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Protection of Children in Armed Conflict: Case Study of South Sudan

An Evaluation of Child-oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Uganda and Northern Kenya

Changing Trends of Conflicts and Response Strategies in Eastern Africa

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P.O Box 24232-00502

Karen, Kenya

Tel: 254 20 388 3157/58

Fax: 254 20 388 3159

Email: info@ipstc.org

Website: www.ipstc.org

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Edited by Dr Geoffrey Njeru

Design, Layout and Printing

Soloh Worldwide Inter-Enterprises Ltd

P.O. Box1868-00100 Nairobi Kenya

Cell: 0701 942 980/0714 991 062

Email: info@soloworld.co.ke

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Foreword

The International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) is a research and training institution focusing on capacity building at the strategic, operational and tactical levels within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture and has developed to be the regional Centre of Excellence for the African Standby Force (ASF) in Eastern Africa. IPSTC addresses the complexities of contemporary UN/AU integrated Peace Support Operations by describing the actors and multi-dimensional nature of these operations. The research conducted covers a broad spectrum ranging from conflict prevention through management to post-conflict reconstruction. The Centre has made considerable contribution in training and research on peace support issues in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa through design of training curriculum, field research and publication of Occasional Papers and Issue Briefs. Occasional Papers are produced annually, while Issue Briefs are produced quarterly. The Issue Briefs are an important contribution to the vision and mission of IPSTC.

The Second Quarter Issue Brief No. 4 (2015) has two titles on peace and conflict in Eastern Africa namely, *Protection of Children in Armed Conflict: Case Study of South Sudan* and *An Evaluation of Child- Oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Uganda and Northern Kenya*

The Issue Briefs provide insights into pertinent peace and security issues in the region that are useful to policy makers and aims to contribute to the security debate and praxis in the region. The articles in the Issue Brief are also expected to inform the design of training modules at IPSTC. The research and publication of this Issue Brief was made possible by support from the Government of Japan through UNDP.

Brig. Robert Kabage

Director, IPSTC

Acronyms

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AFC	Action for Children
AMIB	African Union Mission in Burundi
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
APRCT	Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter- Terrorism
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ARS-A	Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia- Asmara
ARS-D	Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia-Djibouti
ASF	Africa Standby Force
AU	African Union
(AVSI)	Association of Volunteers in International Service
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CAR	Central Africa Republic
CJTF-HA	Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa
CFS	Child Friendly Spaces
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CPA	Child Protection Advisor
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CMFZ	Zimbabwe Commonwealth Monitoring Force
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSC	Defence Staff College
EAC	East Africa Community
EASF	East African Standby Force
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

ECE	Early Childhood Education
EU	European Union
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
FOC	Full Operational Capability
FAPS	Formerly Abducted Persons
FIFA	International Federation of Football Associations
FTR	Family Tracking and Re-unification
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat
GoU	Government of Uganda
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICU/UIC	Islamic Courts Union/ Union of Islamic Courts
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority for Development
IGASOM	Inter-Governmental Authority for Development Forces for Somalia
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IPSTC	International Peace Support Training Centre
IDPS	Internally Displaced Persons
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
LAPSSET	Lamu Port and Southern Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MINUSMA	United Nations Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
MONSUCO	United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDC	National Defence Staff College
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NMLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
NURC	National Union and Reconciliation Commission
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OAUF	Organization of African Unity Force
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
ONUMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PCC	Police Contributing Country
PSC	Peace and Security Council
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
POC	Protection of Civilians
PSO	Peace Support Operations
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
TFIs	Transitional Federal Institutions of Somalia
TNG	Transitional National Government of Somalia
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-RPTC	Southern Africa Development Community Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre
SFMC	School Feeding Management Coommittee
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SNPC	Somalia National Peace Conference
SOWAC	School of War Affected Children
SRRC	Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SPLA	Sudan's People's Liberation Army
TCC	Troops Contributing Country

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNHC	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNITAF	United Nations Unified Task Force
UNOSOM I/II	United Nations Operation in Somalia I and II
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNAVEM	United Nations Angola Verification Mission
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIKOM	United Nations Iraq/Kuwait Observation Mission
UNIMOG	United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNMEE	United Nations Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USE	Universal secondary Education
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
TFG	Transitional Federal Government of Somalia
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Introduction to the Issue Briefs

The topics in this Second Quarter Issue Brief No. 4 address diverse issues of peace and security in the Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes region. More specifically, the first paper examines the protection of children in post-independence South Sudan conflict while the second looks at child-oriented peace initiatives in northern Kenya and northern Uganda.

The first paper, *Protection of Children in Armed Conflict: Case Study of South Sudan* focuses on the protection of children in post-independence conflict in South Sudan laying emphasis on the vulnerability of children in armed conflicts and analysing the strategies in place to protect them. The paper is organised into six sections. After introducing the subject matter, the second section highlights the objectives guiding the paper. Section three discusses child vulnerability in South Sudan conflict while section four looks at the systems approach to child protection. Legal developments and current international laws guiding the protection of children in armed conflict are analysed in section five while the successes, challenges, gaps and limitations in child protection mechanisms are analysed in section six. The paper ends with a conclusion and a way forward.

The second paper, *An Evaluation of Child-oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Kenya and Northern Uganda* explores meaningful child participation in peace initiatives and unravels how peace initiatives can change the lives of children or youth experiencing and recovering from conflict, as well as the future of their communities. Child participation is a concept and practice that has been researched and implemented through different projects across the world for years. However, although it is recognized that involving young boys and girls in the decisions and actions that affect their lives is a positive shift in programming, and a step forward in the attainment in children's rights, it is not always as straightforward in practice as evident in the case of northern Uganda and northern Kenya.

Protection of Children in Armed Conflict: Case Study of South Sudan

By Carolyne Gatimu

Introduction

War makes everybody potentially vulnerable. Although children show incredible strength and resilience, their young age makes them more vulnerable than adults. War exposes children to a whole host of risks, some of them unimaginable. The most obvious ones include the risk of orphanage, death, injury, displacement or separation from family. Losing access to health services also puts children at great risk as this can mean death or long-term effects following a simple injury or illness that has not been or cannot be cured. A child without adult care is at risk of neglect and all kinds of abuse. For example, children may become easy targets for armed groups or forces looking for new recruits. They may be at risk of being trafficked and sexually violated. Additionally, armed conflict brings about general destitution that leaves many children with no choice but to take to the streets, begging or doing odd jobs, often hard and underpaid, simply to survive. Of course, the risks differ depending on the age and sex of the child. Older children are more likely to survive on their own but often face greater risks of abuse (ICRC, 2009).

Less than two years ago, hundreds of thousands of children's lives were uprooted when violence broke out in South Sudan. Today, those children live in fear of violence, are out of school, are unable to return home, and face risks to the rights they – like children all over the world – are entitled to. After a peaceful independence referendum in 2011, the people of South Sudan were filled with hope that, as the world's youngest country, they could finally leave behind decades of war and forge a brighter future. But the promise of a better life for most South Sudanese was shattered in December 2013 when the country descended into violence once again. Three years after the world's newest country was born, more than one in three (3.8 million) people require humanitarian assistance. Close to 2 million people have fled their homes with more than 400,000 to neighbouring countries (World Vision, 2014).

Several states in South Sudan have significant levels of violence, particularly in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei states. Some 100,000 people are taking shelter inside UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites across the country where they have fled

the violence. Millions more have taken refuge in communities and surrounding areas, leaving them unprotected and, for those in hard to reach areas, without access to life-saving aid. According to UNICEF, out of an estimated 748,000 internally displaced children, 400,000 are out of school; more than 11,000 have been recruited into armed groups and forces; and over 6,600 have been separated from their families.

This paper focuses on the protection of children in the post-independence South Sudan conflict. Emphasis is on the vulnerability of children in armed conflict while analysing the strategies in place to protect them. The next section highlights the objectives guiding the paper. Section three discusses child vulnerability in the South Sudan conflict while section four looks at the systems approach to child protection. Legal developments and current international laws guiding the protection of children in armed conflict are analysed in section five while the successes, challenges, gaps and limitations in child protection mechanisms are analysed in section six. After the conclusion, the paper ends with suggestions on the way forward.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to:

a) Determine the level of child vulnerability in the South Sudan conflict;

b) Understand current approaches to child protection;

c) Analyse the declarations, protocols and laws on protection of children in armed conflict, especially in South Sudan and their effectiveness; and

d) Identify successes, challenges, gaps and limitations in child protection mechanisms, especially in South Sudan.

Child Vulnerability in South Sudan Conflict

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) under the auspices of the African Union conducted an advocacy mission to assess the situation of children affected by the conflict in South Sudan in August 2014, in accordance with its mandate to promote and protect the rights of children pursuant to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The committee was exposed to an array of grave violations of children which were interdependent and cumulative and included the following:

Killing of Children

There are numerous reports of children, even babies being wantonly killed. In Bor for instance, one report estimates that 490 murdered children were identified in the many mass graves in and round Bor. On 17 April 2014, 12 children in the Bor PoC were randomly mowed down by marauders, the youngest a mere three months old. It is not that these deaths were accidental or unfortunate by-products of armed confrontation. The committee was reliably informed that children were being deliberately targeted.

Killing of Parents and Care-givers

The killings so far have left countless numbers of children parentless or as orphans whose only refuge is the streets. Child-headed households proliferate, caused not by unfortunate natural disasters or disease, but by man-made causes, namely war. The crisis has forced child protection and humanitarian agencies into a time-consuming, expensive and interminable cycle of family tracking and reunification (FTR) which has to date yielded limited results.

Displacement

There has been extensive displacement of people including children (with or without families) that has occured and continues to occur. It is estimated that more than 1.5 million people have so far been displaced internally and across borders. The effects of this will be felt by affected children, and their parents and families for years to come. The ACERWC recommended the expansion of the family tracing network to all affected counties. It also supports and follows up to ensure that the affected children get into extended family or foster care and that referrals for family tracing are acted upon whenever possible matches are found.

Grave Child Rights Violations

Since the eruption of conflict in December 2013 to the end of June 2014, the UN received more reports of grave child rights violations in armed conflict, than in the whole of 2013. Grave child rights violations continue to be analysed, documented and verified. The violations monitored include killing, as mentioned above, recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, including access to health. Of mounting concern for South Sudan is the escalating recruitment of children into forces associated with the armed conflict. This is one

of the main protection issues that need to be addressed on the basis of absolute urgency. Recent reports indicate girls in military uniform, reflecting the rapidly changing dynamic of the conflict with implications for protection of children.

Abductions and Sexual Violence

The extent to which the war is being waged directly upon the children of South Sudan is apparent from the violent abduction of children and the confirmed incidents of rape of both girls and boys. Tonping PoC, for example, reported high levels of sexual violence as the perpetrators escape with impunity. Abductions on the other hand objectify and dehumanize children, depriving them of their most fundamental right as human beings. More than 900 children have been abducted in Jonglei state alone since December 2013. The scale of abductions goes a long way in confirming that the war could be aimed at children.

Food Insecurity and Poor Nutrition

The crisis around food insecurity and nutrition is readily apparent in the war in South Sudan. According to UNICEF, in the three conflict-affected states, 462,000 children under five years and 180,400 pregnant or lactating women are exposed to unacceptably high levels of food insecurity. Many more infants and young children face imminent death due to malnutrition. Recent reports from the European Commission confirm the food security crisis in South Sudan. In April 2015, the UN estimated that 2.5 million people faced food insecurity and the number was expected to rise during the lean season starting May, 2015. The UN declared South Sudan at 'level-3' emergency, the highest level of any humanitarian crisis (European Commission, 2015).

The ACERWC praised the strategic and cross-sectional coordination of humanitarian programmes whereby UN agencies and non-governmental actors provide essential humanitarian supplies to IDPs and affected populations. At the same time, it urged the international community and donor entities to assist scale up the available aid to combat the looming child mortality catastrophe.

Lack of Education

All South Sudanese that ACERWC spoke to, including children, were desperate for an education. Yet in many places, the education situation has deteriorated to the point where most children do not access education. This was the case not only in the crisis states, but also throughout the country. The effect of this is that a whole

generation risks losing out with respect to the knowledge economy of the future. Many teachers have fled and schools have been occupied by armed groups, closed or destroyed.

Lack of Health and Sanitation Facilities

The situation amongst the IDPs and in the PoCs is far from adequate, with concomitant risks to child health and wellbeing. The physical environment is horrible and the rainy season usually brings untold hardship to an already dire situation. In addition, there has been reported attacks on hospitals. This too imperils children's access to medical services. The ACERWC, however, recognised the efforts made by child protection actors in the extremely difficult circumstances and recommended expanding the number of child friendly spaces (CFSs) to provide psychosocial support to the affected childen and help them heal from the trauma associated with displacement and conflict and to build resilience.

The special representantive of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, also visited South Sudan in June 2014 and called for the full implementation of the Action Plan signed by the government to end the recruitment and use of children in the country's national security forces. During her visits to Bentiu, Bor, Pibor and Gumuruk, she witnessed several children being recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and armed groups. She also visited schools used by the military and looted hospitals and confirmed the massive population displacements caused by the conflict (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict).

In general, the UN Security Council identifies six grave violations against children during armed conflict due to their especially egregious nature and severe impact on a child's wellbeing. They include: killing and/or maiming; recruitment or use of child soldiers; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abduction; attacks against schools or hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access. Most of these violations have already been reported in South Sudan.

Systems Approach to Child Protection

To understand what a systems approach to child protection is, one has to start with the definition of a system. Generally, literature defines a system as a collection of components or parts that are organised (i.e. connected to each other) around a common purpose or goal. Systems come in different forms e.g. mechanical, transportation and biological. Systems also operate at different levels, with each level made up of components that are specific to the level in question. Systems are nested within other systems which means that a given system (e.g. child protection system) has embedded within its boundaries or lies adjacent to other systems e.g. foster care, child protective services reporting, case management, etc. System and system components interact with each other, with the effects of these interactions reverberating throughout the system as a whole. Systems do things in accordance with their purpose or goals. A system accomplishes its work through functions, structures and capacities. Systems are composed of multiple actors working at multiple levels. It is also important to note that systems do not exist in a vacuum, rather, they are embedded within a broader context of environment (UNICEF, 2010).

A child protection system therefore refers to: *certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that have been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. A child protection system is agreed to comprise the following components: human resources, finance, laws and policies, governance, monitoring and data collection as well as protection and response services and care management.* It also includes different actors – children, families, communities, those working at subnational or national level and those working internationally. Most important are the relationships and interactions between and among these components and these actors within the system. It is the outcomes of these interactions that comprise the system (UNICEF et al, 2012).

Why the Shift to a Systems Approach?

UNICEF *et al.* (2012) observes that recent years have seen renewed thinking about how to address child protection risks globally. In the 'global North', many existing statutory child protection systems have been in need of reform, and there has been a move away from a narrowly defined forensic understanding of child protection towards a greater emphasis on early intervention, prevention and family support, including efforts to rekindle child protection as part of everyday life in

communities. In low and middle- income contexts where government capacity maybe limited, such as South Sudan's, systems are often a combination of both more formal statutory and less formal customary elements.

