreover, the emergence of female-headed households inverted traditional gender roles, further contributing to men’s identity crisis (Dolan 2002; Kizza et al. 2012). Following the disbanding of the IDP camps, people began struggling to reclaim their land and secure land titles—a problem compounded by people’s lack of land titles prior to displacement and the GoU’s allocation of land to private investors during people’s displacement (IRIN 2012). Disagreements over ancestral land borders, complicated by the reduction in land availability due to land grabbing by foreign investors and a swelling population is instigating cut-throat inter- and intra-community and family land disputes. Before the war, women’s inability to own or independently manage property did not result in their exclusion from their sole means of livelihood; families and communities ensured the welfare of women and children in the event of the death of or separation from a spouse. Today, disputes over land, particularly amongst men looking to reclaim their traditional source of identity, respect and control, are more selfishly motivated and frequently result in women’s displacement from the land. Land is difficult to secure and there is less of it, hence the income-generating potential of the land itself is reduced. Men in positions of power and/ or men

¹⁴ Ocaya, James Oballim, email correspondence to Durick, Hannah, April 8, 2013.

looking for a way to relieve themselves of unwanted family members (usually women) appeal to former cultural rules which prevent women from owning land. Men's successful use of cultural practices outside of their traditional, community-based contexts as leverage for dispossessing women of land, speaks to a larger problem of structural inequalities and engendered power differentials. Widows, women stigmatized by rape, HIV or other ailments precluding them from agricultural labor, women who bore children to rebels and/or women who do not defer household decision-making to their male counterparts are all vulnerable to being evicted from their homes and their land. Apart from the obvious inclusion of domestic violence in land disputes, failure to protect women's property rights forces women to seek alternative forms of livelihood sustainability. Often times, they must resort to prostitution or agree to become co-wives (sexual partners) of wealthy men. Both of these alternatives have increasing women's risk of becoming victims of SGBV or contracting HIV.

3.5 Habitat for HIV/AIDs: Co-habitation and Infidelity

Increasingly, governmental and humanitarian networks are recognizing the cardinal role that the pandemic of violence against women (VAW) is playing in perpetuating the spread of HIV in post-conflict societies. As the UN's Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women highlights, the "twin pandemics of violence against women (VAW) and HIV/AIDs are each rooted in gender discrimination, women's subordination, disregard for women's human rights, and the power imbalances between women and men that exist in societies all over the world" (UN Women 2012:1). Internal conflict reignited Uganda's HIV/AIDs epidemic and the prevalence of SGBV is fanning the flames. The nature of SGBV slates the demographics of affected populations toward women. According to the WHO (2012:1-9), Ugandan women who are HIV-positive are three times as likely to have experienced SGBV and, specifically, intimate partner violence (IPV); young HIV-positive women are ten times as likely. Completing the cycle, women who are HIV-positive are highly vulnerable to more SGBV and IPV. It matters not the circumstances of the contraction of HIV—whether due to rape, husband's infidelity or personal infidelity, it carries the same social stigma (Dagne 2011)

NGOs operating in the IDP camps successfully spread awareness about HIV/AIDs (Blattmann and Annan 2006). Consequently, men and women share the same fears of contracting HIV, usually associated with their partner's infidelity. VAW and SGBV are also attributed to wives' reluctance to engage in sexual activities owing to suspicions of their partner's infidelity (Koenig et al. 2003; Okello and Hovil 2006). Significant problems, however, lie in the cultural double standards held to men and women regarding issues of infidelity. What is an unacceptable behavior for women—grounds upon which women may be beaten, abused and/or abandoned by their husbands—is perceived as a birthright, should-be-tolerated-by-all behavior for men. As a representative of the KKA expressed

[W]omen of these days are so jealous about sharing men compared to the olden days where a man could have over 5 women in the same homestead and yet only experience joy in the home without any unnecessary conflicts because women are naturally more than men in this world (Owich 2011).

In the context of a raging HIV/AIDs epidemic, this is a frightening double-standard. Decades of HIV/AIDs awareness campaigning aimed at de-stigmatizing people with HIV, served to increase the stigma attached to high-risk sexual behavior and infidelity—attributing people's contraction of HIV to personal recklessness and irresponsibility—without altering many men's attitudes toward polygamy (Muhwezi et al. 2008). Compounding this problem is the Christian condemnation of polygamy and adultery, which publically shames an activity that many men feel is culturally justified. As a result, prevention campaigns that discouraged and shamed partner infidelity had the ironic, adverse affect of driving the HRSB linked to HIV/AIDS further underground (Parikh 2007:1205). Fear of social stigma discourages people's pursuit of HIV testing, treatment and disclosure of their condition to their partners. This is particularly the case for women who face further abuse, dispossession of land or property and/or disownment by their families if discovered to be HIV-positive (Sengendo and Sekatawa 1999; Tripp 2004; Tumushabe 2001; UN Women 2012).

