

**ELUCIDATION OF THE CHALLENGES OF RETURN
IN ACHOLILAND:**



Learning Across Lived Realities

A

Research Report

of

**HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS
Gulu**

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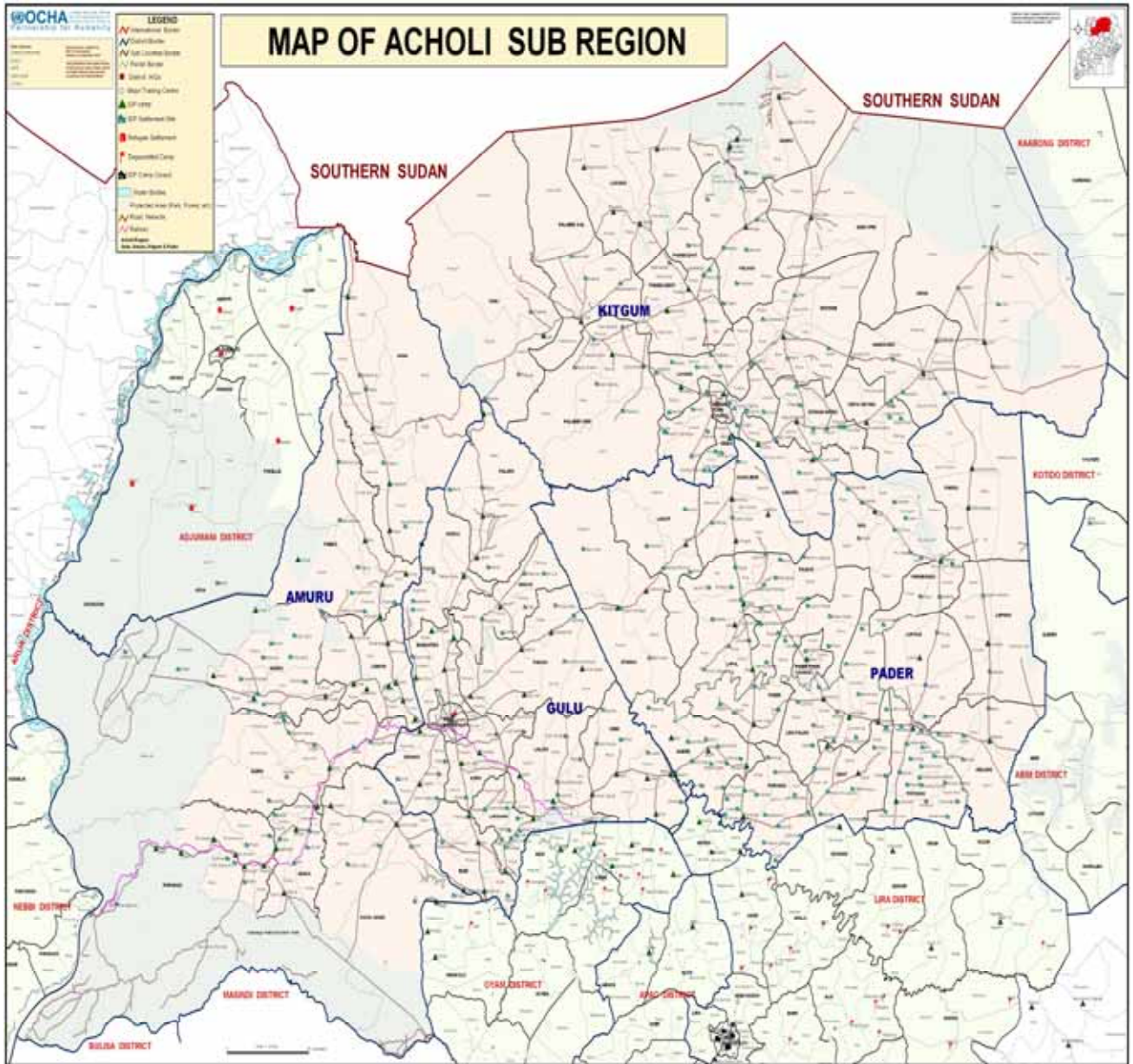
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ACRONYM

| | | |
|--------|---|---|
| ARLPI | = | Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative |
| CBO | = | Community Based Organization |
| CIs | = | Cultural Institutions |
| CHA | = | Cessation of Hostility Agreement |
| DDR | = | Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration |
| FGDs | = | Focused Group Discussions |
| GoU | = | Government of Uganda |
| HURIFO | = | Human Rights Focus |
| IDPs | = | Internally Displaced Persons |
| JPT | = | Juba Peace Talk |
| LRA | = | Lords Resistance Army |
| NFI | = | Non Food Items |
| NGO | = | Non Governmental Organization |
| OAG | = | Organized Armed Groups |
| OPM | = | Office of the Prime Minister |
| PEAP | = | Poverty Eradication Action Plan |
| PRDP | = | Peace, Recovery & Development Plan for N. U |
| PTS | = | Post Traumatic Syndrome |
| SPC | = | Special Police Constable |
| UNDP | = | United Nations Development Programme. |
| UNHCR | = | United Nations High Commission for Refugees |
| WFP | = | World Food Programme |

MAP OF ACHOLILAND



Definition of Key Terms

Defining something or a problem is at times the hardest part of dealing with it. We may be confident that we know it when we see it but still have trouble fitting it into so many words. It is expedient to define ahead some of the key terms upon which this study anchors in order to grasp a clear understanding of their importance

in relation to the research context:-

Acholiland

As used in this study refers to the administrative districts of Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader as presently constituted in the governance structure of the Republic of Uganda.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

This term, which is inter-changeably also expressed as “returnees”, is used in the context of this study to refer to persons who have (or are assumed to have) at one time been affected by internal displacement (with particular focus to those in Acholiland).

According to the UN working definition, internally displaced are

“persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situation of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border”.

Livelihoods

This term is conceptualized as “the economic, social and psychological well-being and material possessions of the affected people.” This concept was applied in respect to this term in the context of this study.

Return

The term return is used to refer to the entire process and the activities thereby, of systematic movements of individuals, entire families and

communities away from the camps back to their original homesteads, defined as pre-displacement homes. The “Return” process ideally must be conceived and exercised comprehensively: constituted in stages of popular consent, relief where necessary, rehabilitation, resettlement, reconciliation, reconstruction, growth and development.

However, the Peace, Recovery & Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) defines ‘return’ merely as “voluntary return to place of origin”.

Returnee

Is used in the research context to refer to any internally displaced person who returns and settles in his or her home or place of habitual residence.

Resettlement

According to the PRDP, ‘resettlement’ refers to return to locations other than the place of origin.

Security

Our definition of security is based on the possibility of “risk reduction”: the abatement of insecurity. It emphasizes the prevention of the causes of insecurity, rather than the means to contain its symptoms. Of primary concern here is the kind of insecurity experienced by the bulk of the population. A secure community means the existence of a political system capable of managing and solving socioeconomic conflicts through relatively consensual adjustments. The consensual option offers, in absolute terms, an opportunity to reduce the overall level of coercion, violence, and harm to human life in repressive and insurrectional modes of conflict management. Its central ethical principles are respect for life and the recognition of human dignity as organizing principles for social action. Without an ethical base and code, no security is possible.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study sets out to systematically elucidate and highlight the concrete elements, features and attendant effects that constitute the real and perceived challenges faced by the IDPs during the process of return and/or resettlement in Acholiland. It interrogates and investigates the lived realities of the challenges experienced by the affected population in and during the transitional phase of emergence from encampment situation. The aim is to contribute analytical information towards a tactical optimization strategy that utilizes the best available approach under the circumstances in ensuring full return.

It is hoped that the report will offer a basis for more discussions and actions on the key issues highlighted and the various recommendations that came up. Hopefully, this should form a basis for reviewing ongoing engagement with government, other agencies and the grassroots communities.

Fourteen (14) sub-counties spread out throughout Acholiland were deliberately chosen as representative areas for this study which was carried out by eight researchers deployed in the field. With open-ended questionnaire guides, the method of narrativisation which relies on recollections, understandings, meanings and interpretations of ordinary people's experiences with respect to critical issues resonating around challenges of return was applied, as well as observations and review of literature.

The report reflects a recollection of the respondents' anthropological description of the Acholiland's pre-displacement set-up in terms of settlement, social organization, maintenance of social cohesion and management style. Out of this, a number of lucid principles emerged: line of authority and respect for it, safety precautions, firm social norms

and values, sharing problems, spirit of communalism, strict knowledge of family lineage, threat of punishment for wrong doing, and collective security among others. Cognizant is always made of the authority of the village elders in the resolution of social ills in society. Portrayal was made of how an individual fits in this social organization develops all the desirable qualities.

Contemporary issues on factors affecting return are brought out and discussed with linkages to structural and proximate issues categorized under economic, cultural, social, political & governance, religion & myths, land issue, question of identity, infrastructure, livelihood means, security, gender aspects, psychosocial factors, reconciliation challenges, and external factors. Brief examination is made of the law enforcement agencies adequacy, and a snapshot of current intervention efforts to these challenges.

The report then ranks the challenges under thematic areas in the degree to which they impact on the return process. It indicates that Infrastructural and social services requirements are the most important aspects that impact on return, followed by the need to address economic emancipation of the affected population as well as other human security concerns. The land issue features prominently followed by the other factors.

In the conclusion, the report avers that internal displacement arises from complex causes that reflect a breakdown in the basic mechanisms of society trapping the victims inside state borders under conditions of terrible violations of human rights. The consequence is deep cleavages that cannot be healed simply by providing emergency relief and development alone. It should embrace integrated efforts and mechanisms for prevention, protection, reintegration, and political conciliation.

In responding to the challenges, a rethink of the scenario is called for so as to adopt the best available approach in untangling the undesirable phenomenon and assisting the return process with dedication.

Finally a set of general rules and recommendations are made:

- 1) Resort to culture should not be seen through lenses that depict primitive undertones but rather in such a way as to identify the values that will be useful to humanity.
- 2) Approaches adopted and actions undertaken must by necessity embrace 'hard reconstruction', but sufficient attention must also be given to 'soft reconstruction' measures available.
- 3) Careful contextualization of government policies and non-state strategies is essential to inform proper responses to the challenges, so as to understand and utilize all chosen approaches in ways that compliment each other synergistically, rather than work against each other.
- 4) Consultations with constituencies (displaced persons still in camps, those in transit sites and the ones already in their original homes) should be part of the intervention planning process.
- 5) Space or forum should be created where individuals or groups can discourse on developmental and contentious issues openly in order to promote inclusiveness of their voices in the management of affairs affecting them.
- 6) Outreach strategy that aims to help restore the authority and integrity of genuine traditional leaders and the values of the mechanisms that they preside be developed. This mechanism can be structured and empowered to deal more effectively and decisively with the land conflicts among others.
- 7) Pursue the revival of the core tenets of cultural values and its attendant practices.

- 8) Knowledge on best economic sense of land use entailing income generating activities and quality food production, without necessarily relinquishing rights to ownership should be imparted widely.
- 9) Community Policing Program be intensified and supported.
- 10) Coordination more visibly and effectively programs that deal with the vulnerable people identified in the return process.
- 11) Carry out a Participatory Research and Dialogue on the understanding of the Institution of Government or the State. What it is in people's perception. What it can do and not do. It is common thinking that government is able.

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

So much literature has been written on the conflict in northern Uganda that the problem remains making sense of it all. So what then is so special about yet another research report on challenges of return in Acholiland? This is certainly a field of research that has captured growing attention of late. The understanding that peace has returned in the region and focus should be tailored towards recovery and development is an acceptable thought, but its far reaching implications have made return and its challenges deserve deeper investigation and assessment. The frailty of each individual life (including its ultimate cessation) following the prolonged encampment has, of course, been well understood for a long time as a “human predicament”. With the growing recognition that the consequences of this continues to threaten individual lives and entire communities, a detailed study that elucidates these challenges have become inescapably a major area of need.

This situation study was therefore deliberately commissioned to establish the current form, character, and conditions of the return process in Acholiland, with a view to elucidate the challenges entailed. As the Internally Displacement Persons (IDPs) Camp set-up in Acholiland constituted for the last 14 or so years get disbanded, the hitherto inmates are required to go back and re-settle in their original places of abode, at times referred to as ‘pre-displacement sites’. The process has been ongoing for a period of time following a moratorium billed Cessation of Hostility Agreement (CHA) in the moribund Juba Peace Talks (JPT), and has resulted in three identifiable patterns of settlements of the war affected population on the ground:-

- 1) Some people still remain domiciled at the camp locations;

- 2) Others have moved to “satellite sites”¹;
- 3) Yet some have outright gone back to their original homestead.

The study systematically elucidates the concrete elements and features that constitute the real and perceived challenges faced by the people during this process of return and/or resettlement.

It builds on previous related study by Human Rights Focus (HURIFO) in displaced persons camps carried out since 2000 mainly focusing on the human rights situation. The reports rolled out include:-

- a) “Between two Fires”;
- b) Input to the National IDP Policy;
- c) The need to look beyond Policy Guideline, targeting Parliamentarians;
- d) “Managing the Transition from War to Peace”.

These previous studies captured the various scenarios and changes in the conflict area and informed various actors to help develop and foster appropriate responses and interventions.