Again, for the last few decades, child protection analysis, programming and funding have focused on particular issues or specific groups of vulnerable children such as violence against children, child marriage, sexual exploitation, alternative care, justice for children, children affected by armed forces and groups, trafficking, child labour and child separation. However, this 'issues approach' has led to overlapping, uncoordinated and fragmented responses as evidenced by the range of national action plans that countries have developed on different child protection issues. Many children, may infact, face multiple child protection problems and such issue-based responses may deal with one problem at a time without providing a comprehensive solution.

Over the last few years, a succession of important documents and events has reinforced this move to a systems approach to child protection. In 2006, the UN Secretary General's study on Violence against Children recommended that "all States develop a multifaceted and systematic framework in response to violence against children, which is integrated into national planning processes." A 2007 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Children at Risk noted that "States should promote the establishment and implementation of child protection systems". In 2008, UNICEF hosted a Global Child Protection Systems Mapping Workshop at which participants concluded that a common understanding of child protection systems would be an important prerequisite for moving child protection efforts forward. Simultaneously, international actors, including NGOs, UN organisations and donors active in child protection in both development and emergency settings, increasingly moved away from a focus on specific issues and groups of children towards a systems approach to child protection.

The benefits of a systems approach to child protection include: increased coverage by serving all children, as well as focusing on particular children; recognition of the interactions of multiple child protection risks as they affect many children; promoting efficient review and coordination of multiple protecton risks and responses; reduced fragmentation of programmes and policies and therefore increased coherence; potential for greater efficiencies through the creation of synergies in administration and targeting; greater focus on prevention while an issues approach tends to focus on response to specific violations; a holistic

approach that allows us to see a child and his/her problems from multiple angles; recognition of child protection as both a sector and sub-sector requiring integration with other sectors such as health and social protection; and involvement of many professionals who bring different types of expertise and perspectives.

In South Sudan, child protection actors have tried to establish a national child protection sub-cluster which brings together all institutions working on child protection in South Sudan. The sub-cluster holds meetings bi-weekly at the UNICEF compound. Meetings are chaired by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare with UNICEF as lead organization and Save the Children co-leading. In these meetings, members discuss the challenges and gaps in their interventions and come up with collective solutions to protect children. This sub-cluster provides a coordination mechanism for all actors working to address child protection issues in South Sudan. There are also laws, policies and Acts of parliament in South Sudan that provide a framework for protection of children.

Legal Developments and International Law on Protection of Children in Armed Conflict

The face of warfare changed towards the latter half of the 20th century. Interstate wars became relatively rare and got outnumbered by internal conflicts. However, while classified as internal, the majority of these conflicts have an international element. Often, conflicts spill over into neighbouring States in the form of refugee flows. States also involve themselves through financial, military and political assistance or intervention. In internal conflicts, the battlefield is not clearly marked and people often get caught up in the conflict as victims or participants, a distinction that is sometimes hard to draw (e.g. in the case of child soldiers). Violence against the civilian population by both government and non-state forces is now the rule rather than the exception (Harvey, 2001).

In the last decade of the 20th century, it was estimated that over 2 million children were killed in conflict situations while over 6 million were seriously injured or permanently disabled. Over 20 million children were displaced by war within and outside their countries. In addition, millions of children suffered sexual violence, grave psychological trauma, malnutrition, disease, and the multiple consequences of being forced to flee their homes. Conflicts further deprived children of their support systems i.e. family, community, educators, health workers etc thereby exacerbating these problems (Machel, 1996).

The 20th century also saw the rise to prominence of the concept of children's rights, most recently encoded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, according to some analysts, neither Humanitarian Law (including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977) nor Human Rights Law, has managed, as yet, to reduce the suffering and involvement of children in armed conflict (Hamilton and El-haj, n.d). Legal protection of children during armed conflict is contained in two bodies of international law: International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law (Harvey, 2001).

International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law is the body of law that seeks to regulate the methods and means of warfare and the treatment of people in times of war, who are not, or who are no longer (e.g. prisoners of war, or injured soldiers), participating in the

hostilities. The international community has been attempting to regulate warfare for well over a century. However, the most significant humanitarian law treaties that apply to warfare today are the Geneva Conventions which were drafted in the aftermath of World War II, and the two Additional Protocols to these conventions that were adopted in 1977.

1. *The Geneva Conventions (1949)*

The overarching aim of the four Geneva Conventions was the protection of victims of international conflicts. The Geneva Convention I relates to the treatment and protection of members of the armed forces who got wounded or fell sick in in the field. The Geneva Convention II relates to the treatment and protection of members of the armed forces who got shipwrecked, wounded or sick at sea. Geneva Convention III relates to the treatment and protection of prisoners of war, while Geneva Convention IV relates to the treatment and protection of civilian persons in times of war, ocupation or internment. The latter was the first treaty that exclusively sought to provide protection for civilians during armed conflict. However, it is mainly concerned with the treatment of civilians in the hands of an opposing party or victims of war, rather than regulating the conduct of parties to a conflict inorder to potect civilians.

Importantly, in its general protection measures for civilians, The Geneva Convention IV includes a limited number of obligations on parties to a conflict to provide special protection to children e.g. to allow free passage of food, clothing and medicine intended for children, and to assist children separated or orphaned. State parties are also permitted to establish hospital and safety zones to protect children and other vulnerable groups. However, the majority of the provisions do not afford protection to all children under 18. This is because the concept that all persons under 18 are children and therefore entitled to special protection did not exist in 1949 and has only been accepted by the international community recently. Although the Convention only provides limited protection for children, its provisions are applicable to every international conflict because 190 States are party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions which are now considered (in large part) to be customary international law. Therefore, even the small number of States that have not ratified the Conventions are bound to uphold the obligations contained therein

UN General Assembly Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict

In 1974, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict. Although this declaration is not legally binding on parties to a conflict, it succeeded in drawing international attention to the plight of women and children as victims of inhuman acts and to the importance of increasing protection for these vulnerable groups in internal conflicts.

Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions

In 1977, the international community adopted the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Additional Protocol I extended the protection to those caught up in international conflicts in particular, by up-dating the rules applicable to the conduct of hostilities, while Additional Protocol II laid down minimum guarantees to be upheld in internal conflicts.

Additional Protol I also widened the protection afforded to children in international conflicts, stating that they shall be the object of special respect and be protected from any form of indecent assault. Parties to the conflict must also provide them with the care and aid they require. Significantly, Protocol I also set the minimum age for recruitment by armed forces and for the direct participation of children, marking the first time the issue of child soldiers was addressed in a binding international document. However, 15 years and not 18 years was set as the minimum age for particicpation and recruitment.

Additional Protocol II was the first binding international document to solely address the conduct of parties in non-international armed conflicts, developing the basic guarantees enshrined in Common Article 3. However, its provisions are fewer and far less restrictive on the conduct of parties to the conflicts than those in Additional Protol I and its application is restricted to conflicts which fulfill the criteria laid out in Article I. In addition, Protocol II contains a similar, if curtailed, version of the child protection provisions contained in Protocol I. Under Protocol II, children are entitled to be provided with the care and aid that they require. Specifically, children are entitled to education, to be reunited with their families where they have been temporarily separated and to be removed from conflict zones to safer areas in the country afflicted by war. In addition, children who are prosecuted for criminal offences related to the armed conflict must not be

subject to the death penalty, if they are under 18 years at the time of their offence. Significantly, Additional Protocol II recognised that children needed protection from being recruited by both government and armed opposition groups.

International Human Rights Law

In response to the atrocities committed in World War II, the international community sought to draw up instruments to regulate the activities of States towards people in their jurisdictions. In 1948, the non-binding Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Others that have followed suit include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, among others.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

While children are entitled to the protection of these international human rights instruments, children's rights have only recently been formally and explicitly recognised by the international community with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. With 192 ratifications, the CRC has become the most widely ratified international treaty.

The CRC defines children as all human beings under the age of 18 years. The Convention contains a comprehensive set of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, which are considered to be indivisible and interdependent and consequently there should be no hierachy in their implementation. However, four general principles underpin the Convention: non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right for children to have their views heard and given due weight in all decisions affecting them. These principles should be taken into account in implementing all the provisions of CRC.

Article 38 of the CRC is important for this paper as it addresses the issue of protecting children in times of armed conflict. However, this provision does not impose an absolute duty on States to ensure the care and protection of children during hostilities. Further, the same article does not significantly extend the protection contained in the Additional Protocols and in international humanitarian law in general, specifically retaining the age of 15 years for recruitment and direct participation in hostilities for children. These are the only provisions of the CRC not applicable to all children under 18 years.

Article 39, on the other hand, relates to the post-conflict care of children, obligating States to assist in the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children who have been victims of armed conflict. Despite the fact that its specific protection of children in times of conflict is limited, it is arguable that all the provisions of the CRC are applicable to children during all levels of conflict and internal disturbance, as there is no provision that allows derogation in times of national emergency (Harvey, 2001).

However, the CRC has some limitations. For example, while being considered to be non-derogable during times of war, it is not suited to the realities of conflict. The monitoring mechanism of the CRC and the Committtee on the Rights of the Child, are not able to respond to situations of emergency, cannot make *ad hoc* recommendations or comment on situations in other countries; and cannot hear individual complaints, impose sanctions on offenders or order compensation.

In addition, the CRC covers a wide range of rights, which governments struggle to implement in peace times. Although CRC is the most ratified human rights document, it is also the most violated. During situations of armed conflict, while in theory the rights are indivisible and interdependent, the right to survival, development and health are prioritised and often other rights are ignored in the short term by States and humanitarian agencies. The hierachy of rights and interaction between the rights and needs of children during and after armed conflict have been the subject of an ongoing debate by aid agencies and the international community.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000)

The optional protocol was adopted by the international community in an attempt to address the widespread recruitment and use of children by armed forces around the world. This instrument raised the minimum age (from the existing 15 to 18 years) for compulsory and voluntary recruitment and deployment for both State and non-state forces. Unfortunately, due to the reluctance of certain States, most notably the USA, a blanket minimum threshold of 18 years for all recruitment and deployment practices was not achieved, allowing States to continue to recruit children under 18 years of age.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) 1990

While the CRC has gained popularity globally and has formed the basis for many of the child rights treaties, the ACRWC is quite detailed and has tried to address

the gaps that were neglected or poorly addressed by the CRC. Adopted in 1990, the ACRWC was entered into force in 1999 by the African Union. Modelled after the CRC, it sets out the rights and defines universal principles and norms for the status of children.

The ACRWC recognises the child's unique and privileged place in African society and that African children need protection and special care. It also acknowledges that children are entitled to enjoyment of freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, thought, religion, and conscience. It aims to protect the private life of the child and safeguard the child against all forms of economic exploitation and against work that is harzadous, interferes with the child's education, or compromises his or her health or physical, social, mental, spiritual, and moral development. It calls for protection against abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation, and illegal drug use. It aims to prevent the sale and trafficking of children, kidnapping and use of children in or for begging (ACWRC, 1990).

The Charter also calls for the creation of an African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This committtee was formed in July 2001, one and a half years after the Charter came into force. Its mission is to promote and protect the rights established by the ACRWC, to apply these rights, and to interprete the disposition of the ACRWC as required of party states, African Union (AU) institutions, or all other institutions recognised by AU or by a member state. In October 2014, South Sudan's parliament adopted the Charter, becoming the 48th Country to do that.

General International Developments to Protect War-affected Children

Harvey (2001) observes that during the last decade of the 20th Century, the issue of protection of children in armed conflicts attracted growing attention and importance on the international stage. Some of these developments include the Machel Study, appointment of a Special Representative of the Sectretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, and UN Security Council Resolutions among others. The next section discusses these important developments in more detail.

Graca Machel Study

Following the UN General Assembly Resolution 48/157 of December 1993, Graca Machel was appointed by the Secretary General to write a report on the

Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. The report, published in August 1996, brought worldwide attention to the issues affecting children living in conflict zones. The Machel Report was the first comprehensive human rights assessment of war-affected children using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guiding framework of analysis. The appropriateness and adequacy of existing international standards in providing protection was analysed, paying particular attention to child soldiers, refugee and internally displaced children, landmines, sanctions and the physical and psychosocial consequences of conflict. The report contained *" a comprehensive agenda for action by Member States and International Community to improve the protection and care of children in situations of conflict."*

The report made numerous recommendations, which included a proposal for the appointment of a special representative on children and armed conflict which would, among other functions, monitor the situation of children in armed conflicts, raise awareness of their plight, and work with the international community, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and NGOs to promote the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict

In 1996, following the recommendation in the Machel Report, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 51/77, which recommended a three-year appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The office was set up in 1997. The role of the Special Representative was that of *Advocate* (building awareness of the needs of war-affected children); *Catalyst* (proposing ideas and approaches to enhance the protection of children in war); *Convenor* (bringing together key actors within and outside the UN to promote more concerted and effective responses) and *Facilitator* (undertaking humanitarian and diplomatic initiatives to unblock difficult political situations).

Since the inception of the post, the Special Representative has succeeded in placing the issues of children and armed conflict high on the international agenda. Not only are children recognised as being in need of special protection and assistance, but it is now also accepted that children should be more central to peace processes, security issues in general and post-conflict reconstruction. The Special Representative has also, over the years, secured commitments for child protection from both State and rebel leaders. While this has been a significant achievement because, it must be noted, majority of the commitments are not upheld.

UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR)

Prior to 1999, there were no Security Council Resolutions that dealt specifically with children affected by armed conflict. However, since 1999, the Security Council has adopted four significant resolutions on this issue. These resolutions are not confined to the actions of the warring parties but call on all actors that might influence or affect the conflict to take measures to provide protection for children, such as the UN Security Council, other UN bodies, member States, corporate actors, regional organizations, and international financial institutions.

Security Council Resolution 1261

This was the first UNSCR on a subject of this kind. Adopted in 1999, it formally affirmed that the protection and security of children affected by armed conflict was an international peace and security issue, and therefore, firmly within the ambit of the Security Council. The harmful and widespread impact that conflict has on children and the long-term consequences that this has for durable peace, security and development was highlighted by the resolution. It was further acknowledged that children were being deliberately targeted during armed conflicts, especially in places protected by International Humanitarian Law e.g. schools. The resolution also contained a list of calls on States to take action on issues such as proliferation of small arms, recruitment and use of children, and access for humanitarian and UN personnel.

Security Council Resolution 1314

Adopted in the following year (2000), UNSCR 1314 reiterated and expanded the list of concerns and calls for action. In addition, the resolution stated that situations where there was systematic flagrant and widespread violation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws, including those relating to children in situations of armed conflict, may constitute a threat to international peace and security and in this regard the Security Council reaffirmed its readiness to consider such situations and, where necessary, adopt appropriate steps.