Recently, some progress has been made on the national front to tackle SGBV in conjunction with other mass-scale social problems, namely the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Recently, Uganda's Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) "allocated 250 million shillings (about US\$92,700) to the 2012-2013 budget for the Uganda Police Force to implement... a new initiative in which qualified village nurses and clinical officers provide free medical examinations and counseling services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)," without which SGBV survivors cannot prove their case in court (IRIN 2012). Additionally, this funding is supposed to help supplement the costs of post-mortem medical examinations (ibid). This is a step in the right direction, but one that must be wedded to more, broad-based and holistically-oriented approaches to community development.

3.6 Social Suffering Today

Many of the women subjected to SGBV during the war and displacement who did not sustain any gynecological damage complain of pelvic or lower abdominal pain. This is referred to as "Somatoform Disorder, the basis of which is psychological" (Isis-WICCE 2001:29). However, an equally substantial proportion of women's complaints of pelvic or lower abdominal pain are not purely psychosomatic symptoms of trauma. Case in point, in a 2010 medical intervention co-led by Lira Women Peace Initiative (LIWEPI) and Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), Isis-WICCE female survivors of SGBV in Lira District were medically examined and those in critical condition received reconstructive surgeries. Three commonly described symptoms were pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), abnormal vaginal discharge and chronic pelvic pain, all attributable to SGBV and lack of subsequent medical care during war and displacement (Isis-WICCE 2011:7). Out of the 185 women examined in this particular intervention, 45 women needed reconstructive surgery. One woman had been suffering severe genital prolapse (her uterus hung outside of her vagina) since a mass rape incident that occurred when she was abducted by LRA rebels—over five years prior to receiving treatment. Roughly 25% of a small sample size of women were suffering horrifically from former SGBV-

induced physical trauma. Given the known pervasiveness of SGBV during the war and the dearth of adequate medical services, it can be reasonably deduced that the number of women suffering similar chronic pain and infections in the north is extremely high. Sadly, such physical trauma and pains are contributing to SGBV. Many women “linked the difficulty to have pain-free sex to the rising domestic wrangles... [and] domestic violence as their husbands do not understand their pains” (Ibid). Additionally, chronic pains preclude women from performing manual agricultural labor, which, as previously observed, is a debilitating setback for women whose socially constructed obligations involve doing 80% of agricultural labor (ibid).

The next section details my experiences as an intern with the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation (CRR) located in Gulu. My case study revealed some of the finer details contributing to the disjointed and ineffectual approaches to resolving SGBV in the north.

4.0 Case Study: The Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation



Sverker Finnström speculates that, “[M]ore than the threat to their physical bodies, perhaps, life in terror and encampment has threatened their humanity, which ultimately has been reduced to bare life” (Finnström 2008:165). To recolor the pallor and crudeness of debased ‘bare-life’—this is where the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation is trying to step in.

The Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation is a small, single story building in a small, well-kept gated compound on a street that intersects the main market in Gulu. The building is divided into six main rooms. To the left of reception are the offices of the program director, financial manager and psychosocial support team. To the right is the legal aid office. The fifteen feet or so that separates the offices of the legal aid team and the psychosocial team serve as a reminder that these issues cannot be disentangled from one another.

Pioneered by four female lawyers, CRR is an exemplar of the type of grassroots initiatives that are needed in the north. Although they receive their funding from Uganda Fund, a US public charity and registered NGO in Uganda, the CRR’s staff—legal aid officers, psychosocial counselors, project manager, secretaries, and accountant and student interns—are all Ugandan.¹⁵ CRR provides legal and psychosocial counsel for people struggling with land disputes, sexual and/or gender-based violence and has a professional legal and psychosocial team whose primary services involve going out to the field to interface with communities. Although the provision of counseling services, psychosocial health evaluations and the facilitation of victims’ access to medical treatment play a crucial role in their operations, their ultimate goal is for communities to usurp CRR’s operations and, in time, render them obsolete.

¹⁵ The majority of the staff was either from and/or educated in Kampala (most of them are graduates of Makerere University) which is both good and bad. Their education and training is well-suited for the job but multiple, highly qualified staff members were not fully committed to living and working in the north. This is particularly the case for staff who are from the south and lack strong personal ties to the northern conflict. There remains socio-cultural, political and linguistic disunity between north and south Uganda, so the number of people that travel between the two is still low. Bearing this in mind, several of the staff members from Kampala appeared to view their position at CRR as a temporary stepping stone to landing a better job back home. In the short time that I was there, two employees left on account of better job offers in Kampala.

The internship afforded the opportunity to travel with CRR staff to the surrounding northern districts and observe community-based SGBV trainings and sensitization. The following sections stress the connections between SGBV and land disputes, and detail my observations of the SGBV trainings.

