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THE EXAMINER



QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS (HURIFO)



[Will this vote reflect the electorate's aspiration?]

"Elections are about good governance and accountability
to the electorates"

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Foreword

In this issue, it would, we do feel, do all of us good to attempt to interpret certain eventful acts and/or utterances by those who by so acting and uttering, make things in this country move or, happen.

It will be recalled that in our previous issue of the Examiner Newsletter [Issue 2], we discussed at length issues to do with the observance and respect for the rule of law and human rights as indeed opposed to the gun rule to which the Uganda Police lately seemed to have been slowly drifting towards. When a section of Ugandans were being tortured by the very force [Uganda Police] who should have protected them in the first place - members of Parliament kept mum. When businessmen and women of Kisekka Market were treated with adequate doses of tear gas canisters sending them scampering for their dear lives – Parliament as legislative arm of government kept tight-lipped. We had dispersal of opposition political rallies in the so called restricted areas; the law makers [Members of Parliament] couldn't even cough to clear their throat. But when two women members of Parliament were roughed up and tortured to the extent of even attempting to undress one of the woman MPs it was then and only then that the law makers thought it was more than enough of a rights abuse. Parliament in response set up a committee to investigate the women MPs and the Police saga .

The Police were far from being done, for on July 18, 2008 they [Police] were at it yet again when they arrested three Buganda Kingdom officials namely; Mr. Charles Peter Mayiga, Minister of Information and Cabinet Affairs, his Deputy Mr Medard Lubega and Ms. Betty Nambooze who was mandated to head a committee set up to handle what was like 'hot potatoes' i.e sensitisation of the Baganda against the controversial land bill through which the state was seeking to amend the Land Act of 1998.

The manner of arrest and the subsequent mistreatment was more than what met the eyes. The trio were reportedly detained incommunicado at secret detention places first in Kampala and later in diverse places in Western Uganda from where they regained their civil liberties. When their ordeal lasted, they were by design denied access to their relatives and to their counsels. This is contrary to the Article 23 Clauses (1), (5-a, b, and c) of Uganda Constitution which has provision which allows for the enjoyment of rights under such conditions.

The arrest of the three Buganda Kingdom officials with the attendant harsh manner including intimidating secretive places of detention of the trio only reminds Ugandans who could have seen it all during the Obote first administration in the 1960's when 5 cabinet Ministers serving in Obote's government were arrested, bundled up, flown in a chopper and detained at a remote semi-arid desert town of Kotido. The Ministers included: Grace Ibingira, Mathias Ngobi, Lumu, Balaki Kirya and Magezi.

Historians tell us that "history teaches us that it teaches nothing ". Put simply in another way, we are told that we seem to learn nothing from lessons of history; otherwise we couldn't be making same or similar mistakes made by others before. In a run up to Zimbabwe's Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the armed forces namely; Police and the Military, were outspokenly partisan. Utterances were made by these forces to the effect that they

would not allow Morgan Tsvangirai to take over power after winning the election. Such a statement could have only come out of a desperate regime well knowing it was losing elections after all. As a result of growing pressure from the international community, talks about power sharing brokered by South Africa are on and off. The leadership of the Army and Police who made such untoward statements could have only shot themselves in the feet. Should the talks yield fruits aimed at building a nation shattered by the election violence with Morgan Tsvangirai in the saddle of power what will then happen to those military men who took such a useless vow?

Back home in Uganda, the Army Commander Lt. General Nyakairima made a pronouncement to the effect that the Army will work loyally with any person who will win the 2011 general election [The Monitor August 4, 2008].The remarks indeed did go down very well with many Ugandans who hopefully thought that the Army was becoming less partisan and more professional. Alas! that was probably a slip of the tongue on the part of Army Guru or the good General could have been reprimanded by the power that be, for that statement to warrant yet another contradiction from the same Army Chief who made a U turn when on September 1, 2008 he stunned Ugandans when he said “Army will not allow bad people to rule” [The Monitor September 1, 2008]

We now wish to laud an appeal to the Police and the Army to lay more emphasis on professionalization of the forces than the hitherto partisan nature of the forces. The wise sayings of leaders come and go indeed holds true. And yet for the Police and Army as constitutional institutions, will always be around. Against this background, therefore, the time to exercise restraint in handling people is NOW or Never – and yet for never, there is a higher price to pay later on- why should a right thinking Ugandan with Uganda and not individual at heart go for that higher price to pay later on anyway?. As for the answer to this million dollar question, only time will tell.