Security Council Resolution 1379

In 2001, the Security Council revisited its concerns regarding the impact of armed conflict on children. UNSCR 1379 included areas of concern not previously addressed. Importantly, the link between HIV/AIDS and armed conflict was acknowledged and HIV training was recommended for peace keeping personnel.

The resolution also recognised the part that corporate actors played in starting and sustaining armed conflict, urging them to refrain from doing business with parties to a conflict that do not protect children. Building on previous calls for actions to halt the recruitment and use of children in hostilities, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to draw up a list of parties that recruit or use children in violation of international law.

Security Council Resolution 1460

This resolution was adopted in 2003. While reiterating the other three resolutions, the Security Council also supported the Secretary-General in his call for 'an era of application' of international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

While not legally binding on States, these Security Council Resolutions do provide a framework of standards for the protection of children in armed conflict against which child protection in country-specific situations and across thematic areas of concern can be assessed by the international community. The observations and recommendations contained in the resolutions also reflect the growing awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children, the increased importance attached to their protection, and the significant progress that, at least in terms of rhetoric, has been made in this regard.

Child Protection Advisors

A concrete follow-up to the recommendations of UNSCR 1261 (that the welfare of children should be promoted throughout the peace process), was the appointment of the fisrt Child Protection Advisor (CPA) attached to the peace keeping operations in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 2000 and the assignment of two Child Protection Advisors to the peace keeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) later the same year. Child Protection Advisors now form part of the central staff of the heads of the UN field missions, serving as their direct advisors on the protection of children. Having a direct input at this senior level helps to ensure that the protection of children's rights are priority concerns throughout the peacekeeping process, and that children's interests are not marginalised in policy-making, resource-allocation or priority-setting.

National Legislation

The government of South Sudan has ratified both the CRC and ACRWC. It has also incorporated the values of the two international legal documents in national legislation. For example, the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (TCRSS, 2011) clearly outlines the rights of the child in Part two, Article 17. This whole section states all the rights of the child and seeks to protect them against all forms of violation. The then government of Southern Sudan also adopted the Child Act 2008. In the Act, the child rights were revised and new definitions given to good and bad cultural practices towards children. It also outlined the violations that can be perpetrated against children and like other conventions called for protection of the rights of children at all costs. In addition, Sudan signed the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2005 and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in 2004 (Tønnesen and Al-Nagar, 2011).

However, despite South Sudan's obligations under applicable international laws, violations and abuses continue to be committed against children in that country by all parties to the armed conflict including the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian accesss as well as military use of schools. Although about 249 children have been released from the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army Cobra faction in January 2015, more abductions and forced recruitment of hundreds of children, especially in Malakal in February 2015, remain a major concern (UN Security Council, 2015).

Successes, Challenges, Gaps and Limitations in Child Protection Mechanisms

Child protection mechanisms in form of laws, policies and actual interventions have had some successes although there are many challenges, gaps and limitations for the same, not only in South Sudan but also in majority of the States experiencing armed conflict. A few of these are discussed in the sub-sections below.

Successes in Child Protection Mechanisms

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in her 2014 report, acknowledges the unprecented challenges for the protection of tens of millions of children affected by conflict in that year, including children in South Sudan. The Special Representative however argues that despite these challenges, years of constructive engagement with parties to the conflict to end the recruitment and use of children are starting to bear fruit. So far, consensus has emerged among the governments of the world that children do not belong in armed forces or even conflict. The Special Representative seized the opportunity to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children by government forces and launched, jointly with UNICEF, the campaign duped "Children, Not Soldiers." This campaign aims to end and prevent the recruitment of children by government forces by end of 2016.

The government of South Sudan also committed and signed an Action Plan with the UN in 2012 to end the recruitment and use of children in the country's national security forces. During the Special Representative's visit to the country in October 2014, the government recommitted to the Action Plan and, despite the ongoing crisis, a national launch of the campaign was held on 29 October 2014.

Also, the Lower House of Parliament in South Sudan endorsed a draft law criminalizing under-age recruitment by national forces. The law is expected to be passed by the Upper House and ratified by the President. Moreover, the Legal Advisor to the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs proposed amendments to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) Act 2009, to include punitive measures for perpetrators of grave violations against children. The proposals have since been delivered to the Ministry of Justice for further amendment and drafting of a bill to be presented before the Legislative Assembly (Annual Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2014).

In South Sudan, the main child protection actors such as UNICEF, Save the Children and others are engaged in child protection activities such as: preventing the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups; supporting the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups; preventing and responding to violence against children, including gender-based violence; protecting children from harmful traditional practices; protecting children from abduction, including by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA); providing psychosocial support services, family tracing and reunification of separated and unaccompanied children; providing family-based care services for children without parental care, including children who live and work on the streets; provididng child-friendly spaces; strengthening community support groups to enhance the protection of children; and supporting the provisison of mine risk education to protect children from landmines and other explosive instruments of war (UNICEF, GOSS and Save the Children, 2013).

As mentioned earlier in the paper, a national child protection sub-cluster has been established by all actors involved in child protection (government, civil society, community-based mechanisms). The sub-cluster provides a coordination mechanism for responding to child protection issues in the country.

Challenges, Gaps and Limitations of Child Protection Mechanisms

Harvey (2001) argues that although there exists a strong legal framework for the protection of children in armed conflicts against which to judge the actions of States and non-state actors, the application of these laws and standards in reality is limited, leaving children vulnerable to abuse. Where parties to a conflict violate international law, there is little action that can be taken by the international community to enforce compliance while the conflict is on-going. Generally, the international community enforces the law by seeking prosecutions following the cessation of hostilities and the signing of a peace agreement. However, this does not always ensure justice is obtained as often, the victors avoid prosecution or amnesty as agreed upon to bring to an end a conflict thereby allowing those culpable to escape punishment.

In addition, considerable problems continue to exist in relation to both the applicability and implementation of international humanitarian law. First, there is a general problem of states not agreeing to the applicability of the relevant humanitarian law. Second, while full implementation of applicable humanitarian law would provide considerable protection to civilians, in many conflicts, such as

in South Sudan, the provisions of the law are openly disregarded leaving civilians, especially children, to face the full brunt of war unprotected. For instance, while starvation of civilians is forbidden by humanitarian law, various conflicts show that it nevertheless occurs. Similarly, while humanitarian law forbids the targeting of hospitals, medical facilities and schools, in reality, hospitals are often targeted and, in certain conflicts, bearing the Red Cross has been seen as an invitation to attack (Hamilton and El-haj, n.d). In the recent conflict in South Sudan, schools have been targeted and taken over by armed forces and groups.

Moreover, in analysing international humanitarian law from a child right's perspective, there are a number of over-arching problems. In the first place, current humanitarian law conflicts with the fundamental principle of non-discrimination to be found in Article 2 of the CRC. Protection under humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention depends on one's relationship with the parties to the conflict. To conform to the accepted notion of children's rights, any protection given to children should be dependent on the fact that the child is under 18 years of age. The nationality, race, political persuasion of their parents or their relationship to the armed conflict are totally irrelevant. Further, the philosophy of humanitarian law is not that of children's rights, nor was it ever intended to be so. The guiding principle of 'best interests to the child' does not find a place in humanitarian law. However, even when current humanitarian law is rigorously applied, children still suffer physical and psychological damage (Hamilton and El-haj, n.d).

When it comes to the application of International Human Rights Law, especially the CRC, a number of jurisdictional and practical problems must be faced. In many internal armed conflicts, the State, if it continues to exist at all, only does so in a muted form. Although the State may technically retain control over territory, its infrastructure and organisation may have all but disappeared and the ability to implement the CRC may be non-existent. In such instances, only humanitarian law exists in reality to fill the void. It may, in reality, if its provisions are implemented, be the only practical form of protection that covers children in such circumstances.

A second jurisdictional problem arises with non-state entities. In many internal conflicts, a state may lose control over a particular area of its territory to an armed group. The armed group now in control of the territory is not bound by the CRC, as currently, the CRC refers to 'State Parties', so that only formally recognised governments may accede to the treaty. In addition, there is always a problem of access to and dialogue with non-State armed groups and militias to end grave

violations against children. These groups are diverse in nature, which requires different strategies of engagement for the UN to reach them. In addition, even when the groups agree to engage, the implementation of child protection commitments that they make may vary considerably. Advocacy strategies for example require identification of specific incentives based on the military structure, size, modus operadi and other charcateristics of armed groups. Taking those aspects into account, concrete commitments are then identified by the UN and translated into activities and measures with the armed group concerned, culminating in an agreed action plan (Annual Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2014).

Francis (2007), in his argument for '*Paper Protection' : Why child soldiers are not being protected*, states a number of problems responsible for the same. To start with, the reluctance and failure of the international community to enforce its own standards on child soldiers is a major problem. The majority of signatories to child protection treaties pay lip service to the implementation of child protection standards, largely due to their strategic self-interest, and enforce these standards incoherently and selectively. Other important reasons for the lack of enforcement of international standards according to Francis include the social construction of childhood in Africa, which inherently limits the application of the rather Western-based international standards for children; the difficulty and reluctance of most governments to incorporate international child protection treaties into domestic national laws; the limits of individual prosecution as a preventive measure; and the fact that given the nature of wars and armed conflicts in Africa, child soldiers will remain the war-fighting 'instrument of choice' for all warring factions.

Other challenges which hinder the implementation of child protection interventions in South Sudan specifically include: limited number and capacity of professional social workers in nascent government services, with few based on the ground at state and County level; conflicts between community and ethnic groups continue to threaten children; lack of access to education; extreme poverty; weak legal and judicial system; over-reliance on customary law practices which make children more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation; and destruction of traditional community-based protection mechanisms due to the civil war. These factors continue to pose challenges in the implementation of child protection programmes (UNICEF, 2013).

Conclusion

The discussion in this paper has shown that despite South Sudan's obligations under applicable international laws, violations and abuses continue to be committed against children by all parties to the armed conflict. These include: recruitment and use of children; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abductions; attacks against schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian accesss as well as military use of schools. Child protection actors are trying to address the needs of the children in the context of many challenges, including an ongoing emergency situation in the greater Upper Nile region.

It is aso evident that armed conflict causes unspeakable suffering to children regardless of whatever is done to address or respond to their suffering e.g. adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as International Humanitarian Law. It is therefore vital to encourage and intensify all efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, ethnic divisions, illiteracy, racism, collapse of government and social structures, corruption, crime, drug trafficking and arms dealing, among others. To encourage compliance with international humanitarian law or international human rights law is not enough. Everything should be done to prevent States from going to war or different groups in the same State so as to protect the children who are the future of any state.

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An Evaluation of Child-oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Uganda and Northern Kenya

By Martin Okwir

Abstract

Today, children are among the most vulnerable groups affected by violence in conflict or face massive abuses of repressive regimes. If breaches of basic human rights become the norm in a society, children's education, family, and play can be torn apart, leaving them acutely vulnerable to physical harm, psychological trauma, displacement, and recruitment by armed factions such as terrorist groups, or other forms of exploitation. In the aftermath of societal upheaval, the voices of children (young boys and girls) are often absent from peace negotiations and subsequent transitional processes. Therefore, participation in peace- oriented initiatives by young people as key actors in post-conflict northern Uganda and Kenya are crucial. This paper analyses the ways in which young people continue to participate in peace-oriented initiatives by investigating the discourse of forming an integrated education system in the wake of continuous conflict. It goes ahead to explore how schools can bridge the gap between their violent and traumatic past by preparing them for the future. In analysing the challenges of abduction and schooling, the paper highlights specific girl and boy experiences that provide a sensitive gendered dimension. However, while attending school during and after the conflict presents functions of correcting societal inequalities, the experiences of abduction reveal challenges in reforming the lives of these young people. This paper seeks to evaluate different child oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Kenya and Uganda.

Keywords

Abduction; children; youth; schooling; post-conflict; reintegration; Northern Uganda, Northern Kenya.

Background and Context

In their wake, conflicts leave populations displaced, infrastructure and social structures broken down, services interrupted, and value systems eroded.[1] Conflict conditions also devastate community and household livelihoods, exacerbate poverty and deplete the resources necessary to ensure children's safety, health and development. In Africa, conflict and post-conflict conditions ultimately erode the capacity of families and communities to take care of vulnerable children.[2] As a result, children are deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life. Because childhood is characterized by development and dependency, children growing up in conflict-affected areas find themselves in dire circumstances that: negatively impact on their current and future lives and livelihoods; affect their chances of survival and holistic development; impact on choices and opportunities open to children; and environments devoid of structures that would provide for and protect children.

In Uganda, children represent one of the most vulnerable categories of people.[3] Years of brutal conflict and violence in northern Uganda have exposed children to multiple forms of vulnerability. There are currently still more than 112,000 displaced persons in northern Uganda, including 28,000 children.[4] Available evidence also shows that the northern region has the highest proportion of vulnerable children, aged 0-17 years (43 percent), including: children returning from IDP camps, orphans, children not attending school, child labourers, idle children, children living in child-headed households, children with adult responsibilities (heading households, married) and children with disability. The statistics in most cases far exceeded the national average of 38 percent.[5]

The Northern Uganda conflict has caused humanitarian crisis and exacerbated social, economic and political divisions in Uganda (IRC, 2006). As a result, one of the greatest challenges is how to ensure social cohesion in a post-conflict situation. One of the theories advanced about the usefulness of child-oriented peace initiatives and education in post-conflict societies is its impact on ensuring social cohesion within society. This discourse relies on the tenet that in divided societies where there is need to create a sense of citizenship, developing an integrated educational system and being sensitive to a unifying language as the medium of transferring knowledge can ensure a culture of tolerance (Arlow, 2004).

Formerly abducted children "child/children" were critically affected by the war in Northern Uganda. This study sought to answer the question as to how child-oriented peace education was conducted during the massacre, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in post-war contexts where life chances have been disrupted and recovering societies live in fear and hate. The study was particularly concerned with the ways in which abduction experiences unfolded in the lives of adolescent boys and girls (12-18 years) within the IDPs, the communities they lived in and schools they attended. Since the independence period of the 1960s, the continent of Africa has been riddled with conflicts and civil wars (Oliver, 2002). Uganda has been no exception. Since independence in 1962, Uganda has had seven changes of government, all of which have been violent and the main causes rooted in inequalities based on ethnicity (Cheney, 2007: 169). Deeply rooted in the colonial stereotyping of ethnic groups, national roles were determined on the basis of which ethnic group one came from and which role was presumed to best fit a particular group. Even after independence, the Northerners continued to hold primarily military jobs under President Milton Obote, a Lango (Luo) by tribe while members of ethnic groups from the South were recruited into civil service jobs and their lands were targeted for economic development (Ibid: 169). This directly impacted on how the national cake was shared amongst the different ethnic groups in Uganda leaving many disadvantaged.