4.1 The Nexus between Land Disputes and SGBV

All relationships are shaped by people's access to the material world around them. Competition over material resources is one of the prevailing reasons why societies clash. Both SGBV and land disputes curtail people's access to the resources they need to survive. When the internal displacement camps were disbanded, people were told to return to "their homes" without much thought given to the newfound ambiguity of what "home" is or means to people now. War-induced rupturing of traditional values of collective ownership, communally shared land, resources and obligations for caring for vulnerable members within the community, resulted in today's problematic shift toward individualism, greed and land wrangles. As previously mentioned (section 3.4 Land Disputes), this is a major contributor to domestic violence and the denial of women's access to land and other material resources. Although women play a disproportionately large role in performing agricultural labor—women do between 80% and 90% of all labor for subsistence farming, over 70% of which involves the production of cash crops (Tripp 2004)—property ownership, rights to land tenure, household decision-making and, specifically, the allocation and expenditure of household income remains in the male domain. Women lack control over household incomes that they alone have often earned, frequently sparking domestic conflicts between husbands and wives over the former's superfluous expenditures on alcohol and gambling habits that whittle away households' financial resources.

The primary objective of the legal aid team is to facilitate communities' peaceful resolution over land border disputes without the assistance of the courts and, post resolution, to provide communities with written documentation of motions of reconciliation and certificates of land ownership. While certificates are not the same as legal land titles, it does help to legitimize and

protect people's land. In light of the court's (located in Gulu District) three to five year backlog of cases awaiting a court hearing, CRR's expertise in facilitating non-legal, community-based mediations and resolutions is tremendously important. Moreover, given the nexus between land wrangles and domestic violence, resolving land disputes soon than later may be an important preventative step in reducing incidences of SGBV.

4.2 SGBV Trainings

CRR works with local leaders to sensitize communities to the issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in Gulu, Nwoya, Amuru, Oyam and Otuke Districts. In a pilot project supported by Uganda Fund, CRR hosted SGBV training sessions from 26 June 2012 to 23 July 2012 in all five districts. These sessions strived to help local leaders to identify community specific causes of SGBV, its adverse effects on individual, family and community life, and arrive at a consensus for how communities may partner with CRR to reduce the prevalence of SGBV. They contain pre and post-training assessment to identify how participants define SGBV and what they think are the primary causes and consequences of SGBV in their communities.



[SGBV Training, Nwoya District, photo by author]

Although SGBV remains grossly under-reported for fear of social exclusion, there is a tendency amongst the minority who do seek counsel to pursue legal options (Raising Voices 2003; UgandaFund 2009). Owing to the aforementioned backlog of court cases, CRR focuses on helping communities to develop the tools they need to prevent and address SGBV via their pre- and post-training sessions. The pre-training sessions revealed that most community members have only a cursory understanding of sexual and gender-based violence, which they defined as a fight between a husband and wife or a misunderstanding between a man and a woman. Interestingly, there was not always a clear link between hardened gender roles and SGBV. “Digging,” “fetching water,” “cooking,” “weeding,” “planting,” “harvesting,” and “child rearing” were identified as distinctly female responsibilities. Identified roles for men were considerably shorter: “land owning,” “house building,” and “decision making,” only one of which is labor intensive.

After engaging community members in listing gender roles, CRR begins unpacking the definition of SGBV and expands upon the list of drivers of SGBV already identified by members of the communities. Once a CRR psychosocial counselor has reviewed the drivers of SGBV, sessions are further broken down to address the following five objectives:

- I. Discuss Concepts of SGBV, defining and explaining SGBV, SV, GBV, VAW, Gender, Sex, and Power
- II. Determine the victims/ survivors and perpetrators of SGBV and the circumstances that predispose them as such
- III. Identify resources for SGBV management at the community, including key persons responsible for identifying, preventing and addressing SGBV
- IV. Discuss the Basic Guiding principles in working with SGBV Survivors, outlining the respect, confidentiality and safety that should be afforded to survivors
- V. Interpret the relevant laws with regard to SGBV [law incorporated into The Constitution, The Penal Code Act, Domestic Violence Act, The Female Genital Mutilation Act and the Trafficking of Persons Act]

4.3 A Word From the Districts

Each of the SGBV trainings were conducted with local community leaders and representatives from villages throughout the district. The hope is that they will return to their villages and relay the information that they learn from the CRR-hosted SGBV trainings. Each training session concluded with an opportunity for representatives to express their suggestions for tackling SGBV in their respective villages. Although similar, the following suggestions presented by representatives from Oyam, Otuke, Lamogi and Gulu District highlight the variability in the solutions people deem most important.

Community representatives throughout Oyam District advised that the community should be sensitized to the harmful effects of SGBV and steps should be taken to ensure respect for individual rights, the responsible use of power, the provision of good education and the creation of by-laws to control drug use and abuse by members of the community. Excessive alcoholism was a serious concern in every district and all suggested the creation of by-laws to limit alcohol consumption. Representatives from Oyam requested accountable compensation for victims, strengthening livelihood and poverty-reduction strategies, and they would like to see community service work attached to penal sentences for perpetrators.