This particular research report, therefore, complements the above studies by addressing in greater details the real and perceived encumbrances to realization of full return in Acholiland. The report focuses on the key thematic areas that directly or indirectly influence or affect the return process; and extends further to review pre-displacement environment and the situation subsequent and consequent to the initial processes of return. It is concerned with the real livelihood needs and means of the population in Acholiland.

The overarching aim is to provide more accurate information about IDPs return, challenges and cost implications for better transition management.

¹ Interchangeably referred to as ‘transit sites’, ‘return sites’, ‘de-congestion sites’. These locations are not necessarily most people’s pre-displacement sites.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Lords Resistance Army (LRA) war tactics, apart from attacking military installations, involved its fighters into brutalizing their own ethnic communities and civilians through arson, looting, torture, murder, mutilation, and abduction. This occurred at the time when government's own capacity to protect the people was quite inadequate and the geo-political power politics of the day may not have considered it a priority. Consequently, the national army - in a scorch earth policy - ordered the entire Acholi population to evacuate their often self-sufficient homesteads within 48 hours to settle in hastily crafted camps around military detaches. The population has over the last 14 years been interned to these camps with devastating effects on the people, described at one time as 'the worst humanitarian crisis". As the guns fell silent and relative stability reigned in the region, the ardent need for the people to return to their pre-displacement places of abodes can not be over emphasized. Even when the affected people began to actualize the return, these and other challenges make the process extremely difficult. Most critical is the challenge on children born in encampment environments who know no other alternative lifestyle or home.

There are a variety of economic, social, cultural, governance, psychological and material demands that have to be concurrently addressed in order to realize a better and more successful return process as well as meet the enviable sustainable livelihoods means for the returning population. Incompatible differences exist between return and livelihood needs of the women, children and male adults in this process. The declaration for the population to return, just like their internment (encampment), was made without sufficient knowledge of how to proceed particularly for the diverse requirements and needs of the various categories of the population affected. Implementation of return has been

expeditiously embarked on without informed, sufficient and deliberate livelihoods guarantee measures particularly for the young age groups. It would appear therefore that much as the return process is absolutely desirable, some aspects of it has encountered unforeseen problems relating to inconsistency, uncertainty and limited means of livelihood sustainability for the affected people.

The paucity of information, methods, strategies, techniques and ways and means to achieving fluid re-settlement of the Acholi population, while sustaining their exceedingly fragile livelihoods, are pressing issues that have to be highlighted.

There is need to review the whole return process by systematically interrogating various scenarios encompassing pre-displacement, encampment, satellite sites and return homesteads in order to identify and inform the interventions and methods that can facilitate good and improvable issues of return and good sustainable livelihoods for the population. The choice(s) of actions must of necessity be counterbalanced by a pragmatic imperative to seize and maximize the emerging chance for peace, reconciliation, recovery and development.

1.3 Significance of the Problem

While displaced persons share many similar experiences, they invariably often have different priorities and concerns. The disparities in the context of return to respective home and diverse locations need to be taken into consideration. Cognizance should be given to the fact that the specific needs of IDPs are at risk of further disappearing in a post-conflict phase where government moves to increasingly assert that they no longer have any displaced persons within its borders. Clearly the motivation behind this government move is to assert that the sub-region and country has now reached a point of stability such that displacement was no longer justified, despite the fact that many people continue to live in fear of

further attacks. Indeed for government, the presence of displaced persons, whether inside or outside, is often interpreted as a challenge to their public image, amidst claims of stability and access to human rights for all.

In this context, there is a need to identify what it means for a displaced person to no longer be displaced in any post-conflict reconstruction process, whether through local integration, resettlement or return, the three 'durable solutions'. It is important, for instance to consider the extent to which people's identities and cultural set-up and values have been shaped and altered by their experience of displacement, especially where it has lasted for a considerable period of time, and to examine how this has a bearing on their ability to eventually return back home – which is viewed as the most desirable durable solution in the context of northern Uganda displacement situation.

Equally important is to acknowledge the different effects of displacement on men and women, not least in a context where displaced persons have suffered from gender-based violence.

Most significantly, any discussion on durable solutions needs to critically examine the extent to which those who are displaced have been consulted regarding their future. All too often, decisions have been driven by factors other than the best interests of IDPs themselves, and the exercises takes place without any consultations with returnees and are dictated by the priorities and political gains of governments and international community. Consequently, those who are displaced are forced to return 'home' even though the circumstances that make the return viable have not been addressed.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this inclusive research, as enshrined and implied in its topic, is to interrogate and investigate the lived realities of the challenges

experienced by the affected population in Acholiland during the transitional phase of emergence from encampment situation. This is geared towards a tactical optimization strategy where the best available approach rather than the best possible can be chosen in handling the entire return process.

It is hoped that in further disseminating and discussing this research report widely, focus and attention will be drawn on the key issues highlighted and the various recommendations that came up. Hopefully this should form a basis for reviewing ongoing engagement with government, other agencies and the grassroots communities.

1.5 Limitations

The research process encountered limitations in some aspects relating to methodology (as it turned out) to conceptual problems. The use of guided open-ended discussions/interviews, much as was relevant in highlighting critical issues and giving a birds eye view, could not begin to unravel the complex intricacies, meanings and effects related to many specific aspects of the lived challenges. This was further aggravated by some respondents not being comfortable discussing all the issues raised. Getting accurate data on number of people who have moved and still in camp locations became difficult due to the back and forth movements going on at the time of the research. For whatever reasons, some NGOs and government officials were hesitant in sharing information. Constraints in time devoted to this research, which essentially allowed only 29 days for data collection in the field, some of which were devoted to traveling, limiting reach to other locations.

In spite of the need to unify and grasp a common understanding of the various terminologies used, various actors tend to assign particular meanings of these terms according to their convenience, which make interpretations tricky.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The backdrops of historical underpinnings and causative factors as well as the unique dynamics of the conflict theatre in northern Uganda have been adequately highlighted in many writings. This has opened the door for analytical reflections of having to face-up to new challenges arising out of the consequences of the conflict as the region emerges into the 'post-conflict' era. One of the most glaring phenomenon that defined the ups and down turns of the conflict has been the unenviable internal displacement of the population for a fairly long period of time spanning two decades, which heralded in its added blends of unique problems on the affected people. Undoing this situation calls for concerted effort that is conceived on the vanguard of lucid information and understanding of the occurrences, instead of merely responding in some high-handed fashion.

2.1 The Phenomenon of Displacement

Displacement is one of the most widespread and tangible consequences of violence and takes many forms incorporating a plethora of different experiences. The need to find genuinely durable solutions for those who have been uprooted from their homes during conflict ought to be integral to any post-conflict reconstruction phase.

It might be said that the crisis of internal displacement forced itself to grab world attention following the end of the cold war. About four and half decades ago, there were thought to be no more than a few million persons internally displaced in only half a dozen countries. Today the total number is estimated at between 20 to 25 million in some 40 countries, substantially more than the 13 million refugees that United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) recognizes as falling within its mandate. A common denominator to internal displacement

amidst varied circumstances, according to a UN survey on the issue, may be called “a crisis of national identity that generates cleavages between the affected population and the controlling authorities, governments, or insurgents groups”.²

According to Francis M. Deng - representative on internally displaced persons appointed by UN Secretary General at the request of the Commission on Human Rights,

“For the internally displaced the government was not their government; it represented an alien, competing, and often hostile racial, linguistic, religious, cultural, or tribal group. For governments – not all but many – the displaced, although citizens in theory, have been regarded as an alien and threatening group, usually with a different language, culture, or religion, and most often a minority subjected to abusive rule by the majority. The common complaint of each side is ‘These are not our people’.”³

This sense of alienation defined in terms of race, ethnicity, language, culture, or religion were found to be present to some extent in virtually every major case of forced displacement. The divisions it causes undermines national unity and make illusory any sense of political or social solidarity. As former UN SG Kofi Annan pointed out, “it is never the mere differences of identity based on ethnic grounds that generate conflict, but the consequences of those differences in sharing power and the related distribution of resources and opportunities.... the role of political leadership at all levels, from local to national, is pivotal.”

Over the past decade crises of national identity have been one of the main causes of internal displacement. They have engendered massive violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms, grave

² David A. Korn., EXODUS within BORDERS: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, (The Brookings Institute 1999).

³ Ibid

compromises of economic and social development, breakdowns of civil order, and attempts at “ethnic cleansing” and even genocide.

But simply to call the victims of these crises internally displaced is to apply to them a label so impersonal as to strip them of their essential humanity, to make them little more than a bureaucratic category.

The phenomenon of internal displacement has become a crisis that distorts the fundamentals of sovereign nations and begs the question of the role of the State in protecting and championing the basic human rights of its own citizen. In many instances, not least the northern Uganda case, there appears to be a disconnect between the affected people and the leaders at the capital. The consequences of these differences in sharing power and the related distribution of resources and opportunities have the potential to at worst generate conflict again.

2.2 The Northern Uganda IDPs

Other recent studies have attempted to offer insights into the problem of internal displacement in northern Uganda in particular and the highlights of their findings need to be mentioned.

In examining the return process, *Oxfam Briefing Paper: From Emergency to Recovery – Rescuing Northern Uganda’s transition* brings to light some challenges that are arising as a result of it, and efforts on the part of the government and its partners to address the changing needs of the people of northern Uganda. It states that since the signing of Cessation of Hostilities (COH) in 2006 over half of the 1.8 million IDPs have left the camps and returned to their villages of origin or to transit sites closer to their homes.

The paper comments on how the distinction between “returnees” (those who have returned to their pre-displacement site) and IDPs is blurred, as those who have left the camps return periodically to access services

unavailable in their village, while camp residents often leave in the daytime to cultivate nearby farmland. In some instances, interviews Oxfam conducted revealed how **government is pressurizing IDPs** to return even though many have anxieties about security, social services and livelihoods. Disputes over land are adding further uncertainty, while widows and orphans remain at high risk of exploitation. Oxfam contends that the shift from relief to recovery has brought about considerable confusion among the array of actors involved in Northern Uganda.

The report further alludes to the complexity of the return process, and taking 2006 as a base year, reports that 900,000 people have returned to villages of origin while some 460,000 have moved to transit sites. But complexity surrounds the definition of “return”. In Lango sub-region all IDP camps have been officially closed while in **Acholiland only 24% have returned** to their pre-displacement site. Oxfam argues that this in part, is explained by the fact that the majority of camp locations are less than 5km or 50 minutes walk from villages of origin. This results in a lot of mobility between both locations. Returnees still access basic services in camps while poor quality of schools in return sites results in separation of parents and children raising a lot of child protection concerns. Also returnees often retain a residence in camps as an act of insurance. Oxfam claims that recovery actors have not been able to keep up with the pace of return and states that a paradox of camp life is that despite the harsh conditions, many residents became accustomed to accessing a standard of social services. They thus urge the relevant actors to sensitize communities about the level of services they are likely to find in their home villages and future development plans. They also advocate upholding services in camps while rebuilding services in return sites.

The Oxfam report maintains that IDPs still fear Kony as the Final Peace Agreement has yet to be signed. The paper also claims that the **high**

levels of Post Traumatic Syndrome (PTS) disorder in the northern region acts as strong preventative measure to return. It also cites police reform as an urgent priority to facilitate return, and argues that currently, communities have no faith in the security forces both in the camps and in the return sites. Ill-equipped and poorly trained Special Police Constables (SPCs) are cited as a fault-line. The notable vulnerable camp residents (widows, orphans, elderly and the sick) are left behind. Some are unable to walk back to the villages and others are denied access to the land. Women and children heads of households are the most vulnerable. In Acholi culture the building of the traditional grass thatched homestead is a man's responsibility. Therefore, unmarried women and widows who want to return are forced to rely on male relatives to build their homes.

“In all three Acholi districts where FGDs were held, camp residents said that **local officials were pushing for returns to be speeded up**, including by threatening imminent demolition of huts or leveling of the camp.”

Some government officials, NGO and UN officials hold the view that after years of exposure to NGOs, camp residents know what kind of excuses to use to explain their reluctance to return (e.g. water, housing materials, resettlement kits) while in fact they are too dependant and used to hand outs. Oxfam recommends that **the issue of aid dependency** should be addressed through constructive engagement with IDP communities, rather than using aggressive language and forcible means. The report criticizes the **World Food Programme (WFP)** for its inability to inform their beneficiaries adequately on their phase out plan, which it argues is another reason challenging the return process. It point out too that the promised resettlement kits have still not materialized. This has resulted in a huge lack of information disseminated to camp residents and in turn frustrates the return process.

In the **PRDP, National IDP policy and recent camp phase out guidelines**, government sets out 3 durable solutions for IDPs to be achieved under local government: 1) Voluntary return, 2) resettlement in the camp and 3) relocation to another part of the country.

However, camp land is mostly privately owned therefore the right of the landowner and the rights of the IDP is in conflict. Government seems to consider the right of the landowner more legitimate.

The Oxfam report calls on the UNHCR to protect IDPs in disputes with landowners, strengthening land arbitration mechanisms and providing legal assistance to IDPs who wish to resettle in the camps. It goes further to criticize the UN and the government for poor leadership and lack of clarity on how recovery activities should be managed, and alludes that lack of donor funding has contributed to the confusion.