Beginning in 1986 when President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni came to power, Northern Uganda experienced at least twenty years of severe civil conflict that took place between the Lords' Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group and the Government of Uganda (GoU). The conflict in Northern Uganda resulted in protracted violence within communities culminating in inter and intra ethnic violence with devastating effects on children. Children had been targeted for abduction as child soldiers and 'wives' to commanders and at least 20,000 to 25,000 returnee girls and boys passed through reception centers (UNICEF, 2010). Therefore, northern Uganda is an important place to evaluate the impact of child soldiers and the meaning of reintegration of children (Blattman, 2008). They suffered in terms of psychosocial wellbeing, education, economic activities, health and violence which challenged their reintegration into society (Roger et al, 2006). During their abduction, the children and youth were victims but after induction into violence by their abductees, they became perpetrators of violence and committed untold atrocities against their own communities thus further complicating their lives when they returned from abduction.

Overall Objective of the Study

The study seeks to evaluate child-oriented peace initiatives in a bid to unravel how peace initiatives can change the lives of children recovering from conflict, as well as the futures of their communities.

Specific Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the structures and processes of peace-oriented initiatives;
- To examine the initial goals and objectives of the initiatives and the extent to which they may have changed the lives of children experiencing and/or recovering from conflict;
- To find out the extent to which the initiatives contributed to peace-building and improved futures of conflict-affected communities; and
- To determine the potential for replicating child-oriented peace initiatives in other parts of East (ern) Africa.

Overall Research Question

The Northern Uganda conflict has caused a humanitarian crisis and exacerbated social, economic and political divisions in Uganda (IRC, 2006). As a result, one of the greatest challenges is how to ensure social cohesion in form of peace initiatives in a post- conflict situation. The study's overall research question, therefore, is: what roles do school-based peace education initiatives play in helping formerly abducted children overcome their traumatic experiences and re-enter their communities as full citizens?

Specific Research Questions

The research is purely desk-top with a broad analysis of the perceptions of life within the IDPs, community and school through different peace education initiatives. The research seeks to answer a series of research questions?

- What are the structures and processes of peace-oriented initiatives in Northern Uganda?
- What were the initial goals and objectives of the initiatives and to what extent have they changed the lives of children experiencing and/or recovering from conflict?

- To what extent have the initiatives contributed to peace-building and improved the futures of conflict-affected communities; and
- What is the potential for replicating child-oriented peace initiatives in other parts of East (ern) Africa?

Justification

This study explores meaningful child participation in peace initiatives and unravels how peace initiatives can change the lives of children experiencing and/or recovering from conflict, as well as the future of their communities. Child participation is a concept and a practice which has been researched and implemented through different projects across the world for years. However, although it is recognized that involving children in the decisions and actions that affect their lives is a positive shift in programming and a step forward in the attainment of children's rights, it is not always a straightforward process as evidenced in northern Uganda and northern Kenya.

"Despite many significant peace initiatives for children, their protection is not consistently prioritized in emergencies and post conflict regions, and good practices are not widespread." Centre for Development and Emergency Practice, Oxford Brookes University, Clare Back, January, 2013.

Furthermore one of the most difficult contexts to involve children and youth in making lasting changes in their lives is in the areas of conflict and instability, and such contexts further compound the challenges found in child protection programming. As a result, the prospect of child participation during and following a conflict is often riddled with uncertainty. Even though children and youth were undoubtedly most affected by the war both as the primary victims and primary actors, little evidence exists on the current situation of children in Northern Uganda and Kenya and what actions have been taken by both Governments, international development organizations, locally based NGOs, communities and other stakeholders to ensure successful recovery of this seemingly "lost generation". There is also little understanding of the magnitude, incidence, and nature of the violence, trauma, and suffering of children in northern Uganda.

Through meaningful participation, children can have the opportunity to develop their sense of agency, while gaining skills which they can apply when responding to challenges throughout their lives. However, questions such as; 'How does this work in practice for the affected communities of Northern Uganda and Northern

Kenya?', 'How effective is child participation in peace initiatives?', and 'How can children be engaged during a conflict when they may already be severely traumatized and overburdened?' need to be addressed to make participation a practicality. Nevertheless, the biggest question to be asked in favour of child participation is; how can children be protected from further trauma, violence, abuse and conflict if they are not given a say in the approaches adopted to prevent and respond to peace and security?.

There is a close linkage between child participation in peace education initiatives and formerly abducted children in Northern Uganda and north-eastern Kenya. Within a policy framework of 'Education for All', Uganda tries to ensure access to education for all children and youth, both male and female. However, there is no clear understanding of what peace education initiatives/schooling means for the formerly abducted children within their delicate histories and how peace education initiatives in schools could reform this experience positively and meaningfully. In the context of the conflict in Northern Uganda, it is imperative to ask critical questions to revalidate the relevance of peace education initiatives in schools for this marginalized population; the extent to which peace education in schools addresses the effects of abduction and the extent to which they offer the youth an opportunity to live productive lives. Despite how well the peace education initiatives within schools may operate, they reproduce the youths' fragmented sense of 'self' and exacerbate the long-term effects of abduction.

Literature Review

"Peace" is a broad concept with spiritual and practical connotations. It can imply a state of inner calm or the end of a conflict. As Lincoln P. Bloomfield notes, "peace is what you think it is (or want it to be)" (Bloomfield, 1986: 237). This expansive quality has led to misunderstandings about peace education. Some observers consider it vague, preachy, and insubstantial and perhaps even a waste of time. This was certainly the impression of a number of humanitarian agency officials interviewed in Northern Uganda. Many of those not directly involved with peace education programming displayed a poor grasp of its content and objectives. As a result, some were sceptical and even suspicious of it. One emergency education expert noted that this sort of reaction had fuelled tension over peace education programming for IDPs, returnees, refugees and street children. While many development agency officials questioned the utility of peace education, "IDPs refugees, street children and communities like it, and the donors do, too" (Foster, 1995: 20).[1]

Access to education is universally accepted as a fundamental human right. Article 28 of the United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that: "Each child has the right to education" (CRC, 1989). Therefore, IDPs, returnees, refugees and street children are covered by this treaty, since "all CRC rights are to be granted to all persons less than 18 years of age (Article 1) without discrimination of any kind (Article 2)". The Machel Report notes that denying education to IDPs, returnees and refugee children "clearly contravenes" Article 22 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (which states that internally displaced children, returnees and refugees should receive "the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education"). In addition, Article 28 of the CRC urges that agencies and governments "ensure that education services are part of both relief and immediate reconstruction activities" (Machel, 1996: 57).

Peace education is a component of a child's right to education. Section 1(d) of Article 29 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child addresses one aim of education that specifically applies to the subject of this research: the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin. Peace education,

1 This Research issue is detailed in the author's "Emergency Education for Children" (Sommers, 1999)

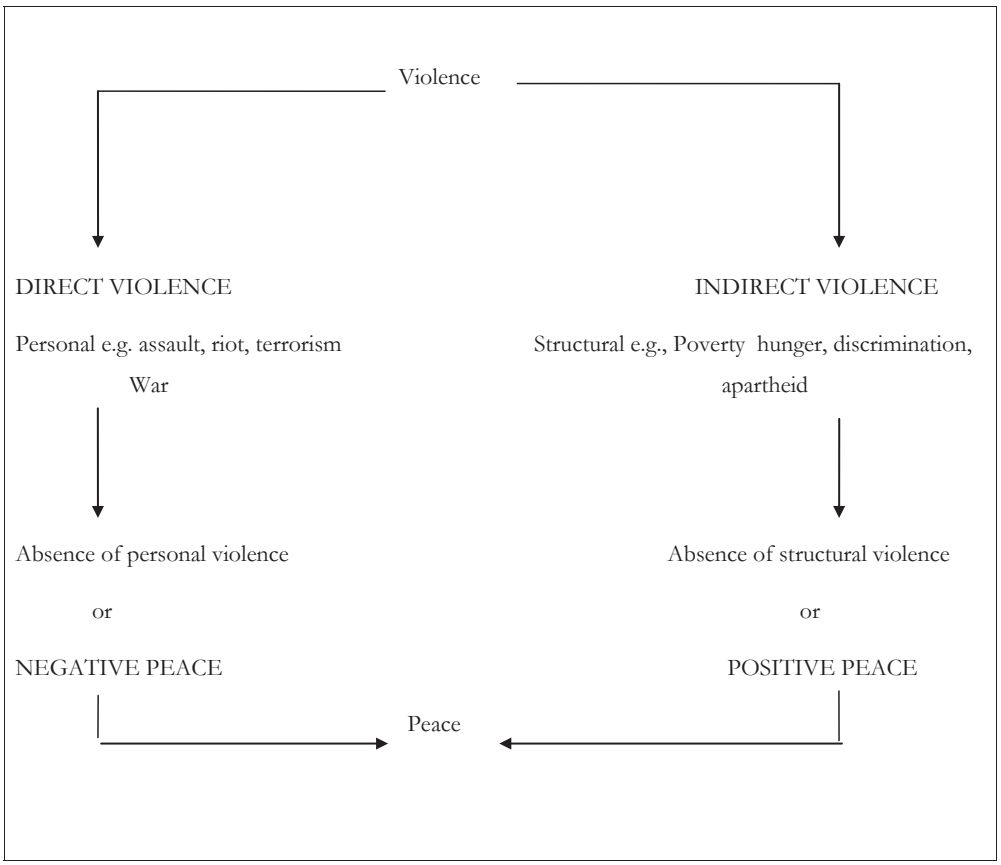
then, can be interpreted not only as an essential component of a child's educational experience but also an instrument for the promotion of peaceful, responsible, tolerant, equitable, friendly and free society. The connection between teaching school-children about peace and the cultivation of peaceful societies suggested is one of the central assumptions of peace education, and is a key pillar of this study.

Peace and Peace Education

Different approaches among peace researchers have created two concepts of significance to peace education: positive and negative peace. In his chronological evolution of the terminologies, Hicks (1988), noted that, beginning in the 1950s, "the initial emphasis in peace research was on direct (personal) violence" such as "assault, torture, terrorism, or war" (1988: 6). He further noted that the emphasis on conflict led peace to be defined "as merely the absence of war", or 'negative peace' (ibid). By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, definitions of peace emphasized violence that was indirect and structural in nature. This shift was directly influenced by Johan Galtung's conception of "structural violence" (Galtung, 1969). His expansion of the definition of violence led to a changed definition of peace and non-violence.

According to Hicks, the movement towards peace involved not simply eradicating war but "cooperation and non-violent social change, aimed at creating more equitable and just structures in society" (Hicks, 1988: 6). Hicks termed this second approach 'positive peace'. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between negative and positive peace. The two concepts, which were once thought to be in opposition to each other, began to be increasingly seen as complementary. Boulding (1991) attempted to unify these two concepts with an idea which he called "stable peace", by borrowing the notion of 'absence of war' from negative peace. Stable peace, he explained, "can be defined as a situation between two independent nations in which neither has any significant plans to go to war with the other" (Boulding, 1991: 108). Boulding also drew from the positive peace concept and argued that research on stable peace entailed exploring how social systems such as "religion or ideology" and economic behaviour "diminished or increased the chances of movement towards stable peace" (ibid. 111).

Figure 1: Linkages between Negative and Positive Peace



Source: Hicks, 1988

Negative and Positive Peace

Galtung takes a different approach. Where Boulding focuses on places where peace already exists, Galtung examines situations where it does not. Conflict is his starting point. In Galtung's view, conflict is always present and cannot be permanently "(re) solved" (1996: 265). As a result, peace cannot be achieved by attempting to eradicate conflict. Conflict must be turned into a non-violent activity. As Galtung states, "peace is what we have when creative conflict transformation takes place non-violently" (ibid).

Here, Galtung seems to be a researcher from the negative peace fold. Conflict is a fact of social life, defined by the absence of violence. Yet his approach crosses directly into areas Hicks identified as those of positive peace. He argues that

the transformation from violent to non-violent conflict "should be peaceful in itself, meaning low on structural and cultural violence" (ibid.). While the ideas of Boulding and Galtung suggest that the positive-negative peace dichotomy may ultimately be a false one, Reardon observed that many peace educators continued to emphasize the idea of negative peace because it was comparatively easy to teach. Most peace education teaching still "focused on negative peace that is, on reducing the likelihood of war"(1988: 14). Positive peace, on the other hand, was still "not conceptually clear enough for curriculum and for planning purposes" (ibid: 13).

The Peace Education Working Group at UNICEF also provides a concise and comprehensive definition of peace education as the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level (UNESCO, 2002).

In a declaration on a culture of peace, UNESCO called for an approach to education that is "directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations or religious groups," and furthering "the activities of United Nations for the maintenance of peace" (UNESCO, 1945). The declaration further defined peace education as a humanizing process of teaching and learning, which facilitates human development by counteracting the dehumanization of poverty, prejudice, discrimination, rape, violence, and war. Harris (1988) adds to this "humanizing" bringing in the concept of "empowerment". He maintains that peace education is the process of empowerment by which students and community members resolve their own problems and conflicts. This kind of empowerment is expected to enable underprivileged groups to learn, feel, and use their power and influence. He identifies the following stages for empowerment: **(1)** overcoming feelings of powerlessness, **(2)** confronting deep-seated fears of violence, **(3)** increasing awareness of public affairs, **(4)** leadership training, and **(5)** taking action.

Finally, for Salomon (2002), the primary concern of peace education is the reconciliation of society, protection of human rights, and development of peace skills.

Peace Education and Pedagogy in School

According to scholars such as Baldo and Fumiss (1998), peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and are modeled by the school environment in which pupils are taught. Of course, teachers (and school administrators) are the crucial actors taking the responsibility of achieving these values. Teachers must be able to foster positive social interactions among children, and establish and maintain positive collaborative relationships with families and the larger community to support students' learning and well-being (ACEI, 1997). That is why teachers should be prepared with universal values such as freedom, justice, human rights, gender equality, tolerance, and respect for the right to life. They should also develop an understanding of peace and a desire for an internalized peaceful culture (Deveci, Yilmaz and Kardag, 2008). In order to achieve the objectives of peace education, a school system has to be prepared for drastic changes including setting new educational objectives, preparing new curricula, (re) writing school textbooks, developing instructional material, and training teachers to create a school climate that is conducive to peace education (Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009).

Researchers further argue that teacher education programs need to provide opportunities for collaborative and interactive learning so that teachers can make peace values part of their own personality. Similarly, Brock-Utne (1989) argues that the peace educator who works with students to develop a more positive and detailed concept of peace, plays a pivotal role in peace pedagogy. Bretherton, Weston and Zbar (2010), while developing their "Peace Education Kit", focus on the use of child-centered, innovative, and participative pedagogies. They emphasize combining pedagogy with curriculum content and creating a teacher resource that is easy to use and written in plain language. They argue in favour of working in line with the existing systems rather than attempting to bring about change by working against the prevailing systems.