Representatives from Otuke District added three new causes of SGBV to the list: cultural differences, inheriting women, and negative peer pressure. Participants from Lamogi sub-county introduced a host of other consequences: prostitution, the spread of STDs, turning to witchcraft, the loss of hope among youth and adults, continuing a cycle of revenge, famine due to low agricultural production and early marriage. In addition to the community resources that should help to responsibly manage SGBV (i.e.: Police, Local Council Leaders, traditional leaders, community members, relatives, church leaders, health workers, human rights activists and other civil society organizations) representatives from Oyam and Otuke shared in their desire for the creation of youth centers. Participants from Gulu added individualism and stigmatization of both perpetrators and victims to the list. The presence of SGBV serves to

deepen the fissures in social relationships, trust and friendship, and creates anew a marginalized sector of perpetrators and victims within each community. Representatives from Gulu also recommended that CRR extend SGBV education to radio talk shows, provide financial support for SGBV community volunteers (help pay for transportation costs), dispense T-shirts and identity cards to raise awareness, provide follow-up support for survivors, increase coordination with the police and have a trained counselor working in each community.

Representatives from all five districts visited requested a continuing partnership with CRR, often in the form of establishing more immediate SGBV services (i.e.: psychosocial counselors and CRR representatives) at the community level to more quickly respond to cases and efficiently liaison with the CRR office in Gulu. They further requested that CRR continue to offer training sessions throughout the year to refresh leaders on their role in the prevention and intervention of cases of SGBV and to underscore the resources at their disposal should a victim need or request medical, psychosocial or legal support.



[Above: community representatives from Nwoya District brainstorming unique, community-specific approaches to SGBV response and prevention, photos by author]

The wide-range of suggestions for resolving SGBV—the result of brainstorming activities among male and female community representatives— optimistically demonstrates

communities' potential to initiate the social and cultural changes needed for reducing the practices and behaviors that result in sexual and gender-based violence. As the Ugandan staff at CRR as well as the men and women representatives present at the SGBV trainings show, clearly SGBV is not a unanimously supported or accepted part of social and cultural life. Its pervasiveness, however, does substantiate the need for more comprehensive programs that lend community members, local leaders and homegrown community-centered organizations like CRR the tools they need for realizing the positive changes that they envision. It is also important to note CRR's emphasis on engaging men and women in the SGBV training and sensitization activities. Staff at CRR said it was often quite helpful when men co-conducted the trainings with the female counselors because it both set a good example for communities and, owing to the contested power dynamics between men and women, it elicits a more positive response from male community leaders.

One of the primary, theoretical advantages of CRR is its aim to afford clients free access to legal aid and psychosocial counseling. Free services are not coupled with assistance in covering transportation, court and medical costs, which often undermines the utility of CRR as a community resource. Like so many organizations in the north CRR has a sound approach to resolving community violence and disputes, but it suffers from an immobilizing lack of infrastructural capacity to implement them. This is what MIT Economist and author of *Poor Economics* calls "last mile problems" (Duflo 2010).¹⁶ Last mile problems are problems that arise owing to simple, often unaccounted for hindrances in communities' ability to access a community resource or, conversely, basic mitigating factors that diminish organizations' or projects' extension of the resources they have to offer. CRR is an exemplar of a last mile problem.

¹⁶ Duflo, Esther. "Social Experiments to Fight Poverty." (Speech, February 2010), TedTalks, http://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty.html.

4.4 Last Mile Problems

On their website, UgandaFund indicates that “the Ugandan Government’s Peace Recovery and Development Program promises hope for the future, but promises alone are not enough. The need for reconciliation runs deep and the groundswell of grassroots action must be supported with organized, strategic assistance that builds capacity, leverages resources and nurtures human capital” (2012). According to the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “The emphasis on standards and codes of conduct [can be] limiting... [and] accountability taken too literally or too far represents a strategy for humanitarian containment, not humanitarian action” (Stein 2008:138). As several CRR staff members begrudged, “it is difficult to plan for the future when your organization only operates from one quarter to the next with budgets only for short-term pilot projects.” Providing legal aid, mediation and counseling services that are consequential requires long-term consistency and, currently there is little to bridge the gap between long-term infrastructural maintenance and the funding horizons dictated by foreign donors. This makes most human development strategies difficult to operationalize, and CRR is no exception.

The effectiveness and reach of a grassroots organization is weighed by two things: a) funding and b) sustainability. Providing legal aid, mediation and counseling services that are of sustainable consequence requires long-term consistency and, currently there is little to bridge the gap between long-term infrastructural maintenance and external timelines dictated by foreign donors. This makes CRR’s objectives very difficult to operationalize.