Communication between all inter-related bodies, (PRDP, UN, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Donor agencies, local government) needs to be drastically improved. This paper also avers that the '**Parish Approach**' is an important conceptual approach for recovery actors.

Another study *International Alert: Building a Peace Economy in Northern Uganda – Investing in Peace Issue No.1 September* examines current proposals to bring economic recovery to northern Uganda. In relation to the challenges of IDPs return, the report in part mentions the question of **unclear land boundaries** ranked highest by respondents in a survey carried out by International Survey, as one of the main conflicts facing returnees. In another recent survey commissioned by the World Bank, 59% of respondents reported having experienced significant **threats to tenure security** since return began. Conflicts concerning land left behind at the point of displacement have the highest dispute prevalence rated 65%, mainly concerning inherited land – with some people reportedly tracing lineage back beyond the point of displacement, complicating matters further.

These studies indicate that land conflicts are on the increase as more people try to return home. Statutory dispute resolution mechanisms under the Land Act are currently lacking and years of displacement have eroded the authority of traditional dispute resolution mechanism. The paper calls on humanitarian agencies to adopt a new perspective on groups classified as 'extremely vulnerable' and assist with their resettlement, since presently the services available in camps create incentives for them to opt out of the return process. More strategic district-level coordination of local-level approaches to resettlement that look at the whole community rather than singling out special interest groups and/or sensitization of communities to understand why certain groups require special treatment when they do get it are also required.

2.3 Government Policies

2.3.1 PRDP

In the widely acclaimed Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) 2007-2010 document, strategic objective 2: *rebuilding and empowering communities*, is billed as a major objective and aims at providing social service and livelihood support to assist households achieve a level of normalization beyond mere survival levels. And yet this provision will vary according to the respective sub-regional circumstances purportedly determined by 'conflict framework' defined to mean interventions are aligned according to development needs rather than conflict needs and are sector based not appropriate for conflict setting. Accordingly therefore, our research area falls under the North Central sub-region classification in the document where the focus will be two fold: implementation of Emergency Action Plan under JMC, and the return and resettlement plans of the large IDP population, but again this will be contingent on satisfaction of security conditions, including land-mine mapping and clearance, information and communication with IDP

populations and processes for return and support. At the same time, it is stated, there will be a corresponding shift in program delivery as IDP camps become decongested and services are established in areas of origin or resettlement.

In implementing this, the PRDP has assumed there will be what is termed a “Complimentarity of Roles and Responsibilities” where international communities are expected to provide tremendous amount of assistance to Government of Uganda (GoU) who in turn will provide humanitarian and early recovery assistance, again, through UN agencies and NGOs. As part of the PRDP, the document states, it is expected that these financing/delivery systems will continue particularly in emergency and return areas ensuring speedy and comprehensive delivery, as well as meeting of universal standards (e.g. for child and mother health, through UNICEF and WHO). The document further asserts that “Other quick disbursements will be required to enable security in areas of return” and gives an example of the UN supported “national landmine policy maternal”, whatever that means. The document then mandates the several ministries, institutions and other relevant agencies to achieve the objective of rebuilding and empowering communities and assigns responsibilities to Sector Working Groups and at times inter-agency technical committee.

Under sub-section 4.2.2 on *IDP return and Resettlement Programme*, which directly addresses the issue under investigation in this research, the PRDP allude to the imperative of putting in place a Return and Resettlement Plan for the voluntary return of IDPs from Lango, Teso and Acholi sub-region. The document assumes that 30% of IDPs will remain in current residence (read in camps) and some 70% will return to place of origin or new resettlement. Within this setup, the plan is to formulate assistance based on a family of 10 persons for a period of 6 months, billed ‘transition recovery’.

The PRDP concurs that the decongestion policy faces challenges of inadequate services in the newly created as well as the old camps and inadequacy of security organs to protect people. The official document asserts “as the process of return/resettlement continues, the IDPs must be supported before departure and on arrival so that they can settle in properly in the communities and maintain household income during a transitional period.” The objective being to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs from camps to their places of origin and/or any other location of their preference as peace returns. A number of strategies are then presented to realize this objective that will amount to 70.1 billion shillings (\$39 million US Dollars) to implement.

Dr. Chris Dolan – Director of Refugee Law Project, in his keynote speech given to NGO seminar for Scandinavian based International NGOs working in Northern Uganda, unequivocally referred to the PRDP as a “Three-Legged Table”. The bad thing about three legged tables is that they cannot support any weight falling over. The good thing is that they can be fixed. The weight that the PRDP is due to carry for northern Uganda will go beyond recovery but include a fundamentally changed society, in terms of its internal arrangements, its engagement with the outside world, its economy and its significance to the international community. He then questioned the prospects of the PRDP bringing about peace, recovery and development? He referred to the PRDP as an ambitious proposal which is strong and welcome especially in its emphasis on tangible change, but postulates that it is also very much a containment exercise, ‘a set of technical solutions to a gamut of political problems’. It is promoted as a solution to the national imbalances which threaten to undermine the implementation of the national Poverty Eradication and Action Plan (PEAP). The document focuses on the symptoms of problems rather than the underlying dynamics.

The missing fourth leg of the PRDP that would stabilize it is the unclear source of financing. The government representatives are quick to brand every other work achievement done in northern Uganda even by private individuals, the PRDP.

2.3.2 The National Policy for IDPs

This Policy is meant to establish the principles which will serve as a guide to Government institutions, humanitarian and development agencies while providing assistance and protection to IDPs in Uganda. The Policy specifies the roles and responsibilities of various actors and other stakeholders and the displaced community themselves.

This Policy is supposed to fundamentally recognize that IDPs shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under the Constitution and all other laws, as do all other persons in Uganda. They are supposed not to be discriminated against in the fulfillment of any rights and freedoms on the grounds that they are internally displaced. It avers that IDPs have the right to request and receive protection and humanitarian assistance from national and district authorities.

Government commits itself in the Policy to:

- i. Protecting its citizens against arbitrary displacement.
- ii. Promoting the search for durable solutions to causes of displacement
- iii. Facilitating the voluntary return, resettlement, integration and re-integration of the IDPs.
- iv. Ensuring that every person, internally displaced or otherwise receives information relating to the Policy.

The IDP policy in its entirety is a well intentioned and written policy, capturing all the remedial effects of internal displacement. However, the challenge is the oversight role and commitment to its implementation.

2.4 Lessons learnt

Given the long-running, deep-seated and ethno-regionalist trend of Uganda's political conflicts, efforts aimed at popular recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, which process by necessity must include return of the IDP population from camps, must address the community and interpersonal levels. The process needs to seek out victims, perpetrators, survivors and witnesses to face-up and recognize the truth about the past and the present across the so called North-South divides, to re-evaluate images of self and 'enemy' which past and current challenges may have distorted, simplified and rigidified; to negotiate justice and societal healing; and to engender a new moral landscape based on consensus woven around values and attitudes that gravitate towards recovery and development.

From the foregoing reviews, it is imperative that while addressing the return process, interventions and policy orientations will be most effective if implemented on the principles that:-

- i. Are based on paradigm emphasizing horizontal planning (involving the affected population).
- ii. Are culture-informed and adapted to local circumstances.
- iii. Emphasize implementation on the basis of local needs.
- iv. Encompass the social, economic, political and cultural determinants of the situation.
- v. Aim at empowerment and emancipation of the affected people.

3.0 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.1 Research Design & Procedures Used

Qualitative research was adopted essentially because the nature of the research required it to be conducted in the natural setting and the meanings derived from the data were to be indicative of specificity of the settings and conditions of the research area. The approach then was to consider a holistic interpretation of the natural setting, with a view to

retain its descriptive value. During the field research, all researchers endeavored to use the relevant local languages and interpretation of issues as understood in those languages and traditions in order to find out meanings as understood by the relevant communities. This open-endedness called hermeneutic approach was meant to attempt to understand the people's worlds through a process of dialogues and conversation.

3.2 Sources of Data

Data for this research were a combination of many materials but with specific focus on primary sources that took into consideration where, when and by whom the data is produced. Basically, desk top review was done, and carefully selected and balanced Focus Group Discussions (FGD) held in the various sub-county locations, as well as key informant and individual interviews. Secondly, it was essential to establish the meanings of the materials collected and its trustworthiness. All the materials collected were subjected to cross-referencing from the 8 researchers deployed to various locations in the field in a data analysis session.

3.3 Sampling Procedures & Other Strategies

Sixteen sub-counties were purposefully selected to be covered; namely Anaka, Purongo, in Amuru district; Awach, Palaro, Odek & Ongako in Gulu; Orom, Omianyima, Palabek Kal & Palugar in Kitgum; and Paimol, Omot, Corner Kilak & Awere in Pader. Besides, information and opinions were gathered from respective technical staffs in line departments and local leadership at various levels, in the respective districts. Each of the Researcher conducted at least three (3) separate Focus Group Discussions (FGD); each constituted by 8 to 12 or more people, purposely selected to represent the array of society structure. The FGD mix included, but was not limited to elders, women leaders, youth

leaders, religious leaders, local leader, returnees, camp location residence, ex-combatants, local council leaders etc. In addition at least 25 Key Informants were interviewed some of who are culturally sound and knowledgeable. This was augmented by 80 Individual Interviews interlaced by recording of keenly observed things of interest relevant to the research issues.

3.4 Methods and Instruments of Data Collection, Collation, Analysis & Rating.

The method of narrativisation which relies on recollections, understandings, meanings and interpretations of ordinary people's experiences with respect to critical issues resonating around challenges of return was applied. In data collection, some concepts of analysis were engaged that aimed particularly to uncover the passive aspects of the challenges not readily discerned by the casual observer. Attempts were made to identify systematic challenges in political, social, cultural and economic terms, as well as understanding underlying issues of injustice, deprivation, and people's sense of needs. A semi-structured open-handed questionnaire interview guide was used in all cases.

In order to unpack the degree of importance of the challenges to the return process, a series of questions and indicators were developed which could be scored from 1 to 4. Selected indicators were carefully scrutinized and weighed to balance out various thematic considerations (social, political, economic, security etc). In all 25 thematic indicators were developed to help give a score out of 100. (*See Appendix 2 for the Tools*) Each of the challenges identified is scored using this tool. The score helps to show the degree to which that challenge may impact on the return process. Different research team members scored the tools separately so as to triangulate the scoring for each return challenge. The results and major differences were subsequently discussed to reach a more reflective and consensual final result.

4.0 FINDINGS & DATA ANALYSIS

The findings from this research based on information gathered during the latter half of September and early October are a snapshot of the challenges of return in specified locations studied. It is presented in three broad categories with attendant sub-titles to address specific interest issues. The first part reports respondents' anthropological recollections and historical memories of some salient aspects of cherished pre-displacement lives of the Acholi people in relation to;

- a) Settlement patterns and life in Acholiland prior to displacement;
- b) Organizational lifestyle and maintenance of social cohesion, and
- c) Conflict resolution approaches as practiced then.

The second part of the report then deals with contemporary issues from the areas studied that revolve around the factors affecting return discussed with linkages to structural and proximate issues categorized under economic, cultural, social, political & governance, religion & myths, land issue, question of identity, infrastructure, livelihood means, security, gender aspects, psychosocial factors, reconciliation challenges, and external factors. Brief examination is made of the law enforcement agencies adequacy, and a glean at current intervention efforts to these challenges.

The third deals with conclusions, general rules and recommendations. Finally, appendix 1 tabulates the main challenges in a summary form with a score rating that indicates the degree it affects return. Then snapshots of the return figures from selected locations are presented in appendix 3.

4.1 Historical Perspectives

In-depth discussions with various respondents revealed that Acholi traditions are based principally on the genealogies of the various rulers

and clan elders. It would do well to understand their social significance, as it is important to consider just what traditions represent in the lives of the people of Acholi, and relate this to the challenges of their situations today in comparison to how they used to live. It emerged that the Acholi, who today is part of a "state society" in the colonial and post-independent times, were certainly not 'stateless' prior to advent of the colonial actors in 1860. They maintained a unique, orderly and functional traditional structure of governance that regulated and guided their society for the wellbeing of all.

According to Mzee Adimola, the name Acholi is a more recent imposition of identity of what constitute the general Acholi tribe. Previously they were known as the "*Gang*" or "*Gangi*" or as the "*Shuli*". The first name is used by their neighbours the Lango and Banyoro and is derived from the Acholi word "*gang*" meaning home or village, and was first used by European travelers who approached the area from the South. Typically this name may have been used to distinguish the Acholi, who were **settled agriculturists** living in villages, from "*kidi*" or wondering hunters, who frequented their country at the time. "*Shuli*" was the name given to the people by the Arabic-speaking slave and ivory traders from the Sudan who approached the area from the north, probably because of the affinity of their language with that of the Shiluk in the Sudan whom they called "Shuli" also. The name "Acholi", which remains in use today, was thus coined from the name "Shuli".