In elaborating the importance of schools for peace education, Harris and Morrison (2003) argue that the pedagogy of peace education should be "a philosophy and a process which caters to the skills of listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process should aim at empowering people with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are instrumental in the creation of a safe and sustained world. More specifically, Bar-Tal (2002) argues that peace education stands to achieve the objectives that are distinct from traditional

educational objectives and therefore require a different pedagogy. He delineates the following implications for peace education pedagogy: **(1)** peace education is an orientation, more a philosophy than a subject matter; **(2)** peace education has to be open-minded to avoid becoming doctrinaire; has to embrace contrasting perspectives and alternate ways of seeing rather than reinforcing dogma; **(3)** peace education has to be relevant; it has to deal with the real problems lived by real people; **(4)** peace education requires experiential, active learning that increases internalization and reflection more than traditional didactic approaches can achieve; and **(5)** peace education is teacher-dependent; without a teacher who understands and can model peace education, the enterprise will not succeed. The pivotal role played by the cultural and contextual realities and differences in peace education has been frequently highlighted in the contemporary research literature. Windmueller, Wayne and Botes (2009) report on a comparative case analysis in Tajikistan and demonstrate that the competences and pedagogical approaches for peace education are influenced by local culture and context. Likewise, Abu-Nimer, (2000) studied the perceptions of the educators, their role, and the obstacles they faced as the outcome of the Oslo settlement in an Israeli context. He found that in both Arab and Jewish communities, the sets of needs were quite different and contextual.

Retrak's Model

Retrak (2011) developed a model that explains the importance of returning internally displaced people/children, IDPs and street children to safe homes in families and communities, where each child feels a sense of belonging through a secure attachment to caring adults. The families and communities also provide the framework for successful peace education activities by ensuring that all activities are consistent and cater to both the children and their families. The journey involves both children and families. For children, it begins with outreach while they are still at the displaced camps and/or on the streets. The next step involves actively dealing with past experiences, identifying strengths and resources and exploring future choices. New attachments may come through family reintegration, foster care or independently with support from the community. The reintegration process is explained in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Reintegration of Children to their Families and Communities

Source: Retrak , 2011

Success depends equally on families and communities. Their journey begins by making contact through home visits, community activities and recruiting foster carers and community mentors through training and resourcing so they can build healthier environments to nurture and support their children. Retrak envisages that success would come through follow-up and care for each child, siblings, care-givers and the whole household, as well as the wider community that provides the necessary support.

Child and Youth Abduction

By 2007, the available statistics from various reception centers showed at least 22,759 individuals registered within the reception data base of returned abductees (Phoung Pham et al. 2007). This shows the magnitude of abduction in Northern Uganda. However, even this figure underestimates the magnitude of the problem since not all returnees register at reception centers. Those who died in captivity are not counted, and those who still live in captivity but their fate is unknown are also unaccounted for. Of the recorded number, at least two-thirds are children abducted mainly to perform as sex slaves, porters and soldiers (Ibid).

The definition of abduction has to be contextualized to have meaning. According to UNODC (2010), human trafficking, which is a crime equivalent to abduction, is understood as a 'process that involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through the use of force, or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them'. However, this definition refers to all forms of trafficking. In the context of the Northern Uganda conflict, abduction is understood as forceful recruitment of persons from their community into rebel activity against their will (Abigeil, 2005).

Ugandans and the international community alike tend to view LRA-abducted children simultaneously as victims and perpetrators of political instability (Cheney, 2007). However, only a small number of early LRA recruits were volunteers (many of whom became senior commanders in the force as time went on) and only a handful of these have returned from the bush (Blattman and Annan, 2008). The local community views these formerly abducted persons (FAPS) with varied opinion. The Acholi are known to have a culture of forgiveness and willingness to accept and encourage former LRA abductees to return home in an effort to end the war (Peer Support Report, 2008). In practice the reception is variable and many FAPs report rejection from their communities.

Experience of Abduction

In captivity, abductees existed as different groupings, were assigned different social roles and commanded different privileges. Some of the groupings include the top commanders, junior commanders, foot soldiers, wives or sex slaves and the porters. According to Pham et al (2007), the main abduction experiences can be summarized into two categories: sexual related experiences and exposure to other forms of violence. While women were for most times the victims of sexual violence, other forms of violence were common for both sexes (Ibid and SWAY report 2008).

Girl Torture and Abduction

Women generally experienced longer stays in captivity as compared to men (Pham et al, 2007). This is generally because they were mostly confined as wives within LRA bases and hence had limited chances of escape. In captivity, about a quarter of all female abductees performed varied tasks including fighting, cooking, pottery, fetching water, cleaning and as sex slaves (Mazurana and Carlson, 2006). According to a SWAY report (2008), women forced to become wives in captivity experienced

more than average violence perpetrated and witnessed than other female abductees and other long term abductees. This is something that Cheney (2007: 181) describes as a 'double stigma of captivity' because of their gender specific experiences.

Girls became wives to commanders. A SWAY report (2008) explains that nearly all top commanders had at least five forced wives and the lower level fighters averaging at least two forced wives. From these 'marriages', many ended up with children. There was a noticeable pattern on social roles and status. The wives of commanders associated amongst themselves and lived in distinct places together with the commanders. They used the 'ordinary' females as baby-sitters and servants within their reach. Being a wife to a commander also came with a set of privileges such as getting the cream of services like health care and protection.

Returnee Experiences

The problem with abduction is complex right from the time in captivity and extending to the long-term effects after return. The average length of time spent in captivity was 342 days (Pham et al, 2007). Pham also notes that female abductees stayed longer in captivity as compared to their male counterparts and younger abductees were likely to spend more time in captivity as compared to the older ones. The correlation in terms of experience and impact is that the longer the period spent in captivity, the more the chances of being exposed to violence in abduction and the greater the impact on the individual's recovery.

Abduction experiences have extreme psychological impacts on abductees and their communities. Overall, formerly abducted children experienced more psychosocial problems as compared to their non-abducted counterparts mainly because of social exclusion (Blattman and Annan, 2008). Such social exclusion is destructive to their psychosocial recovery as it constantly reminds them of atrocities they observed or committed during captivity. Furthermore, stigmatization generates a sense of guilt for the returnee, which can trigger depression.

Abductees also suffer economically. Longer abductions are associated with lower wealth and earnings and unemployment (Annan et al, 2010). This is mainly because of the lost time in abduction and the direct and indirect impacts on family and community acceptance that limit their chances of accessing employment opportunities and family wealth. Many initiatives have come up to ensure a smooth transition of the FAPS back home. Peer support groups, community sensitization, formal disarmament and demobilization, a period of transition in an interim

care centre, issuing of amnesty certificates, tracing and family mediation, family reunification, traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies, religious support, school-based skills training, ongoing access to healthcare for those in school or training, individual supportive counselling, and facilitation and encouragement have been worked to improve relations between the war- affected children and their communities (Peer Support report 2008).

However, these strategies do not necessarily bear all the desired results for FAPs as witnessed in Northern Uganda. Here, both combatant and non-combatant returnees face considerable reintegration challenges within their communities. In some cases, they have been treated as innocent victims who were simply abducted into the bush, while in others they have had to confront themselves with the realities of reconciling with the communities, against which they committed atrocities, sometimes culminating in stigmatization. For instance "Roco Wat I Acoli (2005)", some challenges were also identified in an attempt to demonstrate how returnees were socially ostracized through community resentment and name-calling. Among the common insults hurled were: 'rebel', 'Kony,' 'children of the rebels,' 'rebel wife,' or 'chicken thief.'

The challenges are still great for the young women. The report, Young Mother's Marriage and Reintegration (2006) outlines the challenges as loss of marriage opportunities as the most important socio-economic institution of support for mothers and children; forceful reunion with former LRA commanders who they were forcefully married to; and the question of children born in captivity and their identities in the clan.

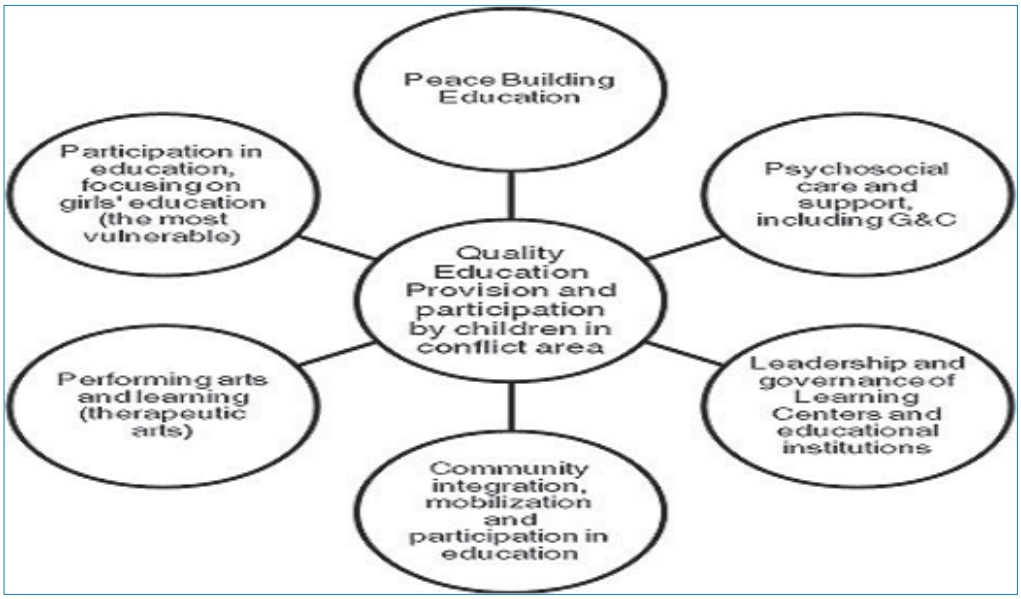
Successes, Challenges and Gaps in Peace Education Initiatives

Factors for Success of Peace Education Initiatives

In order to assist children to succeed in school, it is important to design programmes based on a socio-ecological model which emphasizes the need to engage the community, and family to support the schools, teachers, and the children. The focus should be on specific educational techniques that foster cognitive development within the classroom with support from the children's families, communities, and cultures (Opiro, 2005). Playing an active role in shaping and contributing to the children's future enables their families and communities to stop seeing themselves as victims of a hopeless conflict over which they have no control. The programme incorporates psychosocial principles to improve outcomes for conflict- affected children and adolescents. Revitalization of education, participation and learning in conflict areas was developed to implement the socio-ecological model to meet the education needs of children in Northern Uganda. It was implemented in Uganda's most severely war affected districts under the coordination of the Department of Special Needs Education, Guidance, and Counselling. The program created three model schools (or learning centres) in each of the affected districts. These centres then received extra attention to ensure full implementation of all aspects of the programme. After registering success, it was replicated throughout the conflict zones.

Specific psycho-social components: The establishment of learning centres created the conditions necessary for teaching and learning in conflict zones. The six pillars described in Figure 3) work in an integrated fashion to promote resilience, reduce risk, and foster human connections which are the building blocks of thinking. Within each decentralized classroom, students learn together in small groups and work together as a team to develop creative arts programs that serve the community through giving important messages about health, safety, and peace.

Figure 3: The Six Pillars of Quality Education



Source: Opiro, 2005

Direct personal attention to each student: Children affected by armed conflict are easily distracted. They avoid thinking to avoid painful memories, are pre-occupied with urgent family problems, or are anxious about the difficulties of learning that they cannot think at all. One-to-one attention helps the child to focus attention on the subject at hand. It calls the child out of their daydreams or blank state by directly calling their name, speaking to them clearly, and looking directly at them. With small groups, this becomes possible. Students, teachers, and teaching supports all address group members directly and by name. Students are encouraged to speak to their peers gently while in the small group. Group leaders help support and encourage the process.

Bringing local knowledge to school: When schools utilize local knowledge and honour respected elders and leaders, they help children to experience continuity between the past the present. This helps them to remember that they are more than the terrible things they have experienced; that they are part of a valuable tradition that has existed for generations long before them; and will continue to exist against all odds into the future, because of them.

Symbolic activities (Performing Arts in Learning or PAL): Symbolic activities, like music, art, drama, and dance, help children learn to take the stark world in which they live and turn it into symbols. They may start by drawing everyday things, and after some time begin to draw or write about their feelings, as they come to know and understand them. In Northern Uganda, many organization programmes have trained arts therapists and traditional healers in the classroom working with the children as a regular part of the curriculum. Pupils have been encouraged to participate in story writing, dance, drama, and musical performances. Story writing helped children to create and control a narrative, which helped to heal rifts in their past, present, and future, created by exposure to conflict. Control over the ending of the narrative helps children to feel a moment of power instead of powerlessness. Further, arts education engages students and community members around something that is culturally relevant and participatory, promoting exchange between pupils, teachers, and community members. The psychosocial developmental aspects of the arts programmes have so far been beneficial to students and community members alike.

Problem-solving through peace education: Helping the children to think of solutions to practical life problems (e.g. the kind of problems solved in maths) is important in helping children to begin to think and reflect. Problem-solving activities encourage the establishment and reinforcement of age-appropriate thinking patterns. Extending this problem solving to resolving conflicts creatively at home, school and between communities, supports young people to feel effective in the world. In situations of intractable conflict, all too often, people feel that they are just pawns, incapable of changing their worlds. Peace education promotes a sense of efficacy, an "I can" sense of self, that in turn promotes resilience and helps children to learn.

Life skills discussions and HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention: When children have been over-stimulated by violence, they often have difficulty concentrating on abstract subjects. HIV/AIDS materials are body-based. They encourage children to talk about their own bodies, the bodies of others and the physical realities in their lives. These techniques have been effective in helping children concentrate and participate successfully at school. Having mastered concrete subjects, they are often better able to turn to more abstract lessons. Conversely, many abstract subjects can be taught in the context of the "practical" body-based instruction.

Opportunities to participate in service: Service is built into many aspects of the classroom program. As noted earlier, children who feel bad about themselves, their lives and the violence that they have experienced feel better when they can do good things. Helping others makes children feel effective and confident even when they are struggling with learning or with life. When children are struggling in a group, they are offered opportunities to help with classroom chores or help other students.

Promoting girl education: The situation of girls in the conflict zones is a difficult one. Years of conflict, economic hardship, and separation from their families and farms have created a situation in which many women spend time performing income generating activities in order to support their families. This leaves the girls to tend to the smaller children and complete household chores including fetching water and wood, cooking, and cleaning. Girls have been subject to abduction at approximately the same rate as boys. Like boys, girls have been forced to fight after being taken away. However, they are often seen as defiled after they return and are left on the outskirts of the community.

Education for girls becomes important to their future. Education provides the means for them to earn their own living and gain control over their lives. Girls in focus groups were asked what they needed to be able to attend school. Many pointed to privacy and sanitary facilities, in addition to sensitization of teachers to their needs and plight. To help girls stay in school, older girls in upper level classes were employed as mentors and role models, and given time to spend with younger girls in the classroom. Teachers were trained on gender-friendly teaching techniques and group discussions helped teachers to understand the problems of girls and create conditions friendly to them. Gender-friendly curricula were introduced that helped girls to learn by relating teaching to the realities of their lives.

Challenges of War-Affected Children

...under the right circumstances a child's cognitive and affective processes can also serve as a source of strength, building resilience and increasing the child's ability to bounce back from unusual stress and trauma. This is especially the case when a child can count on continuous support from parents, family, friends and other community members and social institutions (Arafat and Musleh, 2006).