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REPARATION AFTER CONFLICT

By Lillian Aneno

As the region slowly recovers from the anguish caused by the 22 year war and people retreating from concentration camps back to their former places of abode, life is beginning to normalise. However, along the way as people blend into the new reality, several objects still stand in their way. Those raped, maimed, tortured, formerly abducted are all supposed to begin living together. But one may ask how this would be possible when some of the perpetrators were former rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) returning to live with the community?

One of the processes which can make that happen is reparation; which includes a wide range of measures taken or made in recognition of past wrongs and harm done by someone to someone else. It is also a way in which the society seeks to repair harm, restore rights and build trust after a period of atrocities and mass human rights violations. Thus, there should be acknowledgement of and apology for the past wrongs committed for reparation to take place. Reparation is not a **charity**; rather it is a **right** which implies that somebody holds a claim and someone else a duty and thus is accountable.

The time has come for the government to come out with clear reparation programmes, which should not be called or mixed with development programmes. True reparation can contribute substantially to development and also encourage inter-communal reconciliation. But the need for reparation stands besides the general justification of development. Reparation policy and action need always to be distinguished from development policy and action.

The community have suffered so much atrocities in the hands of both the rebels

and the government soldiers which includes rape, defilement, abductions, forced encampment, maiming, death, and also lost of all their property to mention but a few. Much has been achieved in recent years in strengthening human rights norms and enforcing national and international laws against violators. Human Rights Rctivists through hard work have created awareness of human rights laws and practices among the people. The government also set up an institution to promote and protect human rights in the country. What people don't seem to understand and have very little knowledge about is the possibility of justice after reparation.

In short what we know is something about prosecuting and punishing perpetrators, but we know very little or very little or nothing about helping their victims. What we should know is that reparation for victims is both immensely complex and often desperately necessary. This is because reparation helps in reconciliation and accountability as it encourages truth telling which helps victims with recovery, healing and also by encouraging public acknowledgement of wrong doing, a survivor's dignity is restored. Much as reparation is a symbol of apology, it also raises public awareness about harms victims have suffered through venting where victims' grievances are heard and directing blame towards those responsible.

After any conflict has subsided and crisis passed, the divided and dispirited society has to get a way of organising a lasting reconciliation, creating trust amongst themselves and a shared future. The more ferocious the conflict has been like the case of the north, the more complex the process of transition will be. It can only be done through a just and peaceful recovery and reparation is one of the means which can be used to achieve a lasting peace

Traditional restorative justice system as well as international laws impliedly makes it mandatory that the victims of human rights violations must receive a remedy for injuries they have suffered. The question is what counts as an appropriate remedy? Should it be material, symbolic, on an individual or collective basis? One way the government can respond is to come out with a sincere apology to victims and the community as a whole. However, apology alone may not be enough to satisfy victims' demands for justice and allay their fears of a repeat of the same atrocities.

Compensation which includes provision for any economic damage caused by the violations, such as lost opportunities, loss of property, earnings and or moral damage can also be used. Compensation helps to "extinguish" all the consequences of the damage and re-establish the situation which would have existed if that act had not been committed. Victims receive compensation for all damages that resulted from the wrongful act, including any profits that would have been possible had those unjust acts not occurred. In many cases, this involves financial compensation; however, compensation need not be strictly monetary. It should also include psycho-social support.

Restitution measures will help to restore the victims to the original situation prior to the gross violations of their rights. It includes restoration of liberty and identity, enjoyment of human rights, family life and citizenship, return to one's place of pre-displacement residence, restoration of infrastructure likely to spur development that create employment and return of property. It can be done in a way that economic resources are purposely allocated to areas which have suffered gross human rights violation for quick restoration and in cases where victims have lost their employment or property, replacement of these losses might be the

best response. Furthermore, educational services and the establishment of social security and housing projects would help most of the victims to discount their war related losses.

In some instances where violations have caused physical and emotional injury, provision of new medical facilities for medical and psychological treatment would be appropriate. It should be done in a form of reparation referred to as rehabilitation. Government should also make it easy for victims to have less complicated access to legal services, which should be quick and easily affordable. Other social services should also be provided to the victims and the affected community as a whole.