Various respondents in this research who appeared to have a passionate interest in their traditions, narrated that, traditionally as a **settled tribe**, the Acholi exhibited or had an **ordered system of indigenous administration**. Some fundamental and basic principles of management and indicators of knit social fabrics of Acholi society emerged during the discussions along the grains of culture. All the members of Acholi households acknowledge the authority of its heads, the adult male

known as "*won paco*" who presides over a collection of households built close to one another round a circle of bare earth called "*dye-kal*" or central courtyard and constitute a hamlet. From here a great deal of day-to-day economic and social co-operations takes place. The men and boys of the hamlet will often cultivate the fields of the village as members of the same "*awak*" - work party, and they will also take part together in hunting expeditions. The women and girls of the hamlet join one another for the performance of their domestic tasks, and all members of the hamlet will eat their evening meals together in their respective sex and age groups at the "*wang-oo*"- a fireplace in the centre of the courtyard. The men take their place at the "*kongo*" - wooden seats built in tiers all round the fireside. The women sit on the ground not far away and the older children sit apart also. At the fireside, a number of principles are taught, planning done and information shared geared at proper management of the home ("*diro me gwoko paco*"). Usually the heads of the households in the hamlets are close kinsmen, and may be a father and his adult sons, or several brothers and their adult sons. At times, too, there are household heads who is related to the others affinally or maternally, or just as "*lorem*"-friend. The hamlet constitutes "*dog-gola*" of the senior man, literally meaning his doorway, or else his '*dye-kal*', his courtyard, and this provide a clear identity structure.

A number of lucid principles of governance emerge from this set up, namely: line of authority and respect for it, safety precautions, firm social norms and values, sharing problems, spirit of communalism, strict knowledge of family lineage, threat of punishment for wrong doing, and collective security among others. Importantly, they recognize the authority of the village elder or elders (the '*ladit*', or '*lodito*') in the discussion of internal disputes, and as their representative in relationships outside the village.

The social organization of the Acholi forms a progressive series increasing in extent and in complexity of organization. To some degree, they represent stages in the social maturation of the individual Acholi. A child is born into a household, grows up in a hamlet and achieves maturity in a village. As an adult he takes part in the internal and external affairs of the domain which in one way or another involve the whole of Acholiland. An individual is involved simultaneously in all these social units, each of which influences the behavior of those who are a part of them. Not infrequently contradictory interests are involved and the means by which these contradictions between one level of organization and another are resolved form the basis of the indigenous political institutions.

Given the various transformations that has taken place in light of development trends and conflicts that has created vast diversity of family structures and unequal economic potentials and means, it may be foolhardy to expect the IDPs to return to this elaborate set-up as recollected by some of the elderly respondents. However, the nostalgic recollection of these former elements of existence points towards a collective goal and aspiration to reinstate order and decency of human existence as the people grapple with the challenges of return.

4.2 Factors Affecting Return

Overview

To a casual observer, sitting in the comfort of a corporate office or blessed with the opportunity to doll-out opinions unabated on the airwaves, the post-conflict return process in northern Uganda seem like a string of good news. From the conventional point of view, the present exercise appears to contain few challenges and threats. After all, the falling silent of the gun four years down the road means that the possibility of life for the population gaining normalcy is a given fact. To the casual observer, the decongestion and return means, in theory at

least, the possibility of cashing in a “peace dividend”. So the band-wagon response is to make a decisive, yet generally uncoordinated intervention to enforce ‘good intentioned’ policies on the affected community.

The findings of this research present a much deeper insight into realities of the lived/real challenges in this lumber process in a fairly comprehensive manner. Attempts are made to elucidate the issues systematically under some 12 thematic categories and an additional one for ease of reference. The epistemological premise of this framework is that the complex challenges currently facing IDPs can only be adequately comprehended from the vantage point of an equally complex yet intelligible, comprehensive, and dynamic conceptualization. The approach followed is both historical and systematic, in which the specific and general, the micro and macro, the short and long run, and the whole are analytically interrelated, but emphasis is placed on the changes and continuities over time.

The perspective is essentially inter- and transdisciplinary, straddling the rigid and often artificial boundaries of existing vertically compartmentalized disciplines of economics, sociology, culture and politics.

4.2.1 Economic Factors

The affirmation of the inter-relationship between sustainable peace and economic revitalization is central to the northern Uganda successful transition process. There can be no meaningful return, lasting peace and craved economic development without economic justice. There can, in turn, be neither economic justice nor lasting peace without broad-based economic growth reflected both at **micro** and macro levels. For this to happen, there must necessarily be well formulated and executed short and long term policies that address with tactical optimization the best available approach to **economic revival**, not least in the context of northern Uganda, whose grievance has been in part economic

marginalization. The hurdle is even made more daring due to the consequences of the prolonged encampment of the population preceded by desecration of their pre-displacement self-sufficient homesteads effectively eroding their economic base. The challenge now is to re-discover alternative economic livelihood means. The catch word here is “recovery of the means of livelihood”.

One of the most enduring and essentially ubiquitous themes of the current Uganda government has been the pursuit of economic security through **growth**. The modernization vision has been predicated on the inextricable relationship between the improvement of security, political conditions (enabling environment) and the expansion of per capita income. Conventional wisdom postulates that once the society’s overall level of goods and services increases in relation to population, a form of automatic “trickle down” of benefits is bound to occur. (It is as well assumed that wealth and poverty are at the opposite ends of the economic continuum; each being the reciprocal value of the other.) However, little development, let alone catching up, has taken place for the IDPs in northern Uganda. According to one elder who is a retired civil servant residing in Kitgum,

“From Uganda’s post-independent historical perspective, it appears to the common citizen that periods of generalized prosperity have been very scarce, experienced singularly in the mid to late 1960s. The rest of the period is characterized by economic crisis, volatility, and uncertainty being more the rule than the exception”.

He maintained that “the people of Acholi have moved from economic soaring to a state of free fall in which economic insecurity prevails”.

To ascertain the nature of the challenge in light of return, we uncovered some symptomatic manifestations. These traits are multiple and are often systematically interconnected. At any rate, the impact of the challenges tends to be class, gender, age, and regionally sensitive and does not affect the entire population in the same way. Some of the

indicators of economic challenges faced by IDPs in the return process was found to be reflected in:

(i) Persistent Poverty

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life” –

Nelson Mandela

Majority of the people interviewed ranked Poverty high and considered it the common denominator of the challenge of return in Acholiland since it remains the outstanding economic and social problem. The key issue of real economic development, more than the size of GNP, GDP per capita, or the often lauded rate of growth, is one former Palabek Kal Camp leader’s question: “What’s happening to poverty⁴?” The paradox is that poverty is spreading⁵ in what should have been the most prosperous age in Acholi history. The problem is squarely one of squandered opportunities and lax response to the need to rebuild capacity of the people to lift them out of the economic doldrums. One ‘village intellectual’ in Awere, reeling in alcoholic stupor reflectively alluded to renowned revolutionary Che Guevara’s admonition:

“If you want to rule a people forever, deprive them of all economic means”

The people in the sub-region have since been boxed into a situation of dependency syndrome. Fending for themselves in a state of dire poverty as they return poses a real challenge to contend with.

Related to the issue of poverty is:

(ii) Productive/Livelihood means & tools

⁴ Poverty is not scarcity or absence of money; it is the lack or scarcity of ideas to make money. It is not absence or lack of opportunities to be rich; it is failure to make use of those opportunities. Poverty or any other problem or condition in which the IDPs live is rooted in each one’s mind.

⁵ measured in real terms by the number of meals an average family have in a day in relation to better times



The Camp is Best for Business, Alokolum Ongako sub-county

Some people who run small businesses at the camp will not move completely. They tend to commute between the sites and camp to develop and secure their businesses. And yet others have bought land and other valuable items that they feel secure with in the camp than in the return sites.

Popular expression arose on the need to encourage economic elevation, with market outlets and services to the return sites to guarantee full return of the populace. One Okello Boniface who runs a small produce buying business in Alokolum camp had this to say:

“Although, I may consider returning back to my original homeland at Anyomotwon, I still come and stay in the camp because of many reasons like lack of income that makes me unable to provide for my family. Here in the camp at least I am able to find some small money.”

Lack of means to earn income is one factor that really makes the return issue challenging for some people, since currently in the camp, they have engineered means to realize some income through small transactions within the camp.

Again some camp-based businessmen allude to fear of theft in the return sites. It is this fear that makes them continue staying in the camp to

safeguard and pursue their business with sure customer base. The business market is indicated to be readily available in the camps, since even 'foreigners'⁶ come seeking for goods in the camps.

Moreover, still on the economic front, people feel there are no good roads reaching out to the return sites that can enable them transport their products with ease and this factor tends to slow down the process of return too.

Price setting in the camp, to some extent enables the farmers attain reasonable income out of their products as opposed to very cheap price they fetch for the same produce at the return site. E.g. it was quoted from Lagile Camp in Pader that a sack of unshelled groundnuts can be sold for between 75,000/= in the camp but buyers will insist on paying 50,000/= or less at return sites.

Some people are hesitant to dissociate themselves from business associations formed during camp life, especially when these are still going concerns. This is one factor that is keeping those involved in the business line from returning back.

"The hardship of life that we are in also largely contributes to our stay here in the camp. We find that when we go back to our homeland, the life seems to be still hard so that is why we are still in the camp where we get to associate with friends", -Daudi Okeny, Olwal Camp.

This is one of the mutually expressed sentiments of persons still glued to camps.

The employment opportunities at the main camp as casual workers and with NGOs still keep some people in the main camp location. They envision that upon return, such opportunities would be lost causing them some degree of economic insecurity. This scenario is illustrated by circumstances of two young men from Lamola Parish:

⁶ Especially traders from the Sudan and Business people coming from outside the district, especially Kampala based.

Okello Robert and **Okot Ronald** of Lamola Parish were previously employed as pump attendants by SAVANAH GENERAL CO. LTD - a company contracted to supply clean water in the camps. They were responsible for pumping water to the reservoir tanks for onward supply to camp residence. This facility has, however, been handed over to the district authorities, and ever since the two employees have not been paid for their services, in spite of their continued commitment ensuring the facility remains functional.

This has kept them in the camp hoping for payments to be effected which is not forthcoming. They seek for attention by the district so that they can send their family back home to the return site.

The people at the grassroots are made to believe that their economic situation can not be helped by the local government and still turn their plight to the NGOs. The disgruntlement over inability of the local government to provide services was reflected by Ocen Mark – who calls himself a community coordinator in Amuru, who sarcastically suggested:

“Since Constitutional provisions are often changed when required, why don’t we push for amendment of the Constitution to provide for formation of an NGO local government that seems to handle our concerns more responsively and effectively”.

4.2.2 Social Factors

A socially sustainable system must achieve fairness in distribution and opportunity, adequate provision of social services, including health, education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation. The human being, much as is an individual, is also considered part of the wider community. Communal sense of claim of ownership and responsibility attested to by many respondents is a very rich traditional value in enhancing social cohesion within communities and becomes a natural tool for social safety nets as well as a deterrent to potential

conflicts. Individual actions, on the other hand, may affect the well-being of the entire community.

The respondents argued that, due to the camp environment and its effect in shaping social life of the inmates, there emerged different categories of people with different ideas and behavior traits. When faced with the need for return, the youth and young family members who have become very lazy shun the possibility of work at return homes, often making lame excuses that they lack what to do. The elderly are too weak to build and feed themselves in the return sites, and the children who were born and raised in the encampment and have not been exposed to proper village life need careful guidance. Some of the sentiments expressed were:

“Yes, there are social factors impacting return like children have lost respect for their parent because of this camp life, people really want to go back home were they can teach their children good manners”.

“The youth don’t even know their relatives and they get to mix up and at times find themselves having sex with a relative which is rare in the indigenous home set-up where children were introduced to all their relatives”.

Such abominations wrought a heavy sense of shame on the culprits who then find recluse in the vast camp environment rather than return to home where they would be isolated. The wanton behaviors in camp life over the years resulted in a number of births out of wedlock. In a sense these children are treated like orphans and left to loiter around with little guidance and proper sense and means of upbringing. With persistent call by the leaders for IDPs to return, such wayward parents reportedly often feel quite uncomfortable returning with children whose lineage is not quite known.

More daunting are revelations that single parent headed families find it so hard to go back to the return site since they find it difficult to take care of the family without support from NGOs. This is mostly common with mothers who have lost their partners either due to the war or

sickness. Women are indicated to lack the ability to build in the return sites without support, moreover with little or in most case no income to support them hire workers. Sentiments were rife that to such a lady, the government's offer of free iron sheets on condition that one must first build the basic wall structure for a house at the return site appears to be a cynical mockery.

To some IDPs, the camp social life has become so addictive to the extent that they find it difficult to extricate themselves and face-up to a new seemingly 'solitary' lifestyle upon return. This is reportedly a rampant habit of especially some men and women who start drinking early in the morning and their world seems to rotate around the bottle and 'sachets'. The youth, in their peer groups, are not exceptional to addictive habit trends built around diverse contemporary interest ranging from videos, to TV football matches to disco dance events on auction days.

Ex-combatants or formerly abducted also face a myriad of challenges in the return process ranging from failure to locate their original homes⁷, and, for those who do manage to locate their previous places of abode, get assaulted with painful memories of gruesome occurrences relating to their abduction experiences, in some cases involving being witness to gruesome murders. In this case, the 'home' becomes a renewed source of pain to the victims instead of a place of solace from the equally abominable camp life. Yet others are reportedly denied rights to the land they are supposed to live on.