In trying to understand the realities of how FAPS lived through the school and how such an experience helped them reform their past for a brighter future, a series of issues was unearthed. One was the establishment of a School of War-Affected Children (SOWAC) which was organized around three main programmes reflecting the experiences and challenges that formerly abducted children faced, in an attempt to make them more functional individuals. This involved two main interventions: psycho-social support and vocational skills training offered at the school.

Psycho-social support forms the core programme that strategically deals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is because, at the start of the school, all learners were recruited on the premise of suffering from some psychosocial disorder as a result of their abduction experience. Consequently, all departments and activities within the school have a psycho-social support element embedded within them. Together, the peace and life skills are also closely linked and under the supervision of the deputy in charge of this department.

The vocational skills programme has three main components. First is enabling the trainees establish viable businesses after obtaining basic vocational skills in a community-based environment (exclusively for those learners taking vocational skills as their core option). Second is business theory and integrated production skills and third, is agricultural skills training.

Perspectives on Psycho-social Support

The interviews and focus group discussions allowed for the identification of several perspectives from the learners and staffs on how psycho-social support works to re-model the experiences of FAPs as well as key resources within the school that support their resilience. The teachers tended to view all the learners as children suffering from psychological trauma. The ideological usefulness of psycho-social support to the learners has led to its incorporation into various departments as a main strategy to ensure support to formerly abducted children. A teacher explained

that because of acute need for psycho-social support, it has led them to foster a deliberate psycho-social programme to help these individuals. Its usefulness is also reflected in the strategy for recruitment of learners.

When you come to the school, you are a different person. Life is disturbing. At home, the people hate you, the spirits chase you and you find no hope in life. But the school is a fair place. The teachers give us counselling and then you find you are different. Even the other pupils don't abuse you...they are actually not allowed to! When you play with other pupils you feel better and accepted[2].

Learners have also recognized the role of religion and prayers in complementing other psycho-social support mechanisms within the school. Learners have been engaged in prayer sessions intended to ease them from their traumatic experiences and they have reported that this has helped them to find new hope in life because they get someone to confide in. One girl reportedly claimed that she continuously had nightmares and illusions even during the day until she was helped through such prayer sessions. The role of religious institutions is further complemented by the support they provide to such learners. For example, the support the *Watoto Church*[3] has provided to the child-mother learners has gone a long way in ensuring that psychosocial support is holistic.

However, despite the great strides achieved through psycho-social support, it still has not adequately helped some of the learners to recover from their traumatic pasts. The school still lacks specially trained teachers in psycho-social support skills with most of the teachers only getting general teaching courses. The other reason is that the kind of counselling given to these learners is done on one-off sessions with no follow-up and hence the recurrence of such problems. Subsequent support is only provided on ad-hoc basis as and when it shows up. The third reason sighted was that the support given does not have any clear linkages with other potential community-based institutions such as *ker kal kwaro*[4] and the family.

Recreational Activities: A positive view was echoed by learners and teachers about the usefulness of games and sports as a recreational activity which also performed a psycho-therapeutic role. Games and sports which share the same ideology as songs and drama have been one central avenue through which psycho-

2 Interview with female learner, 26th July, 2010

3 The Watoto Church has had healing therapy for children and orphans all over Uganda. It also provides support to care givers of vulnerable children such as child mothers. In SOWAC, many of the child mothers from abduction have been supported by taking them into child mothers' schools.

4 Traditional Acholi clan leadership institution

social support has lived to its usefulness. The main ideology here is ensuring an environment of interaction, confidence building and experience sharing.

> *...you can see that they (former abducted person's) become more comfortable after playing games. When they perform well during sports they get to believe that they can also to do the things that the other learners do. When you sit alone, all that comes into your mind are the things that happened in abduction...these games help you to forget some of the bad things that happened to you.*

All these arguments demonstrate the therapeutic usefulness of games and sports to enable learners assume a normal state of operation.

Perspectives on Vocational Training

Teachers viewed vocational skills training as a useful alternative for learners to beat a fast- paced demand for schooling and prospects for earning a living. To the teachers, the fact that FAPs suffered long periods away from formal learning leading to disorientation, may dissuade many from learning. Vocational skills' training therefore comes in as an alternative to help them recover into meaningful living. The main objective of the vocational skills training is to give basic understanding on how business works and assist some to establish businesses from which to derive their livelihoods; and to develop and restore some basic crafts and agricultural skills. This is a useful way to help the learners gain from competitive schooling.

However, in evaluating the usefulness of the vocational skills training in compensating for the lost opportunities and deriving livelihoods, teachers noted that this was limited in terms of providing the start-up kits needed by the graduating learners. One teacher noted,

> *...after studying and being accredited as a successful student, learners have to be provided with a basic start-up kit containing specific equipment depending on their specialized courses. To the panic of the school, a graduation ceremony which is falling in two weeks is still short of these packages.*

Such setbacks have tremendous impacts on the student since they would have no way of translating their learnt skills into a livelihood, an experience that continues to impact on FAPS and their societal lives. Learners also raised concern about the usefulness of the vocational skills mainly because of technical planning and resource limitations. The department was short of training materials and equipment. This made it complex for the learners who passed through the department to acquire the necessary skills and expertise.

We have stayed for two weeks without classes. We don't even know when we shall have the next classes. Every time we go for the practical classes, we have to use the same old bricks and sand. There is nothing new to use.

In this context, you can see that both learners and teachers had a strong opinion that the school was designed to meet the needs of FAPS and living to its usefulness. This is true especially with the psycho-social support programmes together with games and sports. The findings also show that the vocational training department required a lot more attention in terms of servicing it with the necessary equipment to meet the needs of the learners and reorganizing the system to ensure it supported learning.

The Challenge of Violence to Schooling

Education as a Locus of Violence

Meaningful participation within schools is not a given. Today, many children are celebrating the prevalence of relative peace even after the 'failed' peace talks. The school today is a place where instances of violence are still possible and can be detrimental to the recovery of children who have undergone the violent experiences of abduction.

Direct Violence

Schools in sensitive security environments can expose learners to the dangers of insecurity especially abduction by armed forces UNICEF (2002). The fear of war resuming still remains eminent for the learners. When asked what they worried most about their studies, many children answered that the resumption of war was their greatest threat. This fear was beyond the control of the school. Many of these children had gone through the wildest times of war and some engaged in battle fronts. To them, these were experiences that should never come their way again. Some children reiterated their fear because they kept hearing that the LRA still existed either in the DRC, Central African Republic or South Sudan. For some, it reminded them of the difficulty of moving between school and home during the holidays as a result of the insecurity.

When I came to school, I could not go back for holidays. Everything was so difficult. They would shoot a convoy every other day on its way home. I had to request the teachers to allow me stay at school during the holidays. Some of the teachers then allowed me. They would give me food as I slept in the dormitory[5].

Indirect Violence

Access to schools can be a violent experience to FAPS. This was reflected in the selective manner in which children enrolled in school as evidenced in the case of SOWAC. Some children claimed that the selection procedure downplayed its usefulness to the majority needy population thus ensuring continued illiteracy. This was because of the flawed selection criteria. The school enrols learners at the sub-county level through an identification criteria initiated and controlled at the sub-county.

5 Interview with 17-year old SOWAC male learner who stayed in school for all the time of his studies, 29th July, 2010.

To many children, another form of indirect violence that they suffered was the poverty they were engulfed in. Many children viewed poverty as the 'second war' which could be equally detrimental as the violent war itself. Children freed from abduction particularly portrayed poverty of extensive magnitudes. Many had no families to take care of them and provide for their basic needs, others suffered from health effects from abduction or demonstrated powerlessness and social insecurity. These trajectories impacted their learning. One learner explained that he was not sure he was going to benefit from the schooling if he would still walk back into a community that would not ably support him outside school. However, many learners saw learning as an escape route out of poverty.

To many children, discriminatory practices against the learners by neighbouring communities were another form of violence suffered. In schools earmarked as for former abductees, the phenomenon of hate and revenge would not be avoided. The entrenched bitterness invited a spirit of revenge against the formerly abducted children whenever the learners interacted with the outside community. One learner cited how they were treated on one occasion when they went to play another school during a football competition:

> *They kept calling us 'dwog cen paco' and telling us to take back out madness to the bush every time we went to play. When we played them a foul, they would say we have brought back our bush mentality.*[6]

Message Politics

> *'Educators have a great responsibility not to become propagandists or to push students towards a specific political position...Human rights education must be exploratory, open-ended, and problem-solving. It should also call on the learner to identify and strive to eliminate injustice'* (Spring, 2004).

Some of the messages in the school read as follows:

- Violence is Bad
- Avoid Early Pregnancy
- Say No to Early Marriage
- Disability is Not Inability

6 Interview with male learner, 17 years old, 27th July 2010

- Avoid Stigmatization and Discrimination of HIV/AIDS Infected Persons
- Don't Escape From School
- Virginity is Health for Both Boys and Girls
- Negotiation Solves Disagreement
- Time Management Improves Performance
- Forgiveness Restores Peace

In investigating what these messages meant to the learners, it was discovered that they were too complicated for the learners to pick out on the messages entailed (spring, 2004). Speaking to the teachers revealed several insights about these messages. In reflecting on the messages carried in the inscriptions, one teacher said they were to promote the rights of the children and another thought they were a way for the learners to reconnect with the issues they could not easily learn in class.

> *These children have undergone various experiences. Many of them don't understand why they had to suffer from all these things. It's our duty as teachers to make them know that they are not acceptable and they should never be repeated*[7].

However, another teacher thought that the messages displayed within the school could easily re-victimize the learners and lead to moral exclusion of the victims. He reflected that the messages had lost out on the moral and ethical values of the experiences that these learners underwent under circumstances outside their choice and control. For example messages such as ***"Say No to Early Marriage", "Avoid early pregnancy", "Virginity is Health for Both Boys and Girls".*** These messages largely pointed to experiences that the FAPS had involuntarily undergone and the challenge was that they were irreversible and the victims had little control over them. He concluded that such messages, though meant to discourage such acts, should have been complemented with other responses meant to help the victims recover if they had to bear positive impacts on them.

The language used in these posters could sometimes have trigger effects. A researcher working closely with FAPS reckons the use of the word 'escape.'

7 Interview with teacher, 22nd July 2010

... to most FAPS, "escape" has been one of the key words that abducted children keep negotiating from the time they get into captivity, notwithstanding the fact that it (attempt to escape) has been one of the main sources of torture that abducted children undergo while in captivity. Using such words could be a potential cause of fear, even revoking memories of abduction. The use of positive language such as "Stay in School" could be a more esteemed alternative[8].

My personal reflection is that these messages were loaded with political ideologies and strong political connotations. According to one teacher, the main argument put across for these messages was to link schooling with a sense of nationalism in the learners. Messages such as Yoweri Kaguta Museveni[9] Hall and Retired Walter Ochora[10] Dormitory were witnessed on school buildings. However, to me, this was done without deep reflection on the likely repercussions that such names could evoke e.g. reproducing some of the effects of abduction as opposed to bringing social change. For example, for a student who had been a victim of torture and abuse by the UPDF, such figures might simply revoke pain as opposed to humour. The school could make more intellectual logic to the learners if learning messages were kept neutral from association with the perpetrators of crime or people who the learners considered as being responsible for these crimes. At the same time, such messages could have been more respectful in the eyes of the learners if they were backed with other meaningful responses such as livelihood support from such authorities.

8 Interview with researcher, Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), 3rd August 2010
9 President of the Republic of Uganda.
10 Resident District Commissioner for Gulu District; a position highly politically sensitive.

Education as a Tool to Promote Peace and Social Cohesion

The relationship between education and violence has not always been negative. On an affirmative note, education has been used to overcome violence, promote respect for human rights and harmony within society. Schools have been organized to ensure peace and respect for human rights especially not to allow commanders to reinforce their bush powers. For one ex-commander, even when he joined the school as an individual with a renowned 'bush' mentality, he was able to reintegrate and by the time of completion of his studies he was in interactive terms with the teachers and students.

Another prospect that could be used to transform the school culture into a more democratic practice was the students' political leadership. This was fronted by SOWAC through eliminating gendered discriminatory acts within the students' leadership. The school ensured a balanced gender representation within the school student leadership especially with regard to the two topmost positions, Head girl and Head boy. Girls have been encouraged and provided the same space as men. This has been a way to provide and encourage equal gender participation as well as promoting the status of girls within the school and reversing the patriarchal dominance within society. The challenge however remains in validating the extent to which the girls' could influence the issues that affected women and how this interacted with their male counterparts. Generally, leadership had played a sensitive role in an institutional setting where being male mattered.

In order to promote reconciliation and harmony within society and emphasize the need for schooling, the school brought together learners from different tribal backgrounds. Different tribes affected by the conflict bore varying impacts of the conflict which complicated recovery and reconciliation as others tended to blame themselves. For instance, Langi learners broadly believed that they had suffered under the leadership of the Acholi ethnic group which dominated the LRA leadership. The teacher in charge of counselling reflected that though this war was thwarted with a sense of revenge and reprisal amongst the different tribes, continuous counselling and sensitization about the causes and complexities associated with the conflict could be transformed into a culture of tolerance. He envisaged that if this new generation could be brought together, it could grow up in harmony. Such strategies might have helped to produce a new generation free from the divisive impact of conflict.

For many formerly abducted children, access to extra-curricular activities was an important factor in ensuring meaningful social experience and increasing their chances of academic success. Within the school setting, there have been efforts to ensure equal opportunity and access to extra-curricular activities to the girls and boys. Overall, many children believed that the school could play a positive role in ensuring protection and improving their lives especially in their personal, social and academic domains. Having passed through a militaristic experience of violence, schools could introduce them to yet another dimension of violence embedded within the structures and values surrounding it.

The Girls' Experience: The girl's abduction experience has been masked mainly by sexual violence and abusive marriage relations. The school has moved to reduce the impact of such negative experiences and made learning a possible and positive venture for such girls in a safe environment.

Sexual Violence: Among the continuously recited sexual violence cases were rape, forced marriage, and the resulting affects such as unwanted pregnancies, identity of children born of them and daunting health impacts.

Reforming rape experience through learning: Rape has become one of the greatest war tactics employed especially against female victims of war. It is an intricate issue with widespread, systemic and prolonged impact such that it is difficult to find a girl in puberty that has not walked through abduction and rape. As a result, such girls have ended up getting exposed to sexual encounters at very tender ages against their consent, often leading to psychological torture, extensive gynaecological damages and HIV contraction.

Rape has particular health impacts on learners which can complicate their life within school. Many girls contract HIV/AIDS in captivity after exposure to risky sexual engagements. It was reported by the school nurse that during the last three years, at least three children died from HIV/AIDS. She further cited that suffering from such chronic illnesses also has potential mental impairments that might reduce the learning ability of such children. Such impacts also get back onto their social lives in school because of the stigma and trauma experienced by individuals isolated because of their status. Their vulnerability from sickness has a debilitating effect on their learning. The school has to continue promoting human education within society to provide safe space for its learners (Michael and Rahel, 2003). This is vital in protecting girls from abusive sexual relations resumed after return which may be equated with rape experiences. Schools leave their learners

vulnerable to forced re-marriages with their bush "husbands" because they do not have in place mechanisms to protect the girls. According to Blattman (2008), girls worry about being forced back into such marriages. Yet, as recited by one of the female respondents, having cross-generational sex has one of the greatest traumatic impacts.