CRR engaged in community sensitizations and trainings on SGBV in the Gulu, Nwoya, Amuru, Oyam and Otuke Districts. Having participated in one of these trainings, I listened as local leaders requested more CRR-led community sensitizations. The psychosocial team nodded and wrote down their requests, but there is a good chance that these requests will go unanswered as the project funding for this exercise has terminated and the staff have limited ability to

determine which projects Uganda Fund is or is not willing to continue funding. To this end, I was asked to put together a SGBV report to send to Uganda Fund, highlighting the importance of integrating SGBV trainings as one of CRR's primary services. If communities are not continuously trained on how to address and where to defer cases of sexual and gender-based violence, then CRR loses a large portion of its utility as a community resource.

One of the primary aims of CRR is to sensitize communities to gender rights and help them to create mental maps that link gender violence and inequality to adverse socio-economic functionality. This requires time which is undercut by organizational demands to speed up their delivery of service (i.e. cut down the time needed to train community members in SGBV prevention). Adding insult to injury, the number of site visits necessary to do their job exceeds the organization's fuel budget. As a result, people lounge around the office and take longer lunch breaks. Staff meetings revolve around how much money is appropriate to spend on a goat for an end-of-quarter BBQ rather than on long-term project development schemes. The phone rings. A woman in another district reports a case of child rape and needs help. She is told to bring the child to CRR's office in Gulu where she will receive free support: "Yes, we have free counseling and information for you..." "Yes, we have a legal team at the office every day." "Yes, we have, we have." The caller cannot afford the transportation to come to Gulu and the costs of making a trip out to this distant community for only one case outweighs the benefits. They hang up the phone. CRR does a commendable job in settling land disputes and training communities on how to respond to sexual and gender based violence, but its claim as a "mobile legal and psychosocial aid unit" is misleading as its actual organizational capacities are undercut by insufficient project funding. The organization maintains its positive web image and somewhere out there its sponsor has an impressive humanitarian resume, meanwhile someone somewhere else returns to suffering in silence. CRR has a building, an educated legal aid and psychosocial support team, and an expansive case load, but it lacks the capacity to deliver. On numerous occasions, the program director would appeal to his staff for "success stories." The need for "success stories" was frequently circulated through the office because their sponsor, UgandaFund needed to justify current and future expenditures. A success story, however, boils

down to an attractive photograph with a “feel good” paragraph explanation lodged somewhere in the organization’s annual report; it fails to resonate with anyone apart from donors who are thousands of miles of land and ocean away. What CRR needs is more vehicles, an element of permanence, more district offices and an expansive budget for gasoline.

Ironically, one of CRR’s greatest assets—the provision of free legal and psychosocial support services—is also its greatest vulnerability. CRR provides social welfare services that do not result in a marketable or profitable product. Although, statistically the economy is growing, albeit marginally, the majority of Ugandans continue living on less than \$1 a day. The people do have the luxury of affording legal representation or counseling services. As it stands, however, neither does CRR. This chasm between the services CRR claims to provide (i.e.: mobile legal and psychosocial clinics) and the services it actually delivers was well articulated during one of our Monday staff meetings. One of the social workers with whom I had attended an SGBV training session in Nwoya District stated that CRR received a call from a woman reporting a case of child defilement/rape. As CRR only has one vehicle, it cannot afford to “waste” an entire day driving out to another district to provide counsel for a rape case. The woman would have to bring the child to CRR’s office in Gulu. The woman could not afford the transportation to do so and that was the end of the conversation. Apparently, this is a frequent, yet unresolved dilemma. For an organization striving to reach out to people grappling with trauma, the fact that a people are calling in cases speaks positively of CRR’s public awareness campaign as well as people’s level of trust in deferring their cases to CRR. That said, it is arguably worse to give the illusion of providing support than to provide no support at all. To receive a call, be it someone reporting a rape or assault or battery of a spouse, and then not follow through with providing support, not only reflects poorly upon the organization, but greatly reduces the likelihood that the victim, witness as well as other members of his or her community will make the effort to call again.

Even when CRR is able to go out to the field, there are other, basic logistical challenges and serious problems with efficiency. Land disputes are settled outside, by physically walking the borders, making house visits, planting trees or sitting with people outside at the site in

question. This cannot be done in the rain—a problem that is exacerbated by a six-month rainy season that threatens to rain in the late afternoons. The roads are poor and pocked with potholes, which makes traveling to some of the districts on a good day, an all-day fieldtrip. On a rainy day, the vehicle could get stuck or simply drain the fuel fund for no reason. Case in point, one day two of the paralegals drove two hours out to a site to have one sheet of paper signed by a client. The ground was soft from a recent rain and the woman they were trying to reach lived, quite literally, on top of a swamp. They could see her hut, but could not drive to it, so they turned around and drove two hours back.