The duration of stay in the camp brought in a social transformation especially to the young who are less interested in their villages. In Kidega Richard's expression, 'Pecking' order has changed so that the old ones now feed from the young ones. Originally the elder had all the resources, and now they are pass their productive age while the youth remain vigilant. They argue that if you go back you have to depend on your land,

⁷ Pre-abduction homes

but this does not yield fast result. Thus, the young tend to refrain from going back. Not until they have a specific need, or find a way of utilizing the land – their chosen option is to stay in the camp.

Good social values have broken down due to encampment of entire communities and this has particularly impacted more on the youth whose behaviors have changed in a manner that they do not respect elders. And this disrespect tends to be carried on to return homes, much to the detriment of social order cohesion. One Mego Esther Luk - a cultural consultant in Kitgum had this to say:

“Gin madong rac tutwal bulu pe winyo lok pa ludongo. Gin macwero cwiny lodito tutwal bulu pe woro ladit. Neno ladit macalo obstacle. Camp onyalo adui ma wabitingo wadok kwede gang”.

(The worst bit is that the youth no longer listen to the elders. No longer respects elders. They consider the elders obstacles. Camp life has produced rebels who we will return home with). Such disappointments are heightened amongst responsible parents by the youth hiding behind the banner of ‘child’s rights’. It may be helpful to properly sensitize people at grassroots what entails violation of children’s rights and what the limits are with respect to the inherent responsibility of proper up-bringing of the child by the parents or guardians.

4.2.3 Security

Security threats in Acholiland emerged as a direct consequence of dysfunctional systems occasioned by displacement in their multiple, though overlapping, sub-systemic dimensions. The list of concrete and symptomatic dysfunctions is so extensive the research will only outline a few categories and examples, clustered along general dimensions of human security that directly impacts on the return process. Suffice it to say that security threats are systemically related and that dysfunctions in one sphere tend to express themselves in other subsystems – linked in

vicious circuits of multiple causality. All these pose unique challenges to return as people strive to attain alternative good livelihood which is sustainable.

(i) Violence and Fear factor

The people interviewed argued that insecurity associated with violence is not so much of a factor in the return process although there are some small but grave incidences of banditry or thuggery in the name of '*Boo-kec*' who carry out robbing sprees and threaten movement of people to and from the return sites. This instills a degree of fear in the returnees. Fear still abounds related to imagined existence of unexploded ordinances (UXOs), but not to a significant level. But according to an AVSI representative working on the same, in October alone in Gulu, 98 dangerous items were discovered consisting of 2 mortars, 2 rockets and bullets. In Amuru, 20 mortars, 13 RPGs, and 1 Recoilless Gun were unearthed the same month. Whereas it is argued that the lazy often use reference to UXOs to dodge going back home, this is still a real challenge to contend with. The isolated cases reported tend to keep this fear alive. The clarion call by actors in this field is for people to exercise caution with items they are not clear about.

Again some respondents' expressed fear over allegations that former rebels might have hidden their arms and ammunitions in the villages and could easily retrieve it for violent purposes upon return since many who reported may not have declared all the guns which were in their procession.

The other reported fear factor relates to the question of theft of property due to the isolated settlement pattern envisioned at return as opposed to congestion in camps which set-up in itself is a deterrent to aggravated robbery and theft.

(ii) Epidemics⁸

The spread of disease contributes another real and present danger to the IDPs and those returning. The current generation of IDPs have been mercilessly assaulted by juxtaposition of “traditional epidemics”⁹ coming back with a vengeance, and relatively “new” strains of morbidity, in particular those presenting a threat to natural immunities like ebola, HIV/AIDS, and now the latest Hepatitis B, which from its onslaught six months ago, has claimed 129 lives with 8,713 cases reported. One dismayed Elder Mzee Koyo of Lukee painfully wondered:

“Why are all these diseases coming to Acholiland one after another? Is there something behind it? This never used to happen before”.

Dysfunctional health facilities in the region coupled with changing strains of many diseases like malaria which are beginning to show signs of resistance to medication are clear manifestations of challenges faced by IDPs in the return process. Given the social stigma and prejudice attached to the pathology of HIV/AIDS, it is highly probable that most cases go unreported – making an ever larger segments of the population standing at serious risk. It is even more damning that the incidence of all new infections are reported by TASO to be growing amongst women and young people. With these epidemics rampant, the sick fear going back to isolated places where it may be quite difficult to get medical attention and treatment. This poses a grave challenge to the return process.

(iii) Hazardous waste

One unique threat to those whose original homes are the current camp sites and for those who will remain at camp locations¹⁰ are the problem of waste. Waste refers to “materials that have no further value for human society”. Such materials include non-biodegradable materials and household garbage. Examples can be seen in widespread portable

⁸ Epidemics involve a complex pattern of interactions rooted in pathogenic conditions, demographic dynamics, cultural practices, and public policies.

⁹ tuberculosis, cholera, malaria, and typhoid

¹⁰ PRDP projects this category at 30% of the original population per camp.

latrines found in all camps, plastic bags and bottles strewn everywhere curtailing use of otherwise cultivable soil. The streams that are running near camp sites are mostly contaminated and not suitable for human consumption. Further, the evacuated houses littering camp locations are a clear menace, and reportedly a refuge for unruly characters, sometimes used for immoral exploits. Gulu town itself, which had been the largest unofficial IDP camp, is embroiled with perennial problem of garbage largely unresolved and escalating (especially in Layibi Division industrial area), even as the authorities of the day wishfully envision Gulu attaining a City status soon.

(iv) Environment

The “death of forest” or deforestation is one of the most widespread and visibly shocking forms of environmental degradation facing the IDPs situations at return sites especially for those who will settle near the camp sites. Most trees have been cut for firewood and as source of income in the making of charcoal. The IDPs face the challenge of returning to whose environments with depleted trees which pose its own attendant problems. This has as well had the adverse effect of depleting the traditional building materials that the Acholi rely on in making their huts.

(v) Food Insecurity

The camp population has over the years been depended on relief food items, with limited nutritional values. Now that the food distribution program gets phased out as people return, they inexorably get faced with new challenge of food insecurity. Principally, food insecurity amongst returning IDPs is manifested in terms of malnutrition, deprivation and hunger. This threat has emerged as the most profound and immediate consequence of encampment – negatively affecting food production. Before the returning population can reap the harvest from their hastily planted fields, which produce has been severely affected by the changed

weather pattern, food insecurity becomes a real challenge to be tackled as an emergency.

4.2.4 Cultural, Religious & Myth Factors

Perceptions itself can be a deadly tool to engineer and stir unease and in the extreme conflicts. During the return process, contestations are rife between the approaches to adopt in relation to perceived presence of *cen* - marauding 'spirits' at return sites. The belief in Acholi ancestry cultures is that killing, which happened abundantly in Acholiland, imply psychological suicide, because the soul of the perpetrator cannot reincarnate in the family's cycle of life and death. Hence, the perpetrators' soul is condemned to remain in the nebula between life and death facing an existence as a perpetual family outcast. The soul may even become a capricious and revengeful spirit attacking the living with misfortune - *cen*.

Whereas the propagators of cultural belief system maintain that some traditional rites must be performed to cleanse the territory to enable people to freely resettle without undue disturbance from the *cen*, some Christian religious pundits mainly of the Born again order are up in arms against this move, branding the cultural approach evil and prefer to wield the Bible to cure the menace.

Although traditional and cultural practices in the past were alluded to as having played a major role in guiding decent human existence among the Acholi, they have been subjected to severe stresses, especially with encampment experience. They consequently lost their prestige and relevance.

Yet according to most elders interviewed, societal resources of indigenous cultural mechanisms are very useful, especially after the violent conflicts the region have been through, in their potential to facilitate the reintegration, return and healing process, since the community members

can easily associate with them. They maintain that tradition-based practices can be used to effectively transform conflicts and restore harmony in society, not least in the context of return home.

There were several reported incidences/cases of perceived super natural afflictions on some returnees that contemporary systems can not deal with. According to the people interviewed, there is high need to perform cleansing and healing processes of certain areas where people (captured from neighboring places) were herded to and killed. Other areas were just intense battle arena between government forces and rebels. Some of their remains are getting exposed on the surface land which is to be used by returnees as farms and community pathways.

Superstitious beliefs are rife that these sites and other previous unhealthy events that occurred there prevent some people from returning.

A case is cited where displaced people from Amida who should have returned to Lamolo instead opted to move 2 km away to resettle in Padibe due to superstition, believing that some aggrieved old man before he died, dispensed a 'curse' to the effect that if people came back to Lamolo, they would all die. Another lot of people from Labuje instead of returning to Pagen only 3 km away, chose to resettle at a distant relatives land at Akwang 10 km away for the same superstitious reason. One person was reported to have moved from Palabek and resettled all the way in Buyalle. Others wait at transite sites until the curse is removed through traditional cleansing ceremonies. Interestingly, even the Christian believers were reported to opt to wait for these ceremonies to be performed first, then they go to Church.

Now the demand is that traditional practitioners should take up the responsibility to perform such exercises immediately.

The Justice and Peace Commission office in Kitgum reported that, in Mucwini, Acholi Religious Leaders & Peace Initiative (ARLPI) organized memorial prayers but this has not changed the people's mentality and perception of fear. The most regular in Church are reported to be the ones who have the biggest fear of superstition.

However, others don't see the value in these cultural practices, believing that only the entertaining aspects of it are useful.

“The only cultural value that I see can bring great change in the return process is rejuvenating the cultural dances and cultural norms in the return sites. With this, people will feel embraced in their return sites and forget of the camps” and,

“Elders in respective return sites should organize and come together get involved in ceremonies that kind of call for people within the area to participate in the cultural initiations like dances, plays and other cultural practices, this would strengthen the spirit of return to those who have not made up their minds on returning home.”

It is implicit to point out that these tools can only complement the efforts of formal and contemporary systems being attempted by government and other agencies, since only the later are capable of dealing with the complex issues that are beyond the mandate of the tradition practices.

4.2.5 Question of Identity

The question of identity was tendered in some respondents' opinions as sensitive challenges that are likely causative factors to eminent tensions and contestations in the return process. Tensions are reported to have been generated spiraling around the question of specific dynamics created by different expressions of Identity along clan and/or tribal labeling. Groups gang themselves along identity labels to contest or vouch for settlements in specific locations. Indeed, issues of identity are seen by many to lie at the heart of many of the recent land conflicts emerging in the region during this return process. Antagonistic

articulations of identity often play a significant role in the cycle of conflict – with people labeled as *okeyu [nephew]*, *adonyi [alien]*, *larok [non-indigenous]* being denied right of settlement in particular locations. The conflict brought a little more than the Acholi people into the camps. Historically, in pre-displacement settings, there were a number of ‘foreigners’ intermittently settled within Acholiland. E.g. Teso laborers in Anaka, the Ankole herdsmen (Balalo) in Labora, and the Sudanese Nubians settled in different locations. The displacement and encampment massed-up people from diverse backgrounds together. Now with return, many people tend to cling back to clan identity in the face of many family break-ups and expansions. This tends to leave the other people who can not attach themselves easily to some specific identity hanging and face a challenge fitting in the new emerging set-up.

In particular, there has been a growing reference on the issues of ‘indigenusness’ as people increasingly define themselves in relation to strangers (the so called ‘home people’ vs ‘encroachers’). It is a discussion that is intimately connected to determining whether or not a displaced person is able to return home and resettle peacefully.

4.2.6 Land Issue

There were sufficient concerns raised by the respondents that the issue of land features prominently in the return process. The fundamental contention resonates around land access and land rights that tend to generate land conflicts, disputes and wrangles with varying degrees from place to place or diverse circumstances.

In Anaka and Purongo sub-counties in Amuru district, land wrangles on issues of boundaries amongst family and clan members are reported in almost every parish or village. The touchiest being claims of land by a community against an individual or other groups/community. One reported case which has lasted for almost two years is disputes between

the Payira people and the Jonam (Alur). According to one Obote Langelanga of Latoro Parish; long ago, the Payira people occupied all land of Got Apwoyo, and were later sent out by the colonial administration on the grounds that the area is a game park reserve for animals. However, in early 1970s the Alur including some Acholis started occupying the land. By 1986, when the war started, the majority of the occupants were the Alur who decided to run across the Nile to Pakwach. With the return process, both the Payira people and the Alur are claiming the land. The contest is spiced by other town dwellers who are as well attempting to portion out large chunks of land at Got Apwoyo for commercial purposes using individually designed criteria to champion their interest. Very big chunks are ending up going to families who originally did not hail from there, thus making the indigenous community very bitter. Additionally individual 'big shots' in government are portioning for themselves big land in the area. Examples were cited of Charles Otema, Alex Omoti, Awany Tonny, Toodwong, Obong P' Okutu all purportedly coming from the Awany family.

The misery of indigenous people is not helped by some 'big shot' district, government and cultural leaders scrambling for their share in total disregard of the local people. The Paramount Chief alone, the local people report, own such big land that the size cannot be estimated because the borders are informed by streams and valleys. Other individuals with similar big land are Brigadier Otema Awany, Rt Col Walter Ochora Odoch, Hon Ogenga Latigo, Lacan pe Nino. These people with extraordinarily big land are being questioned by the community on the procedure they used to acquire it. Other local people allege that the 'big shots' interest is to see people remain in the camps so that they become a labour reserve to provide workforce for their farms. Sadly this is already happening. A case in point is Te Acana camp which is full of farm workers who get up very early and go straight to work in these people's farms.