Unwanted marriage and pregnancy/children: For most learner-mothers learners who went through SOWAC, their children were either a product of rape or unwanted pregnancy. Some girls were reported to have been inducted into puberty prematurely through the use of herbal concoctions so that they could be given to commanders as mature women ready for sexual engagement. This has contributed to single motherhood and child mothers. Mothering children has affected the schooling of such girls especially in terms of getting adequate space for them and their children, the stigma against their children, and the lasting impact from pre-mature exposure to sexual intercourse.

Child mothers have been constrained in their learning because of their children. It was understood that creating an environment where young mothers could learn together with their children was difficult for SOWAC. It was noted by one of the teachers that a day- care centre was established for children whose mothers studied within the same school. However, for the tender-aged children, the school was not in a position to take care of them as well as their children. This has had a tremendous impact on both the child and mother. Many were referred back home until their children matured into school-going age. Such expulsions from school sometimes resulted into total forfeiture of schooling since the girls got absorbed into other ventures.

The challenges that formerly abducted girls faced at school were further complicated by the identity and stigma against their children. At home, they had been segregated against and always found it difficult to situate themselves within communities. Many girls would return with children whose fathers remained in abduction. As a result, the women together with their children returned without reference any clan or family to which they belonged. In Acholi culture, the child and mother belong to the clan of the husband and Acholi clans play an important role in determining the identity of its members and that of the children (Bailey, 2009). Back in school, these children presented a new problem. When asked what challenges they faced with their children at school, many formerly abducted mothers were quick to point to the stigma surrounding their children. While such impacts were remarkably

reduced in school, seeing their children suffer from such acts of segregation greatly impacted on their academic concentration and performance. In certain cases, the girls simply walked out of school when they could not endure it anymore.

Another finding from the research was that girls suffered as a result of early childhood sexual abuse and subsequently had difficulties adapting to school rules. The challenge was that little attention was given to discussing the harmful impacts of child sexual abuse leading to lack of knowledge on these early exposures (Michael and Rahel, 2003). At SOWAC, many of the girls proceeded with regular sexual engagements, an act that was impermissible in school. Some even tried to find their way out of school and reach out to their sexual partners. Without understanding the complexities surrounding such behaviour, the school often responded by expelling the culprits or simply cases of absence from school.

Marriage and its dilemma for learners: Education expands the marriage openings for formerly abducted girls and while schooling can be embraced for lifting the economic chances of child mothers from captivity and ensuring self-reliance, the problems concerning marriage still remain eminent. It is understood that when the girls return home, they are faced with stigma that normally complicates their chances of finding marriage partners. Schools present a specific negative correlation with marriage for increasing individual independence, freedom to make choices and changing values. Education for formerly abducted girls is also likely to sway parents to charge higher bride price for their daughters thereby discouraging potential husbands especially the poorer ones. While this might sound rational because of the capacity built, many men still view these girls as formerly abducted which further lowers their chances of finding marriage partners.

Another factor that constantly posed a threat to the child mothers was the fear of forced re-marriage. Most of the school-going girls who had mothered in captivity were continuously confronted with the spectre of rejection when it came to re-establishing the unions they began while in the bush, as a pragmatic solution to the challenges associated with re-marrying. While such threats have not been commonly associated with SOWAC, other cases such as one where a former LRA commander, Sam Kolo, came claiming back his "bush wife" but was forcefully chased away by the girl's mother, present practical threats for the girls. Such instances demonstrate the eminent threat that school-going girls can still be exposed to when they return to communities that cannot protect them. The school should ensure that such protection needs of their learners are taken into account

so that they are not exposed to the same abuse and mistreatment as in abduction.

Consequences of sexual health on education: There are certain social conditions that people in abduction were born into, lived and aged with that undermined their health. Traumatic experiences such as witnessing grave atrocities could lead to "madness" and physical ailments. Many respondents also attributed "over thinking" to the *cen* (spirit) of a killed person returning to haunt the killer. Other social determinants that affected health included: overcrowding which affected physical health and led to an emotional sense of loss of freedom; poverty; loss of land which affected physical health in terms of lack of food and income; and mental health problems because of worry and uncertainty (Roberts et al, 2009). Such experiences have sometimes manifested themselves negatively on the experiences of girls in school.

Menstrual experiences together with social and cultural norms were reported to have had particular effects on the girls' health and education. Treated as taboo, it was surrounded by a culture of silence which made it even more difficult for girls to access the relevant health education with regard to menstruation. Those who experienced menstruation were segregated, according to a female learner. For example, menstruating women were not allowed to touch food or go to battle and were also prohibited from interacting with the rest until the experience was over. This left the girls feeling guilty for normal human biological experiences.

In school, abduction and menstrual experiences presented particular impediments on the socialization of girls. For formerly abducted girls, their biological wellbeing was handled with dishonour. One girl recounted how they were segregated upon based on such experiences, "...they would say that we were not familiar with using sanitary pads. Sometimes, if used pads were found dropped in the school compound, they would say that it was us (formerly abducted girls) who had dropped it[11]." Yet the school administration may not have been aware of such discriminative acts. Instead, the school confirmed that these girls needed more information about such health practices if they were to conform to the recommended health practices within the school.

Girls in school were continuously victims of psychological torture which had peculiar health impacts. Girls suffering PTSD suffered intense nervousness, difficulties in concentrating, memory impairment, sleep disorders, emotional numbing, and other violent reactions to situations related to their experiences (Michael and Rahel,

11 Interview with a female learner, age 17, 29th July 2010

2003). These effects had particular impediments on their education that reduced their learning capabilities. This is true especially in a statement given by the school nurse.

> *These girls cannot settle to learn. The impacts from their experiences are huge and they keep disturbing them. Many have little concentration in class and some just don't want to be in school. When things become hard, they just can't persevere and choose to leave school*[12].

This study looked at the commitment of the school system to reform some of the girl-specific experiences of abduction. Most of the school systems offered an opportunity for the girls just like the boys to advance up the educational ladder despite historical impediments. It has, however, been noted that some of the measures taken to ensure maximum impact could be achieved if they were freed from the threat of sexual harassment and gender-biased assumptions of how girls should learn, and addressed the lasting impacts from their experiences in captivity.

12 Interview with school nurse, 4th August 2010

Government Response to the Plight of Vulnerable Children in Uganda

Universal Primary Education

Government of Uganda (GoU) introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. Before UPE was implemented, the cost of education constituted a major obstacle to primary school attendance. Since the introduction of UPE, primary school enrolment in Uganda has more than doubled, from 3.1 million children in 1996 to more than 8 million in 2011.

In northern Uganda, primary school enrolments increased from 356,182 children (216,185 males and 139,997 females) in 1996 to 1,674,650 (862,219 males and 812,431 females) children in 2010. In 2010, the Gross enrolment ratio (GER) for Kitgum and Lira was estimated at 129 percent and 144 percent respectively, compared to the national average estimated at 120 percent. In addition, the Net Primary enrolment rate (NER) was estimated at 109 percent and 95 percent for Lira and Kitgum respectively, compared to the national average estimated at 83.3 percent.

However, school retention and completion rates are still low. Only 20 percent of the children complete primary school in the north. There are many factors associated with drop out and non-completion rates for children in northern Uganda. These include failure of parents to meet additional non-tuition costs associated with schooling such as scholastic materials, hunger and lack of school feeding programmes, pressure on children to work and earn income for the household, and early and/or forced marriage. Other common causes for school dropout include distance to school and poor quality of education.

The quality of education in the region continues to be undermined by several factors such as mixing of children of different ages and abilities in the same classroom especially in lower primary without proper adaptation and teaching methods; overcrowded classrooms; limited funding and delay in release of funds; and teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism is mainly attributed to low job satisfaction, low pay for teachers, and lack of staff quarters at some schools. The quality of education is also affected by inadequate infrastructure. For example, only 54 percent of the pupils enrolled in primary schools have access to adequate sitting and writing space.

Additional factors that influence the continuation of children in primary level include perceptions of how education would influence lifestyle and career possibilities, and availability of options to access secondary school and beyond. Repetition was also cited as a reason for children's decisions to drop out of school. Recent estimates indicated that the northern region had the highest repetition rate at 16.9 percent, above the national average of 10.9 percent. The repetition rate was almost equally distributed at 17.0 percent for female and 16.7 percent for males.

Universal Secondary Education (USE)

In 2007, Uganda became the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to implement free secondary education. Expansion of access to secondary education was the main policy thrust for secondary education. Universal Secondary education aims at addressing the challenges of poor transition of primary school leavers to secondary level created by a combination of factors, including poverty. Under the USE scheme, students who get specific grades in each of the four primary school- leaving exams, study free in public secondary schools and participating private schools. The government pays the school an annual grant up to Ushs. 141, 000 ($52) per student, spread over three school terms.

Since the outset of the programme, student enrolment figures increased from 814,087 in 2006 to 954,328 (in 2011 according to the Ministry of Education and Sport, an increment of over 17.2 percent. In northern Uganda, about 139,105 (88,058 male and 51,047 female) children are currently enrolled in secondary schools. However, like UPE, the USE programme is fraught with problems.

First, free education is not necessarily free in practice. There are both hidden and explicit costs. Students are expected to pay for books, uniform, meals, transport, etc. These costs represent a significant barrier to enrolment of many children. Second, the poor quality of education is also a significant concern. The study revealed that the quality of education received in UPE and USE schools was poor compared to the Non-UPE/USE schools. The quality of education is also hampered by inadequate teaching spaces and materials (e.g. utilities, books and supplies), a shortage of teachers, low teachers' salaries resulting into absenteeism and/or lack of motivation, and inadequate and late disbursement of government funds.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

It is estimated that there are 6,579 ECE centres in the entire country. Up to 742 (1.3 percent) ECE centres are in northern Uganda. About 67,611 children (33,923 male and 33,688 female) are enrolled in pre-primary Schools/ECEs in northern Uganda, accounting for 13.6 percent of the country-wide pupil enrolment. In addition, 2,293 children (1,158 male and 1,135 female) are enrolled in day care, accounting for 24.8 percent of the total day care enrolments country-wide.

This study reveals that there are a number of organizations providing ECD programmes in Northern Uganda. In Lira district, under their community lead action for children programme, Plan International in Uganda is supporting 2 ECE centres in Barr sub-county, 32 in Aleptong sub-county and 32 in Apala sub-county. Under their ECD programme, the children targeted are aged 3, 4 and 5 years of age. PLAN provides learning kits, mats, corner play games, cement and iron sheets for construction of ECE centres. Plan also recruits and pays caregivers at the ECD centres. A lead caregiver receives a monthly stipend of Uganda Shillings X 100 and a care-giver receives UGX 60,000. In Kitgum district, Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) is currently providing support to 2 ECD centres in partnership with CESAL (city of Madrid, Spain). AVSI provides support with furniture, learning aids and building materials as well as training for teachers. Another organization providing support is Action for Children (AFC) in Lira. With funding from USAID, AFC is currently supporting 2 ECD centres with nutritive food supplements such as maize flour (Maganjo) and sugar which are purchased locally. AFC also recruits volunteers to help in the preparation of porridge for children in the morning.

Catch–up and Second-chance Education for Children in Northern Uganda

To complement the government's efforts in providing educational opportunities, some organizations such as BRAC, Plan International, War Child Holland and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) are implementing second-chance education programmes. Second-chance education initiatives primarily target children who never had the chance for an education or who had dropped out of primary school. These include orphans and other vulnerable children such as formerly abducted children (FAC), former child soldiers, child mothers, etc. For example, the NRC, under their accelerated learning programme (ALP) targets over-age, out-of-school children especially those who missed out on education due to captivity and encampment, enabling them re-enter the education system and complete primary education.

Almost all programmes focus on basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. But as the students' progress, they are mainstreamed into government-run primary schools. The main features of second-chance education programmes include child-friendly teaching environment, school timing flexibility, etc. Similarly, in Lira district, Plan International is implementing a catch-up education programme for out of school children who are willing and able to re-join primary school education. The programme has 3 levels of entry where level one and two are for younger children re-joining lower primary classes, while level 3 is for older children who can be fast-tracked to complete primary seven.

School Feeding Programmes

Between 2005 and 2008, the UN World Food Programme implemented a school-feeding programme targeting over 1, 360 schools in the conflict affected districts in North and North- eastern Uganda. The programme specifically targeted schools operating in the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps and in Refugee-hosting districts. Up to 776,000 children, constituting up to 12% of the children enrolled in UPE in the region, benefitted from the programme. The programme also involved provision of free food (lunch) at school under the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK). The provision of free food at school under ABEK attracted about 42,250 learners in Karamoja of which 1,427 crossed to the formal education system.

The school feeding programme was intended to provide an immediate consumption transfer to children and encouraging children from poor households to attend school even during difficult times. Under the programme, WFP supplied assorted food items mainly maize meal, beans and vegetable cooking oil. Parents were expected to contribute firewood. Although the programme was originally designed as part of a recovery strategy, it was changed to relief due to the continuing civil conflict by the Lord's Resistance Army in the region. Available evidence shows that this programme significantly increased enrolment and attendance rates for children, and reduced dropout rates. An independent evaluation also revealed that meals were generally rated as of good quality, culturally acceptable and considered tasty by the children.

Similarly, ACDI/VOCA has also been implementing a school-feeding programme since September 2010, under its Literacy Enhancement and Rural Nutrition (Uganda-LEARN) programmes. The programme targets 33 schools in the North-eastern region in the districts of Katakwi and Amuria. The Uganda-LEARN program provides school lunches of corn-meal, yellow peas, and vegetable oil to

over 25,000 primary school pupils in 33 schools each day that they are in session. In addition, female pupils with an attendance rate of 80 percent or higher receive monthly take-home rations of corn-meal during the school year, and they and their families receive health and nutrition lessons before each distribution. Over 10,000 girls earn take home rations each month. As a condition of participation in the program, School Feeding Management Committees (SFMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) lead the rehabilitation of school food storage and preparation areas, and ACDI/VOCA has trained members of these groups from all 33 schools in proper storage, safe handling and preparation of the food. The program has provided the schools with large cooking pots and the communities themselves contribute other necessary inputs, such as cooking fuel, flavour additives, and labor to prepare the daily meals. Similarly, Action for Children (AFC) also has a school feeding arrangements in over 50 ECD centres in Lira districts. Under the programme, the organization provides ECD centres with sugar and nutritive food supplements. ECD centres also receive maize flour (Maganjo) and AFC identifies volunteers to participate in preparation of porridge for the children

Several others organizations such as AVSI and Action for Children (AFC) have initiated and/or are currently supporting a range of small-scale community-based school feeding programmes**,** albeit on a limited scale. For example, AVSI is supporting school feeding in 1 UPE school and 2 ECD centres in Kitgum district. Children in the target schools receive maize porridge for breakfast and in some cases free lunch. In addition, the organization is implementing a pilot programme referred to as the junior farmer field's programme in Kitgum district. Under this programme, AVSI has established a demonstration farm at one selected school in Kitgum district. On this farm, children and their parents are encouraged to participate in agricultural production. Parents are supposed to till the land, plant the foodstuffs and do other gardening activities. During their free time especially on the weekends, children are encouraged to participate in weeding. AVSI hopes that the food harvested from this will be utilized for feeding the children whilst at school. This programme has only been running for less than a year, and AVSI intends to scale it up, once it is proven to be successful. It is hoped that this will be a model intervention for other schools in the district.