4.5 The Trouble with Nine-to-Five

At one of our morning staff meetings, the program director of CRR admonished staff for staying “too long in the field.” Employees operate on a nine-to-five payroll.¹⁷ This means that you “leave the office, not the field, at five.... if it takes three hours to drive from the field site to the office, then that means the latest time you can leave the field is 2pm.” Employees do not get paid overtime, so there is no economic incentive to hold later hours. However, this resulted in some ridiculous cost-benefit analyses. For example, if it takes three hours to drive to the field, on account of poor road conditions or sheer distance, then leaving the office at 9am puts your arrival time, assuming no delays, at noon. This allocates two hours to conduct community based counseling sessions, sensitizations, case assessments or trainings before packing up and leaving the field.

There is little utility in cramming in psychosocial support services into the space of two hours and the organizational pressure to be time (a.k.a. cost) efficient whittled staff incentive to make the trip. Most drinking and domestic violence occurs after work when people return from the fields. While it is unrealistic to expect battered wives and children to seek help during a violent episode, it is equally unrealistic for CRR staff to leave the field by 2pm or else put their own co-

¹⁷ Technically, employees are to start work at 8am, but this is subject to daily change. While I was there, most employees either did not arrive at work or otherwise begin working before 9am.

worker relations and job security in jeopardy. Resultantly, most of the trainings are held with local community leaders who have the luxury of losing a day of work, which diminishes the utility of community sensitizations. The importance of community-based conflict resolution cannot be overstated and has met with successful results in other parts of the country. I will return to this point later. But the utility of community-mobilization programs demands the involvement of the entire community, if not all the time, at least some of the time. CRR's work is tedious, tiring and time consuming. It requires many meetings with local leaders, multiple site visits one village at a time, and following up community visits with training sessions. It requires time for explanations, time for questions. Such community-based approaches have great potential to instigate sustainable community development, but this cannot be achieved on an empty gas tank and it will rarely fit the bill of nine-to-five.

5.0 Discussion: Refining Community-based Approaches

Capacity and knowledge around the intersections need to be strengthened at the organizational level before commencing with interventions. This is especially important because of the potential for projects to further stigmatization, discrimination, or harm among the people they engage with
—UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (2012:4)

Researchers and humanitarian aid workers, including the Ugandan professional staff at CRR, are quick to point out that the general population lacks both the infrastructural capacity and cultural capital needed to address issues of structural violence (Brocklesby and Fisher 2003; Florin and Wandersman 1990; Manzo and Perkins 2006). The recognized suitability of community-based and community-led approaches for capturing the area and context-specific nuances of SGBV has not prompted the establishment of community-based projects that holistically address SGBV. The lion's share of community-based organizations remain remarkably superficial and their frequent, "uncritical adoption" of mainstream development

terminology has the potential to backfire. For instance, Mansuri and Rao (2004:8) problematize the usage of the term *community* arguing that “what is labeled a community is often an endogenous construct defined by the parameters of a project, by project facilitators, or by the nature of administrative or identity boundaries rather than an organic form”.¹⁸

The community-based approach, undertaken holistically to account for the multivariate causes and consequences of SGBV, offers a promising way of re-sculpting gender relationships. It also highlighted the wide range of community attitudes toward, perceptions of and experiences with SGBV. Solutions to this problem must be as dynamic as the problem itself if they are to be holistic—something that is best achieved with community-based approaches. Community-based approaches make use of the other aspects of culture that promote healthy gender-relations and are, thus, more likely to capture the nuances of culture and resonate with the people who interface who encounter this problem in different ways in their everyday lives.

The case study at the Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation demonstrates that there are homegrown organizations that understand the importance of both aforementioned objectives, but they lack the material resources to realize them. There is another organization that does similar work to CRR, albeit their operations are largely restricted in the south. It is called Raising Voices and it strives to address violence against women and children in Uganda through community sensitization trainings and mobilizations. They successfully provide the first service—education—but they offer little in the way of facilitating people’s access to the necessary medical, legal and psychosocial counseling. So, like CRR and many other civil society organizations that target violence bred through gender inequalities, Raising Voices’ endeavors are frustrated by deep-seated socio-cultural norms:

Many Ugandans still believe that violence against children and women is socially acceptable. [Citing Peter Bahemuka, a senior programme officer at Raising Voices] We [Ugandans] are in a society where people think it is okay to beat their children and

¹⁸ For this claim, Mansuri and Rao (2004) cite Guijit and Shad (1998), Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Mosse (2001).

women. So for us, changing people's attitudes and beliefs is a big challenge (AllAfrica 2013:3).

As the example of Ker Kwero Acholi demonstrated, changing gender roles and socio-economic situations are in tension with patriarchal dynamics that frustrate the redress of gender inequality and exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence.

Long-term investment in community-based approaches is absolutely needed for addressing current magnitude of the problem of SGBV, but there are at least two easily implemented ways that help pave the way for positive socio-cultural change. They are: 1) the inclusion of men alongside women in orchestrating community SGBV trainings and mobilization, and 2) utilizing known mediums of effective communication and population mobilization—radio broadcasting.