To overcome the common people's plight in this matter, one Mzee Olal of Anaka Camp proposes that the various Clans should be reorganized and the Got Apwoyo land be distributed to the Clan leaders in terms of hills which later the Clan members would appropriately settle their needy people in.

The largest occupation and land use in Acholiland is characterized by productive agricultural. For the displaced people returning home, land represents the only equity they have after the war. If significant numbers of these people are disenfranchised from their rights of access and use of land, then this will perpetuate a downward spiral of destitution and poverty.

The respondents did aver that there are numerous cases of land contestation spiraling mainly around boundary disputes and encroachment. This according to them is heightened by apparent confusion and mistrust over land administration and adjudication systems. Most respondents expressed little faith in the ability of the statutory systems to adjudicate land access and land rights fairly, promptly, and honestly. Preference was always tendered towards the traditional systems led by elders and the *rwodi kweri* – a chosen leader mandated to oversee aspects of farming which function makes him by default, an authority in land boundary demarcations of the different families within his jurisdiction.

Reports were rife of competing interest on the touchy issue of land access and control. These interest involved competition between: (i) indigenous land owners themselves over boundaries; (ii) indigenous land owners and diaspora based Acholis who reportedly dish out massive amount of money to buy off land; (iii) indigenous land owners and their elected or appointed leaders and some 'powerful' individuals; (iv) indigenous Acholi and government interests; and (v) between indigenous Acholi and outside interests (investors?).

Concerns were raised with regard to access to land occupied by armed forces and follow-up compensation. In Kilak Sub-county in particular, land owners whose land hosted the army brigade are completely being denied access and control of their land. The 'ownership' remains in the hands of the army who continue to use it even for cultivation and other productive activities at the expense of the poor landless community. The concerned victims our researcher talked to had this to say:

“As we are being sent out like dogs, we have resorted to stay in the camp for fear of being harassed, and working very hard to rent pieces of land for survival at high prices of 10,000/= to 20,000/= per acre. At least government should give back what we possessed or relocate us land somewhere”

Some original land owners of the camp sites, too, raised concerns over land contamination and deterioration of the land quality that can not be immediately used for viable agricultural purposes. Besides, the vicinities of the camp locations have been left bare of trees (deforested) causing serious environmental consequences, as discussed in section 4.2.3 (iv).

The evident challenge facing the returnees is limited public awareness, knowledge and information on land laws, land investment opportunities, land use planning, and links with environmental remediation and sustainable natural resource management.

Squatters and land grabbing cases are reported to be numerous in traditional homesteads where some IDPs are returning or due to return. The squatter phenomenon was particularly said to be common around camp locations and close to towns and trading centers, by people who begin to claim rights to the land without consent of families and clans.

Reported too were cases of people not familiar with their traditional homesteads. This affects mainly orphaned children, those born in camps and LRA returnees who were abducted at very tender ages.

Cases of land sales, mainly by wayward youths, without consent of legitimate owners who have rights over such land, are reportedly

widespread. These transactions are normally done on cash basis without involvement of traditional authorities, and have become a cause of much anxiety and conflict within various clans at this time of return. Announcements warning prospective land buyers over lost of their money are a common feature on local radios.

Patrick Lakwonyero of Koch Goma sadly narrated that with his hard earned savings, he bought a piece of land along Gulu-Kampala highway for 2 million shillings and started construction on it. When the building reached roofing level, some other group of people approached him claiming to be the rightful owners of the land and that the person who sold the land had no authority to do so. He was then advised to recover his money but it was too late since the 'seller' had already squandered it and had no capacity to pay back. In order not to throw his investment to waste, he had to re-purchase the same piece of land from the rightful owners at another 2 million shillings. He ended up buying the same piece of land twice.

Lots of concerns were expressed, particularly from women, and child-headed households, of inequity and denial of rights to re-access traditional homesteads and lands. Others intimate that threats were used in certain instances for them to remain silent about their land rights amidst obvious grabbing. The suppressing argument is that these are internal matters and should not invite external intervention or investigation.

It remained unclear to many who expressed wariness about the issue, how land previously held communally as hunting/grazing lands will be accessible to the returning IDPs. This concern has significantly been highlighted by the rumored discovery of oil in some parts of northern Uganda particularly Amuru district.

The government's statutory capacity to address these disputes effectively is limited, with power vested in the LC2s whose competence in many

incidences was questionable by the aggrieved parties. Such disputes are expected to have far-reaching and unfair impacts on the poor and vulnerable, not least in the context of return.

The land question, which has always been referred to as very sensitive, is at the center stage of the return process. Disenfranchised and marginalized people arising from failed land access, land disputes and conflicts, and undetermined rights can become a volatile constituency, undermining attempts to build consensus and civic engagement in development.

4.2.7 Gender related issues

Gender plays a role in identifying specific groups who are at risk in the displacement and return process. There has been a radical shift in the traditional roles and responsibilities women and men play with the advent of camp experience. Women have to maintain their usual role of raising their children, doing household chores, or engaging in petty trade. But their burden is increased, since usual household tasks are more difficult such as greater distances and risk in carrying wood fuel, and more difficulties in drawing water and searching for food. Additionally they feel burdened because some roles that traditionally were performed by their husbands has been unloaded to them, besides facing increased risk of rape or physical abuse.

Men on the other hand, are afflicted as seriously as women. These men lost a major life purpose by losing their work, traditional role, sense of worth and their identity is further hurt by loss of ability to protect and care for their families. Because of this, families have been polarized and rendered incompetent to handle the return process in a fluid manner. There was a huge debate in Kitgum instigated by men who complain that their wives are leaving them to return to original home alone, while they tend to remain behind or have joined their children working outside the

district in places like Kampala. The contentious issue was, “is it right for children to take their mothers to live with them away from their fathers?” According to Mego Esther Luk, the major challenge to return in this respect is that there is no master planner or leadership in the return process at household level since the role of men have been trimmed and usurped by women, which culturally is incorrect. “*Coo okun woko*” – men are in protest. Under these circumstances, the youth must be empowered to spearhead the process and build back the homes.

4.2.8 Psychosocial factors

The events precipitating the start of the northern Uganda conflict, acts of relocation of the population, the process of relocation and the settlement in diabolical camps has taken a mental and physical toll on the population. Even as they return home to their original places of abode, this effect is evident and manifests in various forms posing very negative challenges that the population has to grapple with.

Individuals, often in such numbers as to include families and entire communities, suffered from a range of human rights violations, including torture, rape, abductions, sexual violations, war wounds, deprivation of basic needs, loss of home, loss of loved ones, loss of culture, starvation and premature death.

The resulting long and short-term mental health and psychosocial consequences are daunting.

Children became the easy victims of this misfortune and overcrowding in the camps. Aggressive and antisocial behavior frequently associated with substance abuse became common among children in these circumstances. They developed attrition¹¹ that led to failure in reaching normal development landmarks, quite contrary to Acholi upbringing, making cumulative defect even larger, manifesting in three ways: (i)

¹¹ Attrition is caused by inadequate intake of nourishment vital for body and mind such as a lack of proteins, calories, or micronutrients, clearly unattainable in camps.

Physically, as height and weight below norms of age; (ii) In school settings, as learning failures and retarded mental development; and (iii) Behaviorally, as psychiatric disorder and social deviance. Normalizing the lives (as the PRDP portrays) of these children is a daunting challenge as people return.

Other consequences and challenges to content with include collective trauma, loss of loved ones, disability, brain drain, adaptation of complicated behavior and behavioral problems, adapting new cultures in order to integrate into different societies, broken ties of home and villages that formed the basis for Acholi identity, sense of guilt and hatred developed as events unfolded in the 20 years conflict, lack of employment, income and basic life requirements, all attesting to very stressful situations and trauma to the people that often results in somatization, depression, and disturbance of the functioning of families. These are psychosocial challenges to overcome, is even expounded more by bad memories at return home environments, which reportedly trigger traumatic effects on some returnees. A person who may have had half or three quarters of their family members killed, finds the return home an emotionally torturous place in the short term.

The other aspect of the challenges is the fear factor generated by past misdeeds that some returnee have to content with upon return.

In Mucwini, a boy who hailed from Pajong was abducted while visiting at a friends place in Pubec. While in the bush, he registered that he comes from Pubec and later escaped having attained some rank in the bush. Upon reporting, he took the UPDF to a hidden armory where the rebels kept their arms. In retaliation, the rebels came and killed over 20 people in Pubec believing that they were exacting revenge on the boy who they knew comes from there. 11 of the dead were from the family of the friend from where he was abducted. Now with the return process, the Pubec don't want the Pajong to come back near them and the Pajong also fear going back. Being originally from Omia-anyima, the Pajong who were just

allowed to settle as migrants near the Pubec where they grew in number, now find themselves stranded in the camps.

Other smaller cases involved individual incidences where the perpetrators fear to return to a location because they caused disappearance or death of person from that location. These fears are manifested even before any threats directed to them.

Another large scale incident is reported in Palabek at Ayuu Alali – the late Rebel Commander Tabuley’s ancestral village, where lots of atrocities were committed all accredited to him. So his relatives now do not want to go back due to fear of incrimination.

These ties in with reported fears of attacks from spirits at places where killings took place. People tend to shun going back to the vicinities of such black spots, due to psychological fears.

4.2.9 Infrastructure and Social Services

This is one major factor as well that has hindered the return process to some extent. People blame the delay in return to lack of enough infrastructures in the return sites. This is a factor that cuts across all the areas investigated with concerns raised at the camps, transit sites and return sites.

(i) Water

The most important infrastructure and social service that most people call for is clean water. With clean water, they can live happily and healthy in the return site. Prior to displacement, the local population relied on shallow wells and streams, some of which have been found to no longer be usable at return sites. Even where water sources are in use, women and girls have to travel fairly long distances in some instances more than 1.5km to fetch water. This to them is a challenge having been used to the readily available safe water supply in the camps most of

which had motorized pumps in use. Yet the distance also exposes them to risk of abuse and perceived security threats. The numerous springs at return villages have in many cases been overgrown by bush or dried-up due to lack of maintenance. So lack of safe drinking water is a serious hindering factor in the return process making people decide to remain in the camps or return to camps, where they enjoy clean water.

The respective districts and development partners are responding to this challenge by adopting the parish based approach and attempting to meet a two point objective: provision of water at institutional levels e.g. at primary schools and health centers as a priority, and at community level by sinking boreholes and spring protection where there is no boreholes.

The only problem here is that the call for return has been repeatedly drummed before the services are provided in some locations, the argument is that people have to go first and help in identifying the needs. It becomes the hen and egg debate. The number of people who have returned should not be used as a criterion for providing social services. The target at return sites should at least be 1 borehole per village so that the availability of water can as well serve as a pull-factor to encourage people to return. The challenge here then is that drilling one borehole technically cost 22 million shillings and the district local governments do not have this kind of money. For example, for Gulu district alone with 235 villages, it means Shs 5.17 billions have to be raised to meet the water policy requirement. In Amuru, with 110 villages, it would require Shs 2.42 Billion.

In Palabek Kal for instance, most water sources are found in the camps with over 10 boreholes & 2 motorized pumps provided by Oxfam and WaterAid. In Alali Parish there are only 2 boreholes serving 6 villages. Labigiriang has 4 boreholes serving 6 villages with now a higher population. Lamwo has 5 boreholes, 2 of which were drilled in a dry place provided water for a short time and has dried-up. Some return sites are 20 miles away from functional water points.

(ii) Access Road.

After twenty odd years of displacement, access to villages of origin is sometimes not easy due to lack of community access roads. There certainly were real community roads existing before displacement, but these have since been overgrown and completely covered up. Even as the roads are identified, in some instances, bridges or culverts are required where the road crosses valleys and water streams. In Gulu district alone, 550.6 km of road were assessed to be opened, of which only about 30% have been achieved.

To construct a typical district Class 1 community road with a carrying capacity of 4.5 metric tonnes with all the engineering provisions covered, it cost an estimated Shs 30 million per kilometer. This means Gulu district for instance, in order to complete construction of the remaining community roads of 385.5 km assessed, would require Shs 11.5 billion, which is already 70% of the total district annual budget of Shs 16.5 billion.

(iii) Health

Maintenance of good health is quite an essential element of human security not least in the context of IDPs who have survived the harrowing camp situation for many years. As people leave camp environments and return to their original homes, it is quite essential that provision of health services is accessible to the returning lot. Understandably respondents talked to, indicated being hesitant to return to sites without functioning health facilities that they can easily access. According to Dr. Paul Onek, the health sector faces some fundamental problems that translate into challenges impacting the returning IDPs as well. These challenges range from gaps in availability of health infrastructure/unit facility from the ideal of maintaining at least one health center per Parish, to lack of personnel to man the existing facilities. Much as health infrastructures were spread all over the districts under study, many of

them were closed down due to displacement. The functional health units now face the recurrent problem of retention of staff in remoter areas. This relates to other associated problems of lack of provision of accommodation for staff, unavailability of utility (water, electricity, solar power) in those locations, and very meager salary without incentives. Gulu district, for example, has 60 health facilities comprising major hospitals and health centres II, III, and IV. 14 of these are closed due to insecurity 7 in Omoro and 7 in Aswa. Yet 24 Parishes are still without health facilities in spite of the national standards requirements. The health sector technical policy stipulates that a health facility should not be more than 5 kms away from the beneficiary, which is a walking distance. Yet some returnees have gone further away from the health centers thus posing a problem to them. Malaria and diarrhea are the major ailments that pose a challenge to the returnees. Fear is expressed that HIV/AIDs will be spread to the villages due to return. In the camp environment, it was easy to reach people with health messages, but with return it means greater cost implications in the budget.