Similarly, All Nations Christian Church Care (ANCCC) is also implementing a school-based gardening project with support from SNV Netherlands. The programme engages parents and school to ensure food production with the aim of meeting the school feeding needs of children. The organization requires beneficiary schools to have land for agriculture (4 acres). In cases where schools

have no land, some parents have stepped in and donated land to schools. At present, only 26 UPE schools are benefitting from this programme.

In schools with no school-feeding programme, parents and care-givers are expected to take on the responsibility of feeding their children. School authorities and some organizations are increasingly encouraging parents to organize packed lunch for their children according to what is available in their homes or contribute a specific amount of money for school feeding. For example, Plan international encourages parents of children under its education sponsorship programme to contribute a specified sum of money to the school administration for preparation of porridge and lunch for the children. For the parents unable to contribute money, they are encouraged to make contributions in kind, providing food items such as maize flour, beans and cooking oil. The programme runs in 20 UPE schools in Lira district.

Challenges and Limitations of School Feeding Programmes

Overall, the school feeding programmes are few and limited in scale. Many children still go hungry which affects their ability to concentrate and actively participate in class. Unfortunately, the government is yet to develop a school feeding policy to facilitate mobilization of resources to scale up testable and proven school feeding interventions and guide the actors. Under the UPE programme, government-aided schools receive a capitation grant that only covers tuition fees. Parents are expected to meet the nutritional needs of children whilst they are at school. However, in many parts of northern Uganda, parents cannot afford to pay even the minimal cost of a simple meal of maize porridge.

Sustainability

Most of the programmes have been initiated by donor-funded organizations. The continuation and sustainability of these programmes is therefore dependent on continued donor funding.

Operational Costs

The operational costs of school feeding are quite high and yet the demand for services is higher than what is currently available from the few organizations supporting it in rural schools. At present, limitation of funds also poses a major challenge to school feeding programmes. Only a small number of schools are benefitting from existing school feeding programmes. Due to limited funds, organizations are unable to scale-up their services across all schools in the region.

Lessons for Northern Kenya

(i) Leaders Must Engage All Children/Youth in Children's Clubs

The establishment of child/youth clubs and their networks as micro-level community institutions was one of the milestones in youth participation. They created opportunities for youth-led organizations to involve them in enhancing their understanding through Increased accelerated learning opportunities for older youth and adults these has been achieved through the provision of toolkits and apprenticeship opportunities for technical/vocational school graduates. This has helped children and the youth to raise their voices collectively as well as to establish themselves as key actors in local level development and political structures. As such, the roles of children and youth are gradually becoming visible in communities thereby highlighting their capacities in the communities. Over the years, resistance from elders and seniors promoting and supporting the rights of children and youth has decreased significantly. The environment has thus become more conducive for children's and youth's participation in social work and governance (Karki et al, 2012).

(ii) All Children to Participate in Functioning of Clubs and Leadership Transfer

One of the major objectives of supporting children and youth to organize child/youth clubs and their networks is to provide them with opportunities to learn democratic values and practices. The members of child/youth clubs participate in internal functions and decision making processes within the clubs as well as in the election (or selection) of key leadership positions (i.e. Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.) in the club and networks. Externals can distinctly notice the children and youth following the democratic process in electing the key members of the clubs either by consensus or by election (ibid.). Likewise, the majority of child/youth clubs and their networks organize monthly meetings to gain some understanding and better communication which are effective procedures for dispute resolution within the clubs as well as transferring leadership within clubs and offer the necessary technical support.

(iii) Compulsory Participation in School Youth Clubs

There is an emerging trend whereby schools invite members of child/youth club members during School Management Committee (SMC) meetings. In certain schools, they have nominated focal teachers who undertake bridging roles between

clubs and school management. However, the participation of club representatives is limited to matters related to a school's operation or conducting classes. In matters related to school construction, infrastructure development or external affairs, child/youth participation needs to be further enhanced (ibid).

(iv) Compulsory Participation of Children in Village Development Committees (VDCs)

Representatives of the network of child/youth clubs were invited, as stakeholders, to participate in a pre-planning meeting organized by the VDC at community level. Similarly, district level networks of child/youth clubs were invited as advisors in the finalization process of District Development Committee (DDC) planning at district level. The child/youth clubs and their networks are gradually gaining recognition at the community, VDC and district levels. The work done by the child/youth clubs regarding community mediation and children's and youth's issues has helped them gain this recognition. Additionally, child/youth clubs are maintaining coordination and linkages with mainstream structures e.g. school, village child protection committee, DDC, District Administration Office and District Police Office.

(v) Compulsory Reintegration of Ex-combatant Youth

During the armed conflict and post-conflict period, the youth were oriented on the importance of being involved in development activities. Hence, the youth returning from armed violence are identified, listed with the youth clubs and accorded high priority in most of the programmes. The Youth Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (YAAFAG) are invited to youth clubs, youth information centres through door-to-door visits by the youth themselves. They are invited to be part of the vocational and micro-enterprise development trainings. Special staff members were seconded to NGOs for counselling support to help the ex-combatant youth to re-join school, family and youth-led structures.

(vi) Youth Information Centres

A youth information centre is a forum with the potential to bring the youth's views and participation to bear on local peace building and reintegration after conflicts. Moreover, the aim is to construct a tool for social healing processes. There are youth information centres that are either part of youth clubs or sister structures. However, in both situations, local youth club members are actively engaged in day-to-day operations and management. They are successful in disseminating information about HIV/AIDS, peacebuilding, sexual health and so forth (Maharjan, 2011).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study evaluated the role of schools in reforming abduction experiences of adolescents. It has reviewed what a school can contribute for the abducted lot. There is indeed a close linkage between education of formerly abducted adolescents in Northern Uganda and their process of recovery and ability to move on. Children and adolescents who are victims of abduction go through the school system to gain a livelihood or new life for themselves but are also exposed to the challenges of violence and social disruption embedded within the system.

Schools address the critical challenges from abduction and rebuild the fragmented self of war- affected children. However, the same system is built within disruptive structures that can be detrimental for FAPS.

The research has shown that carefully designed school-based systems such as psycho-social support programmes and special needs vocational programmes can help FAPs recover from their traumatic pasts. The finding also reveals that children are proud to be in school and are positive about the new social environment that they interact with. However, if care is not taken, violence which is a striking experience for FAPs, can be reproduced in the new school context.

The school remains a space confronted with violent structures and value systems that FAPs have to continuously negotiate. This leaves not only the boys but also the girls exposed to delicate impacts of abduction, ruining their chances to recover and sometimes bearing the same experiences again.

Taking into account the specific abduction experiences and the impairment that they cause to children is the first step in ensuring a supportive system. It should not aggravate but supportively transform these experiences to ensure normal growth and maximum benefits from schooling. Practices such as transforming the curriculum and improving pedagogy to provide the society's underprivileged members with a more empowering education are relevant in ensuring that the system is stripped of its wrathful effects.

In a similar manner, ensuring social cohesion through education in society is an extensive process requiring enormous strategies. In particular, a research-oriented analysis of the causes of conflicts should inform educational governance and policy issues that guide curriculum development. This is relevant because to the educationalist, schooling can expose children to difficult situations enmeshed within a system of dominance, shadowing and structures of violence.

Finally, the specific concerns relating to education during armed conflict, their recovery and the challenges in implementing school policies stem from their very communities. Investigating the particular concerns from the community point of view could play a big role in ensuring that schooling could meet the broader needs of the community. If children engaged with the sensitive educator who pays attention to all the contributing facets, then, education becomes a space to promote social cohesion in the aftermath of conflict rather than re-awakening the scars of abduction.

Therefore, it can be concluded that initiatives in education constitute a sensitive space and educational policy designers should pay particular attention to the issues that pertain to this context. If well done, provision of different school initiatives may offer desirable outcomes for the children in hard-to-reach conflict areas such as those in northern Kenya that are still facing cattle raiding, and abductions, by bridging the gap between their traumatic past and their future.

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Highlights of Key Messages in the Issue Briefs

This fact sheet is a quick reference guide regarding issues discussed in the two papers. The key messages include:

Protection of Children in Armed Conflict: Case Study of South Sudan

- War makes everybody potentially vulnerable. Although children show incredible strength and resilience, their young age makes them more vulnerable than adults. War exposes children to a whole host of risks, some of them unimaginable. The most obvious ones include the risk of orphanage, death, injury, displacement or separation from family. Losing access to health services also puts children at great risk as this can mean death or long-term effects following a simple injury or illness that has not been or cannot be cured. A child without adult care is at risk of neglect and all kinds of abuse. For example, children may become easy targets for armed groups or forces looking for new recruits. They may also be at risk of being trafficked and sexually violated.

- The UN Security Council identifies six grave violations against children during armed conflict due to their especially egregious nature and severe impact on a child's wellbeing. They include: killing and/or maiming; recruitment or use of child soldiers; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abduction; attacks against schools or hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access. Most of these violations have already been reported in South Sudan.

- The face of warfare changed towards the latter half of the 20th century. Interstate wars became relatively rare and got outnumbered by internal conflicts. However, while classified as internal, the majority of these conflicts have an international element. Often, conflicts spill over into neighbouring States in the form of refugee flows. States also involve themselves through financial, military and political assistance or intervention. In internal conflicts, the battlefield is not clearly marked and people often get caught up in the conflict as victims or participants, a distinction that is sometimes hard to draw (e.g. in the case of child soldiers). Violence against the civilian population by both government and non-state forces is now the rule rather than the exception.

- International Humanitarian Law is the body of law that seeks to regulate the methods and means of warfare and the treatment of people in times of war, who are not, or who are no longer (e.g. prisoners of war, or injured soldiers), participating in the hostilities. The international community has been attempting to regulate warfare for well over a century. However, the most significant humanitarian law treaties that apply to warfare today are the Geneva Conventions which were drafted in the aftermath of World War II, and the two Additional Protocols to these conventions that were adopted in 1977.

- In response to the atrocities committed in World War II, the international community sought to draw up instruments to regulate the activities of States towards people in their jurisdictions. In 1948, the non-binding Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Others that have followed suit include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, among others.

- Despite South Sudan's obligations under applicable international laws, violations and abuses continue to be committed against children by all parties to the armed conflict. These include: recruitment and use of children; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abductions; attacks against schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian accesss as well as military use of schools. Child protection actors are trying to address the needs of the children in the context of many challenges, including an ongoing emergency situation in the greater Upper Nile region.

- Armed conflict causes unspeakable suffering to children regardless of whatever is done to address or respond to their suffering e.g. adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as International Humanitarian Law. It is therefore vital to encourage and intensify all efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, ethnic divisions, illiteracy, racism, collapse of government and social structures, corruption, crime, drug trafficking and arms dealing, among others. To encourage compliance with international humanitarian law or international human rights law is not enough. Everything should be done to prevent States from going to war or different groups in the same State so as to protect the children who are the future of any state.

An Evaluation of Child-oriented Peace Initiatives in Northern Uganda and Northern Kenya

- Today, children are among the most vulnerable groups affected by violence in conflict or face massive abuses of repressive regimes.
- This paper analyses the ways in which young people continue to participate in peace-oriented initiatives by investigating the discourse of forming an integrated education system in the wake of continuous conflict.
- It goes ahead to explore how schools can bridge the gap between their violent and traumatic past by preparing them for the future.
- In analysing the challenges of abduction and schooling, the paper highlights specific girl and boy experiences that provide a sensitive gendered dimension. However, while attending school during and after the conflict presents functions of correcting societal inequalities, the experiences of abduction reveal challenges in reforming the lives of these young people.
- The study sought to evaluate child-oriented peace initiatives in a bid to unravel how peace initiatives can change the lives of children recovering from conflict, as well as the futures of their communities.
- There is indeed a close linkage between education of formerly abducted adolescents in Northern Uganda and their process of recovery and ability to move on. Children and adolescents who are victims of abduction go through the school system to gain a livelihood or new life for themselves but are also exposed to the challenges of violence and social disruption embedded within the system.
- Schools address the critical challenges from abduction and rebuild the fragmented self of war- affected children. If children engaged with a sensitive educator who pays attention to all the contributing facets, then, education becomes a space to promote social cohesion in the aftermath of conflict rather than re-awakening the scars of abduction.
- The study concludes that initiatives in education constitute a sensitive space and educational policy designers should pay particular attention to the issues that pertain to this context. If well done, provision of different school initiatives may offer desirable outcomes for the children in hard-to-reach conflict areas such as those in northern Kenya that are still facing cattle raiding, and abductions, by bridging the gap between their traumatic past and their future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Caroline Gatimu

Carolyne Gatimu is a Social Science/ Development researcher. She holds a Masters degree in Development Studies and a Bachelors degree in Sociology, both from the University of Nairobi, Kenya. She has been involved in various research projects and is well versed with matters of research, particularly qualitative research techniques. She has previously worked at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, where she has researched on industrialization in Kenya with a focus on textile and clothing industries. She has also consulted for Oxfam International and Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex, U.K on food security issues in the country and is currently working as a researcher at the Peace and Security Department, IPSTC.

Martin Okwir

Martin Okwir is a researcher at IPSTC. He has 7 years experience in implementing programmes such as Climate Change Adaptation, Integrated TB/ HIV/ AIDS, Malaria, Water and Sanitation . He has worked with UNICEF in the Nutrition and Food Security project in Eastern Uganda through Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability (SDS) project, which supports local governments in Uganda to improve Social Service Delivery.

Mr Okwir holds a Masters degree in Public Policy and Management (MPP 2011) from , Korea Development Institute, School of Public Policy and Management; He has completed Certificate in Law and Policy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Faculty of Law. July 2015, Israel a Bachelors Degree (BA) in Social Sciences majoring in Public Administration and Sociology from Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, and a Diploma in Economic Development from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

He has published an article on Positioning Uganda for Economic Development in the New Vision Newspaper of Uganda. Mr Okwir has also conducted independent research on Saemaul Undong's contributions to Korea's development and the lessons for Uganda.

International Peace Support Training Centre
P.O Box 24232-00502 Karen, Kenya
Tel: 254 20 388 3157/58
Fax: 254 20 388 3159
Email: info@ipstc.org
Website: www.ipstc.org

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