5.1 Men and Women Addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Hyper-focusing on the adverse physical and psychosocial effects of SGBV on women establishes another unhealthy victim-perpetrator dynamic, which runs the risk of engendering further violence. It may even introduce a new set of socio-cultural inequalities. Moreover, men's frustrations with their own confined gender roles or desire to see an improvement in family income returns, marital or domestic relationships should not be discounted.¹⁹ After all, men make up half of the equation and play an equal part in both conflict generation and conflict resolution.

¹⁹ Between 2004-2011 OXFAM supported the "We Can" campaign which worked with local civil society organizations (CSOs) to disseminate information to communities across South and Central Asia that sensitized them to the causes and consequences of SGBV (Green 2012:226-8). Much to the program orchestrators' surprise, the majority of the people who requested more information and/or training on how to become "change makers" were men! ["We Can" is notable for being modeled after Uganda's Kampala-based program, *Raising Voices*, which works focuses on community SGBV trainings, sensitization and mobilization; unfortunately, their operations are largely restricted to the south.]

5.2 Radio Mega FM

The synergy between wide-ranging media campaigns and locally targeted outreach efforts has proven to be most successful in mobilizing communities around various issues salient to conflict resolution. Remembering the success of the radio Mega FM's broadcasts out of Gulu to de-stigmatize LRA escapees and encourage LRA rebels to return from the Bush (Green 2012), radio broadcasts offer potential useful avenues of sparking community conversations about the family health, HIV/AIDs and SGBV. Rather than implementing creative, but externally designed programs, it is more important that programs resonate with people's experiences with and perceptions of the identified social problem. People will be far more receptive to stories and examples that they can relate to and see a correlate to their daily lives.

6.0 Conclusion

Sexual and gender-based violence knows no boundaries. It is a globally mushrooming problem reducing the dignity, productivity and integrity of humanity. That said, it is a global problem with regional, cultural and community-specific derivations that require unique, nuanced resolutions. Where they share some common ground lies in the development of community-based approaches that catalyze positive social and cultural change. Harmonizing with the findings of Mansuri and Rao (2004:1), my case study demonstrates the importance of "community-based and -driven development projects are best undertaken in a context-specific manner, with a long time horizon and with careful and well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems."

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index ranks Uganda 161 out of 187 countries—miserably low by any standards (UNDP 2011). This thesis sought to illustrate how sexual and gender-based violence occupies a central role in retarding peacebuilding and development in the north. SGBV is the antithesis of "development with a human face." Moving forward with human development will require more long-term

investments in community-based approaches that 1) educate communities on the causes and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence and 2) strengthen people's capability to access necessary medical, legal and psychosocial services in instances of SGBV redress.

At the macroscopic scale, the success or failure of SGBV address in northern Uganda may have important implications for the development of policies in communities blighted by SGBV in other parts of the world. At the regional scale, developing policies that holistically address SGBV will determine the success or failure of human development in northern Uganda. Failure to do so undermines human and, more importantly, *humane* development by fostering the regeneration of institutionalized gender inequalities and sexual and gender-based violence, thereby diminishing people's capacities to pursue lives and lifestyle that they have reason to value.



[photo taken by author]

"Brothers in Nwoya District"

viii. Epilogue

“Uganda has been described as the Pearl of Africa. However, in this beautiful land, there are a number of harmful cultural practices that makes it a place no child would want to live...”

These were the opening lines of an April 18 2013 *New Vision* article featured on AllAfrica Global Media. The article is talking about widespread physical, psychological and sexual violence to which Ugandan youth are subjected today—violence which is occurring in the two places children should not feel vulnerable or insecure: at home and at school. Sexual and gender-based violence is not a temporal phenomenon, but one that is transmitted to the next generation if not actively addressed, redressed and resolved—peacefully.

In 1995, children’s author Stacey Schuett published a bedtime story called “Somewhere in the World Right Now.” Its pages are filled with enchanting depictions of children all over the world, operating in different time zones, simultaneously engaging in different activities or chores of varying cultural or economic importance. Capturing some of the illustrious exoticism of the world, this story stokes the embers of children’s imaginations as they ponder the life beyond their neighborhoods and dream about a world that never sleeps:

*Somewhere in the world right now fog hugs the shoulders of buildings and bridges,
a baker slides long loaves of bread into an oven... in velvety darkness elephants sleep;
The moon shines through a window [and] a little girl lies dreaming of tomorrow;
But somewhere else, tomorrow is already here... farmers leave for the fields to tend their crop;
Somewhere in the world right now the sun is setting; In the city, signs flash on and off,
off and on [and] trains whoosh through tunnels taking people home[;] A girl and her brother
race each other to the door; Somewhere, somebody reads a story and someone listens.
Voices whisper sweet dreams and lights go out...
somewhere in the world right now — Schuett, 1995*

What if Schuette's story said something else? Suppose it said this instead:

*Somewhere in the world right now
a child is silenced by rape.*

*Somewhere in the world right now, a hot sun beats down on a woman who works for
money she cannot keep; a boy holds a weapon that stands taller than he.*