(iv) Schools

Schools have proven to be a “pull-factor” in the return process, in that IDPs have a tendency of returning more to locations where schools have been opened. This becomes a challenge for return to places where school facilities are not yet available. By the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008, the process of school return commenced. This year, some 61 primary schools and 1 secondary school have returned to original sites at least in Gulu district. So the challenges that affect return of schools also impacts on the IDPs return process. Some schools have not returned due to lack of structures at return site while others don't have access roads. Examples are given of river Agago that cuts off Obolokome and Latome Primary Schools from Lira Palwo center; and Awuc river cutting off Pader Technical College & Alwer Primary School from Kalongo, all in Pader district.

But even the schools that have returned do not yet meet all the minimum standards required by the Ministry of Education. e.g. Lamintoo P.S returned but operates in only 2 classrooms one of which has been taken for administration, leaving the one to be shared while the rest of the pupils learn under trees outside.

More challenges affect schools including lack of latrines at returning school sites. There are yet some schools without water moreover this is an absolute necessity.

In Omelboke Primary School in Gulu district, two pupils reportedly lost their lives when they left school to go drink water from the river.

In Gulu district, as in others, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the teachers are not residing in schools and have to commute from outside place making them come late. This sets back the curriculum completion leading to poor results. In the 2008 Mock Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), Gulu district recorded very poor performance with only 12 in first division out of 1,345 candidates, representing a miserable 0.9%

Other challenges are reported in terms of inadequacy of learning materials and sitting facilities with some pupils still sitting on the floor. There is an apparent gap in joint efforts between the teachers and the parents in the management of children's education which regrettably has lead to high girl-child drop out.

Again in Gulu district, from P.1 to P.3, girls are more than boys, but from P.4 boys become more in number due to girl's drop-out to the extent that some schools end up having no girl candidates in P.L.E - according to the Senior School Inspector, Gulu district.

The schools seem to be in perpetual situation of lack of funds in spite of government's promises of improving lives of people in the north through education. Mr. Okot Robinson, the Senior Inspector of School muses,

“I have been wondering what difference PRDP is going to make, if it won’t address affirmative action that will enable our learning environment to succeed. We have a National Education Policy already which is not being effectively implemented”.

He adds that the staff ceiling which puts a ban on recruitment of teachers puts a strain on schools some of which are run by only 3 teachers, yet our children have to compete with children from more affluent and well resourced schools in Kampala. “A lot still needs to be done to improve the welfare of our teachers if we claim to vouch for standard education. The question of teacher’s welfare is not catered for in the PRDP as well as funds to run school programs. These are the two issues that the PRDP should address”. He concludes by saying:

“Our teachers are pretending to be working when they are not. But however much we blame our teachers, they can not make a miracle”.

Nonetheless, schools are very essential in the return sites since children still find it so hard to cope with the long distance moving from the return sites to school. Most parents leave their children in the camp which is near school to avoid all the difficulties the children would have to undergo to access schools. But again these children do not concentrate for lack of parental love and guidance.

4.2.10 Political & Governance Factors.

The respondents identified inconsistency of the governments both at higher and lower levels in channeling information to them as the beneficiaries on the return process. There are information breaks with no feedbacks, while some leaders sound ruthless and cause suspicion and lack of trust in every information that they pass. This makes people reluctant to embrace wholeheartedly the process of return. Too much expectation is raised by the government leaders’ talks urging people to return, but they don’t deliver on the services that they promised would

follow them. They alluded to the unclear process of promised iron sheet distribution project which is disturbing potential returnees.

The fall-back position government adopts is claiming success in supporting and guiding the development partners to provide genuine services to its community.

More grievances attributed to the governance at the lower levels through some politicians was alleged stopping of the distribution of food items in the sub-county without any clear explanation with the lame claim that food distribution is the factor making people to cling in the main camp. This to many was considered too harsh and not expected from their leaders. Besides, other politicians were thought to practice sectarian politics, and mention was made, without giving specifics, of some people accessing opportunities on the basis of his/her leanings to a particular Party, a practice that is very frustrating, to say the least.

The other contentious issue considered a governance factor hindering return is the unsuccessful conclusion of the LRA/GoU peace Talks, with people harboring the fear of renewed attacks in spite of numerous government assurances to the contrary.

Attempts were made to cast government's contributions to the return process in both positive and failed achievement as summarized in the table below:

| CONTRIBUTED | FAILED TO CONTRIBUTE |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|--------------------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peace talks that has brought peace. - Promising protection of people in the return sites. - Encouraging people to go back home. - Some training has been passed on to the leader in the grass root to manage the society well. - Introduction of law keeper in the centers to help out with crime offences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - False promises basing on return, ie; the start up package promised to the people is not yet given them. - Roads in/within the return sites. - Clean water in the return sites. - Equal distribution of schools to help the local child. - Restocking process is not yet effected since other people still haven't got the restocking package. |
|--|---|

A disgruntled respondent from Pader, drawing on the failure of delivery of government promises, expressed grave concern that the so-called 'war debt claimants' activities is concentrated in Gulu only, excluding people from Pader yet they too lost property.

4.2.11 Law Enforcement & Judiciary

As people return and resettle, law enforcement and wider judicial structures are critical to the way in which they will be re-absorbed into their places of origin. In particular, although localized mechanisms are often critical to effective reintegration of returnees, it is important that they are not seen as arbitrary and partisan as this will only serve to exacerbate the potential for the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups as well as handling individual cases. This is particularly the case where groups of returning refugees are associated with specific clan group. Indeed, it is only when political and judicial processes are seen as fair that clan identities will cease to be used as a tool for mobilizing against real or perceived injustice. Thus at the point of return and the need for promoting inclusion at community and national level is critical in order to allow for constructive expressions of localized identity within community and eventually national context.

Much as the deployment of Special Police Constables (SPCs) to augment the meager Police presence was most welcomed, lots of challenges still dog law enforcement at return sites. These range from still inadequate number of police personnel to ill-trained ones who do not execute their duties professionally; few police posts to lack of logistical support for following cases. In Amuru for instance, the situation is so bad that a complainant has to come with an exercise book to get the Police to record statements in, and at times one has to provide fuel to transport the investigating officer.

In order to reflect people's sense of justice, the Judicial System, which is largely inaccessible to many returnees, needs to be restructured to incorporate traditional mechanism of alternative dispute resolution.

4.2.12 Reconciliation Challenges

The general sense from all respondents was that there is real genuine need for reconciliation in Acholiland, not least the entire country as the only sustainable way of moving forward and avoid sliding back to the realms of strife. In the society emerging from conflict, it offers the only realistic alternative to enduring and prevent reigniting conflict, and a vital precursor for building a society based on the rule of law and social reconstruction. According to the various individuals interviewed, reconciliation needs to be guided to take place first at individual and interpersonal levels given the different kinds of atrocities and conflicts experienced. This may involve healing of deep psychological and emotional wounds. Fear was expressed of flaring-up of revenge tendencies as people return and are reminded of the past misdeeds. This is more likely where perpetrators are known and seen to be freely moving around. That is why, some respondents suggest, former top LRA Senior Commanders like Brig. Banya just meander around town and fear to go back to their original villages. It may, however, be most unlikely for every

person or group to deeply reconcile with everyone else in society, but the thrust should be a willingness to work together with one's former enemies and adversaries in the common pursuit of a solution of past grievances.

4.2.13 External Factors

Opinions from some of the development workers interviewed point to changing shapes of conflicts that adversely affects return. This arises basically out of two sources in the Acholi sub-region: the one being Organized Armed Groups (OAG) and the question of cattle rustling. The former is orchestrated by former rebel characters who should have been subjected to a proper and well organized formal Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration (DDR) process, and have over the period been shifting their objectives, scaled down their activities and transformed into hooligans, thugs, rapists, and robbers of travelers along the way. The other source -cattle rustling - alluded to by almost everybody interviewed in Pader and part of Kitgum is said to have become a way of life associated with the Karamojong pastoralist. Conflict lines are seasonally drawn over the questions of grazing pastures and water sources, which the roaming pastoralists seek in dry seasons. The fear of cattle rustlers exploits has kept most people bordering Karamoja to remain in the camps.

“Elite Conflict” has been as well alluded to as a factor that compounds tensions in the community during the return process. This relates to the behavior and attitudes of the so called elite class in selfish handling of community issues referred to their jurisdiction. This was cited to parry the Members of Parliaments and the local leaders, for instance, who engage in giving contradictory messages. Complacency and arrogance exuded by civil servants and some NGO operatives were said to negatively affect inroads to implementation of smooth return. Poor

education standards was also singled out as a potential challenge that held most victims of encampment from competing favorably in job opportunities to lift them out of poverty and hence enable them to properly develop their prospective return homes.

4.3 Overview of Current Intervention Efforts

Numerous efforts and interventions are underway in the post-conflict arena of Acholiland as it moves from emergency to recovery phase. Amongst themselves, the various agencies deal with interventions in the broad areas of:

- a) Food distributions ;
- b) Non Food Items (NFIs);
- c) Health;
- d) Food Security & Livelihood;
- e) Water and Sanitation;
- f) Infrastructure development;
- g) Agriculture;
- h) Education Rehabilitation;
- i) Peace building;
- j) Access to Justice; etc

Given the complexity, scale and diversity of the aftermath of the conflict, no single entity can hope to adequately respond to bring about and sustain peace. Rather, a complex networked relationships and actions are called for. However, much of this works should be increasingly geared towards recognizing and empowering the grassroots and linking their initiatives with the top-level leadership level.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

Although instances of internal displacement almost always arise from complex causes, not least in the context of northern Uganda, all can be said to reflect a breakdown in the basic mechanisms of society. The victims are trapped inside state borders under conditions of terrible violations of human rights. They leave deep cleavages that cannot be healed simply by providing emergency relief and then development assistance. These efforts must be integrated, and there must be mechanisms for prevention, protection, reintegration, and political conciliation.

Considerable difficulties encountered in meeting the challenges of post conflict era stem from having to do with a humanitarian response system shaped by experience of earlier times. The systems often poorly adapts with reasonable effectiveness in dealing with very unique crisis of internal displacement like the one unfolding in northern Uganda. This calls for a rethink of the scenario so as to adopt the best available approach (rather than the best possible) in untangling the undesirable phenomenon by assisting the return process. And a dedication to making the strategies work.

5.2 General Rules & Recommendations

The accounts presented in this research report have been largely descriptive and analytical. However, this report also aims to open-up insights into ways in which to face up to the challenges highlighted. The recommendations that follow attempt to underscore that aspiration. We do hope that they will facilitate decision making and action in approaching the numerous challenges to return in Acholiland. The challenges require imagination, wide consultations, consensus building and capacity building, technical support, and further research. Our

suggested general rules and recommendations are just a propelling step in this complex process.

- 1) Consider cultural norms, values and beliefs, to be at the core of human development and informed coexistence which are founded and bonded on specific sets of principles that guide human behavior in favorable ways. Resort to culture should therefore not be seen through lenses that depict primitive undertones but rather in such a way as to identify the values that will be useful to humanity.
- 2) Given the fragile circumstances that pertains in efforts to rebuild the society of northern Uganda in a sustainable manner, approaches adopted and actions undertaken must by necessity embrace 'hard reconstruction' (economic stability, disarmament and demobilization, security sector reform and so on), but sufficient attention must also be given to 'soft reconstruction' measures available through informal practices, reconciliation, and the restoration of local traditional authority.
- 3) Invest sufficient time and energy to careful, contextualized assessment of how best to blend the relevant government policies and non-state strategies available. Understand and utilize all chosen approaches in ways that compliment each other synergistically, rather than work against each other.
- 4) Increase wide consultations with constituencies (displaced persons still in camps, those in transit sites and the ones already in their original homes) on plan formulations and the use of tradition-based practices peculiar to their circumstances.
- 5) Create a social space or forum where individuals or groups can come together to address their developmental, contentious and conflict/grievance related issues openly in order to promote inclusiveness of their voices in the management of affairs affecting them.

- 6) Develop an outreach strategy that aims to help restore the authority and integrity of genuine traditional leaders and the values of the mechanisms that they preside that may have been lost among their local communities during the course of the conflict. This mechanism can be structured and empowered to deal more effectively and decisively with the land conflicts among others.
- 7) Concurrent to return to original homesteads, pursue the revival of the core tenets of traditional justice, reconciliation and moral systems (e.g. social education received in the home and in the community through teachings surrounding the rituals involved). Develop training programmes for lay judges, traditional leaders and healers on basic principles of transitional justice. Engage the international community in providing funding and technical assistance for these programmes.
- 8) Design a program to make people expand their knowledge on best economic sense to land use entailing income generating activities and quality food production, without necessarily relinquishing rights to ownership. Land should be put to the best possible use and benefit to the people who own it. The investor syndrome can come later.
- 9) Intensify and support the Community Policing Program to help resolve and stem the many contentious issues in society and improve the capacity of the SPCs on the ground.
- 10) More effective coordination of programs that deal with the vulnerable people identified in the return process so that their special needs are met and they are not left behind.
- 11) The IDPs harbored too much expectation from government which was not forthcoming. There is need to carry out a Participatory Research and Dialogue on the understanding of the Institution of Government or the State. What it is in people's perception. What it can do and not do. It is common thinking that government is able.