*Somewhere in the world right now a girl walks for miles to a well so her family will have clean
water to drink; somewhere in the world right now a toddler*

*is abandoned on a dusty market street and somewhere else, in the world right now,
a child daydreams to cope and retreat; a man becomes violent from having too much to drink
and a daughter becomes a prostitute so that her family might eat.*

*Children are not read to because their parents cannot read. Somewhere in the world right now,
people fear to dream, people fear to sleep— Durick, 2013*

No publishing company would endorse such a book for children. It illustrates some sad and scary happenings in an unjust world and, yet, this is the stuff to which millions of children around the world are more apt to relate. Men, women and children dream of waking up to a world working to re-write this story more sensitively, more humanely, somewhere in the world right now.

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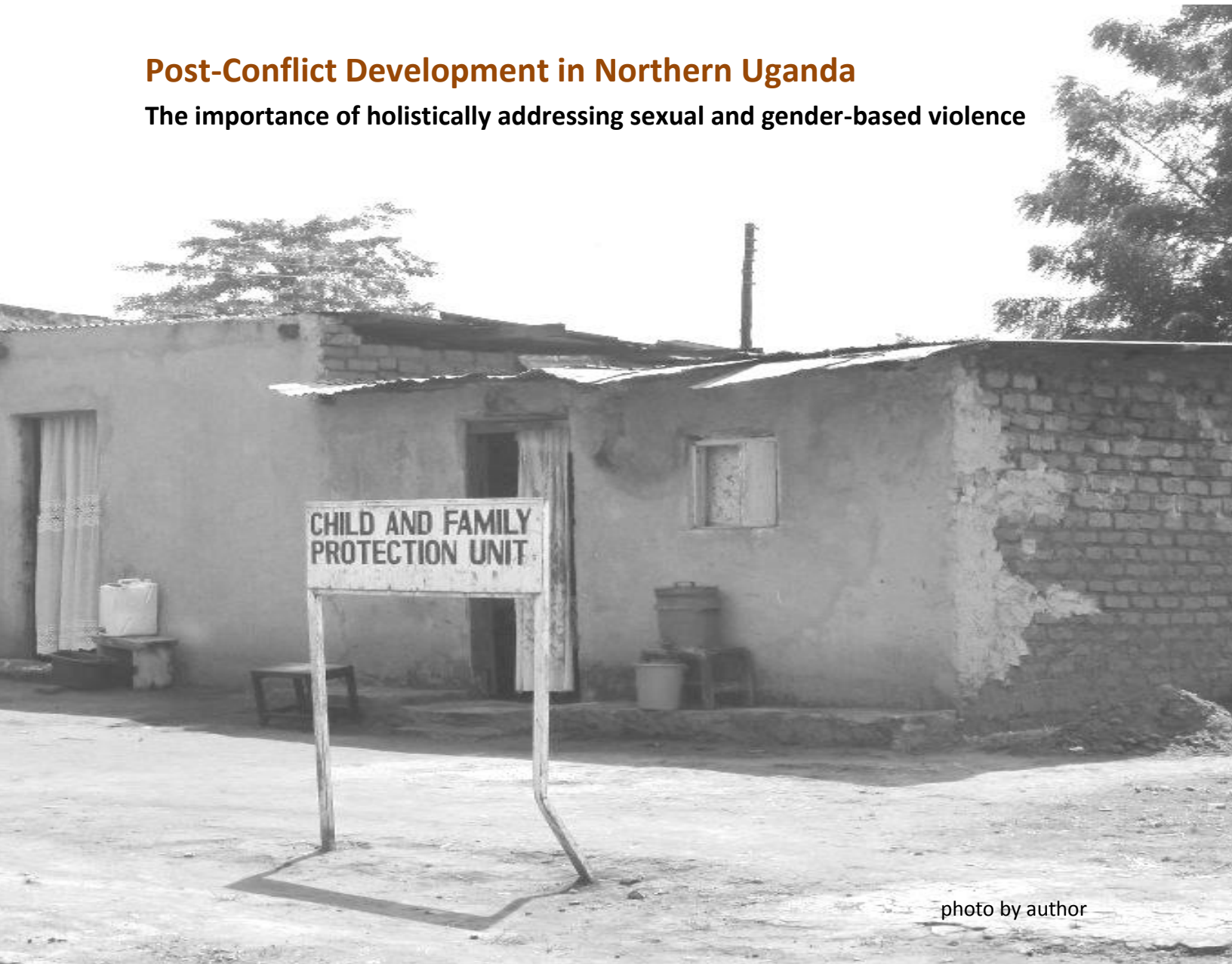
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Post-Conflict Development in Northern Uganda

The importance of holistically addressing sexual and gender-based violence



College Scholars Thesis

Program Title: Population Displacement & Post-Conflict Development

Mentor: Dr. Tricia Redeker-Hepner