Appendix 1:

SUMMARY OF IDP RETURN CHALLENGES IN ACHOLILAND

| Structural Issue | Proximate Challenge | Location | Weighted Ranking |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Economic | (i) Persistent poverty (ii) Inadequacy of production means/tools and livelihood means. (iii) Market access restricted to camp locations. (iv) Petty employment (odd jobs) opportunities at camp locations. (v) Poor seeds and erratic weather patterns | All | |
| 2. Social Factors | (i) Vulnerable persons (orphaned, widowed, aged and terminally ill) tend to be left behind during the return process. (ii) People from diverse social backgrounds were massed together during encampment divorcing the social fabric cultivated previously. (iii) General idleness and drinking continues to drive some to resist the return process. (iv) Many youths born & raised in the camp do not envision the value of alternative life outside the camp. (v) Single parent and child headed families heavily lean on the collegial support offered in the camp. (vi) Some ex-combatants fail to locate their previous home or are denied access to their land by relatives. | All | 62% |
| 3. Security | (i) The threat of the 'boo kec' violence and fear factor (ii) The real or imagined existence of UXOs (iii) The threat of LRA return (iv) Epidemic threats in return sites (v) Food insecurity (vi) Harzadous waste (vii) Environmental degradation | Rural Areas | 75% |
| 4. Cultural Issue | (i) A need for more cleansing ceremonies at return homes prior to return (<i>moyo piny</i>) (ii) Revival of cultural norms, values and belief system (iii) Superstitious beliefs | | 46% |
| 5. Identity | (i) Displacement bundled different identities together in camps contributing to contestations in specific locations upon return. (ii) Contestations over issues of indigenoussness vis-à-vis enchroachers | | 20% |

| | | | |
|--|---|--------------|-----|
| 6. Land Issues | (i) Land Contestations spiraling mainly around boundary disputes and encroachment (ii) Land occupied by armed forces and follow up compensation (iii) Land owners of the camp sites are faced with degraded land (iv) Limited public awareness, information & knowledge of land laws (v) Denial of rights experienced mainly by women and child headed households (vi) Unauthorised and wanton sale of land and sticky squatters (vii) Denial of land rights to some specific categories and groups. (viii) Weakness of mechanisms in handling of land dispute (ix) Status of former communal hunting grounds - who should claim use of it? | | 79% |
| 7. Gender issues | (i) Radical shift in the traditional roles & responsibilities of women & men. (ii) Women's increased responsibilities and workload (iii) Men's loss of traditional role (iv) Widowed, elderly and child mothers' inability to lead the return process (v) Some men returning without their wives | | 58% |
| 8. Psychosocial | (i) The resulting long and short-term mental health and psychological consequences of displacement are daunting and manifesting with return. (ii) Bad memories revived at return sites are causing renewed traumatic effects on some people (iii) Fears of attack by marauding spirits at return sites are rife. | | 50% |
| 9. Infrastructure | (i) General inadequacy of social services & infrastructures at return sites contrary to acclaimed government policies. (ii) There is a lack of safe clean water in return sites (iii) Lack of community access roads to return sites (iv) Return Parishes are still without health facilities (iv) Most schools in return sites do not meet national minimum standards | | 91% |
| 10. Political & Governance | (i) Misinformation being channeled to IDPs on return process (ii) Unfulfilled promises of return packages (iii) Unsatisfactory distribution of iron sheets promised by the President. | | 25% |
| 11. Law Enforcement & External Factors | (i) Weakness of law enforcement & easy access to judicial services at return sites (ii) Operations of some Organized Armed Groups at return site and robbery along the way. (iii) Cattle rustling by the Karamojong | Border areas | 37% |
| 12. Reconciliation Challenges | (i) Lack of appropriate political avenues for open dialogue and communication | | 50% |

Appendix 2:

RESEARCH TOOL RANKING INDICATORS ON CHALLENGES TO RETURN IN ACHOLILAND

| Key Indicators on Challenges to Return | <u>1pt</u> <u>2pts</u> <u>3pts</u> <u>4pts</u> | Score* | Max Score | Weighted Ranking |
|---|--|--------|-----------|------------------|
| <i>To what degree do the following factors affect or complicate return?</i> | <i>Low Med High Very High</i> | | 4 | 100% |
| 1. Direct or Indirect Economic factors | Low Med High VH | 40 | 4 | 83% |
| 2. Social factors | Low Med High VH | 30 | 4 | 62% |
| 3. Security factors | Low Med High VH | 36 | 4 | 75% |
| 4. Cultural, Religious & Myth factors | Low Med High VH | 24 | 4 | 46% |
| 5. Question of Identity | Low Med High VH | 10 | 4 | 20% |
| 6. Land Issue | Low Med High VH | 38 | 4 | 79% |
| 7. Gender Related Issues | Low Med High VH | 28 | 4 | 58% |
| 8. Psychosocial factors | Low Med High VH | 24 | 4 | 50% |
| 9. Infrastructure & Social Services | Low Med High VH | 44 | 4 | 91% |
| 10. Political & Governance factors | Low Med High VH | 12 | 4 | 25% |
| 11. Law Enforcement | Low Med High VH | 18 | 4 | 37% |
| 12. Reconciliation Challenges | Low Med High VH | 24 | 4 | 50% |
| Total Score | | | 48 | |

* = Researchers Total Score

Formula = Average of Researchers score per indicator/48 x 100

Appendix 3: SOME INDICATIVE STATISTICS ON RETURN PROCESS FROM RANDOMLY SELECTED LOCATIONS

(Source: UNCHR Office – Gulu)

| Population Movement | DISTRICT: | AMURU | | REPORTING DATE: November 7th, 2008. | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Site/Village NAME | Parish | Sub County | Last Updated | Population | | SECURITY PRESENCE | | | | ACCESS TO LAND | |
| | | | | Estimated Individuals | Estimated Household | Military Detach | Civilian Police | Mine Evidence | Condition Road | Cultivating Own Land | Settling Own Land |
| Patira | Kuluamuka | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 1405 | 339 | No | Yes | No | Good | Yes | Yes |
| Amuka | Kulu-Amuka | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 320 | 59 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Kweyo | Kulu-Amuka | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 113 | 30 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Pudyek | Kulu-Amuka | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 56 | 10 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Akago | Pabali | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 107 | 51 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Gok | Pabali | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 1030 | 190 | No | No | Yes | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Lapono | Pabali | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 109 | 28 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Kal Central | Paduny | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 612 | 102 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Lamogi | Paduny | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 361 | 78 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Bidati | Pangora | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 498 | 120 | No | No | Yes | Good | Yes | Yes |
| Olony | Pangora | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 148 | 36 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Owak | Pangora | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 234 | 69 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Paja | Pangora | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 365 | 73 | No | No | No | Good | Yes | No |
| Alokolum St Luke | Todora | Anaka | 2-Aug-07 | 165 | 50 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | No |
| Te-Olam | Todora | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 303 | 68 | No | No | No | Good | Yes | Yes |
| Lamoki | Ywaya | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 1248 | 325 | No | Yes | Yes | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Okir | Ywaya | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 189 | 47 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Onyomtil | Ywaya | Anaka | 30-Sep-08 | 1405 | 339 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Sub-Total | | | | 8668 | 2014 | | | | | | |
| Got Apwoyo | Latoro | Purongo | 17-Oct-07 | 306 | 97 | Yes | Yes | Unknown | Good | Yes | Yes |
| Got Apwoyo | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Aug-08 | 266 | 52 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Kibaa | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 129 | 18 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|------|---------|---------|
| Koyo | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 255 | 62 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Lagaji | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 165 | 29 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Pabit Kibaa | Pabit | Purongo | 24-Apr-08 | 100 | 20 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Yes | Yes |
| Tangi Lawaca | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 104 | 40 | No | No | Yes | Poor | Unknown | Yes |
| Te Acam | Pabit | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 104 | 24 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | No |
| Got Nguu | Paromo | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 539 | 141 | No | No | Yes | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Lodi | Paromo | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 632 | 52 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Oruka Kla | Paromo | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 539 | 141 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Lakwaya | Pawatomero | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 170 | 29 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Lalem | Pawatomero | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 235 | 44 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Onika Kla | Pawatomero | Purongo | 6-Sep-07 | 315 | 60 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Oruka | Pawatomero | Purongo | 30-Aug-08 | 188 | 51 | No | No | No | Poor | Yes | Yes |
| Oruka Patuda | Pawatomero | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 161 | 44 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Pida | Pawatomero | Purongo | 30-Sep-08 | 204 | 47 | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | | Unknown | Unknown |
| Sub-Total | | | | 4412 | 951 | | | | | | |

Kitgum District - Camp population figures August 2008

| No. | Camp | November 2005 GFD population (indiv.) | November 2005 GFD population (HH) | Current camp population according to Camp management (indiv) | Current camp population according to Camp management (HH) | Change individuals (remaining) | Change HH (remaining) | Estimated host community population (Indiv) | Estimated remaining IDP population (Indiv) | % Estimated IDPs remaining in camp |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Agoro | 15366 | 3798 | 6518 | 1200 | 42% | 32% | 0 | 6518 | 42% |
| 2 | Akilok | 3592 | 725 | 2823 | 513 | 79% | 71% | 0 | 2823 | 79% |
| 3 | Akwang | 17663 | 3626 | 6652 | 1702 | 38% | 47% | | 6652 | 38% |
| 4 | Amida | 26915 | 5128 | 2923 | 600 | 11% | 12% | | 2923 | 11% |
| 5 | Aweno Olwiyo ² | 1819 | N/A | 562 | 164 | 31% | * | | 562 | 31% |
| 6 | Kitgum Matidi | 16165 | 3291 | 8441 | 1623 | 52% | 49% | 619 | 7822 | 48% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----|
| 7 | Lagoro | 12896 | 2701 | 2592 | 442 | 20% | 16% | 24 | 2568 | 20% |
| 8 | Labuye | 18848 | 3751 | 1390 | 400 | 7% | 11% | 0 | 1390 | 7% |
| 9 | Lokung | 19585 | 5400 | 9812 | 1431 | 50% | 27% | | 9812 | 50% |
| 10 | Madi Kiloch ² | 4911 | N/A | | | 0% | | 0 | | 0% |
| 11 | Madi Opei | 11593 | 3067 | 5901 | 1488 | 51% | 49% | | 5901 | 51% |
| 12 | Mucwini | 22465 | 4738 | 3508 | 650 | 16% | 14% | 0 | 3508 | 16% |
| 13 | Namokora | 12774 | 2708 | 5474 | 2600 | 43% | 96% | 797 | 4677 | 37% |
| 14 | Ngomoromo ² | 1646 | N/A | 617 | 131 | 37% | * | | 617 | 37% |
| 15 | Ogili | 6796 | 2354 | 801 | 300 | 12% | 13% | 0 | 801 | 12% |
| 16 | Omiya-Anyima | 17059 | 3737 | 6757 | 1692 | 40% | 45% | 311 | 6446 | 38% |
| 17 | Orom | 16602 | 3562 | 2557 | 696 | 15% | 20% | 0 | 2557 | 15% |
| 18 | Oryang | 6492 | 1263 | 5252 | 866 | 81% | 69% | 52 | 5200 | 80% |
| 19 | Padibe East | 17366 | 4153 | 2051 | 400 | 12% | 10% | 0 | 2051 | 12% |
| 20 | Padibe West | 17730 | 4232 | 3565 | 700 | 20% | 17% | 0 | 3565 | 20% |
| 21 | Palabek Gem | 12592 | 3545 | 5334 | 1500 | 42% | 42% | 0 | 5334 | 42% |
| 22 | Palabek Kal | 21668 | 5776 | 5746 | 1200 | 27% | 21% | 0 | 5746 | 27% |
| 23 | Paloga | 7996 | 1972 | 5349 | 1972 | 67% | 100% | 0 | 5349 | 67% |
| 24 | Pangira ² | 4716 | N/A | 1663 | 317 | 35% | * | | 1663 | 35% |
| 25 | Potika A & B | 10092 | 2981 | 8236 | 2000 | 82% | 67% | 0 | 8236 | 82% |
| X | Total | 323528 | 72508 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| X | Total CM 08 | 318617 | 72508 | 104524 | 24587 | 33% | 34% | 1803 | 102721 | 32% |

Guiding note:

Camp population figures is calculated on remaining population in the main IDP camps. The baseline is the November 2005 General Food Distribution population figures produced by WFP. The current camp population figures, individuals and households, are produced by camp management agencies operating in each camp. The current population is divided with the baseline for each camp which produces a percentage indicating the size of the remaining population as compared to November 2005. The camp population figures have no correlation or reference to the return or relocation in the areas which they are located. The reason being that not every person was displaced to a camp inside their sub-counties and a significant number of people from Kitgum is believed to have been displaced outside the district, while another significant number of people from neighboring districts are believed to have been displaced to camps in Kitgum district. Therefore, a direct correlation between estimated return & relocation population versus camp population can not be made.