Satisfaction, which comprises of measures aimed at prevention of violations, truth telling, the search for the disappeared, recovery and decent reburial of remains, public apologies, judicial and administration sanctions, commemoration and building of monuments as well as human rights training could also be used. Erecting headstones, building memorials, naming or renaming public facilities like roads, and establishing days of remembrance for victims of rights violations are what the government could start with immediately, having in consideration the minimal cost involved. Burials and reburials of the many scattered bones in the region, which are causing a lot of superstitious fears among the people, would help in the smooth process of home return.

Formal apologies, the prosecution and punishment of those responsible for human rights violations on both the government and the rebel sides would ease some pain and tension and make victims move beyond the desire for revenge. The government should set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help get the truth of what exactly happened, then

publicly accept responsibility for the violations perpetrated and condoned by government security agencies . And lastly, come out with laws and policies that would prevent a repeat of such atrocities in future.

The right to reparation should not be restricted to only direct victims but also to indirect victims including the affected community. The indirect victims are the immediate family members, dependants or people who suffered harm in helping the victim or victims while trying to prevent harm. Reparation could be given to benefit only an individual, groups of people or the whole affected community of that area in order to revitalise the community as a whole.

The state as the main duty bearer should take responsibility and provide reparation for its own acts and also for not stopping or countering the violation of gross human rights of its citizens by non- state actors. Other duty bearers are the individual perpetrators for the harms they have caused. If the individual perpetrators are unable or unwilling to provide reparations, then the state should endeavour to establish national programmes for reparation and other assistance to victims

The best advocates for reparation rights are primary victims and people who themselves in one way or the other have also suffered from the conflict. It also takes the active and collaborative efforts of those persons and their allies (other people, Non Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations) to ensure that their human rights are respected and to effectively create positive change. Reparation can be advocated for through sensitisation to raise awareness in order to create positive change in society.

WAR AGAINST CHILD ABUSE.

By Emmanuel A. Okello

“He sodomised me and I did not scream,” said Robert (not real name).

What turned out as a simple visit to a relative has turned out to be a nightmare, horrendous memories etched on Robert’s mind that would take some time to be completely erased.

Once when Robert, 13, visited his elder sister together with his younger brother and sister, they were all separated and slept in different rooms altogether. Robert was to sleep in a room with a young male, Paul (not real name.) When he went out to bathe, the young man followed him and told him not to tell anyone. He threatened Robert with severe beating and arrest if any word slipped out.

Paul then proceeded to sodomise little Robert. In the morning, Robert went back to the auntie’s place where he stayed. Ever since, he’d been threatened with death by Paul in case he told anyone what happened to him. He had been molested four times since then.

When he reported the incidences to the sister, he only got a cold shoulder when she told him that

He (Robert) would be wasting his time reporting the matter.

Such are some of the instances faced by children as cases of child abuse continue to soar.

Child abuse can be described as the physical, psychological or sexual maltreatment of children.

While most of these cases occur at home, others occur in organisations including schools, churches, day care centres and isolated playgrounds among others.

With neglect, physical, psychological/emotional abuse and sexual

abuse as the four main primary categories, there are several other subcategories under each category of abuse.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as one below the age of 18. Article 34(4) of the Uganda's Constitution defines a child for purposes of employment as below 16 years. Children by virtue of their vulnerability and dependence need special protection and care. They depend on the adult world to take care of them, to defend their rights and to help them to develop and realize their potential. It is because of this that there are specific instruments addressing the rights of children.

As human beings, children are entitled to all the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

According to article 34 of the Uganda Constitution, subject to the laws enacted in their best interests, children shall have the right to know and be cared for by their parents or those entitled by law to bring them up. This, however, has not been the case not only in Uganda but across the globe as children constantly find themselves victims of child abuse.



A child like this could be vulnerable to child neglect.

According to Irene Anying, the Human Rights Protection Officer at Human Rights Focus, cases of child abuse were among some of the human rights issues reported besides torture, estate wrangles, assault, land dispute and corruption among others.

“We have had cases of child neglect in where some instances fathers failing to provide food for their children or at times beating them up,” she said.

She also added that the Convention of Rights of Children (CRC) covers four different rights of children including subsistence rights that is right to food, shelter, health and waters among others. There are also development rights that allow children to reach their highest potential, protection rights which shields them against abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or economical. Additionally, there are participation rights that allow children to take an active role in community and/or political life.

Among the effects of child abuse on children include teenage pregnancies, poor physical health and retarded brain growth among others.

Maltreated children also participate less in classroom activities and are less likely to be accepted by classmates and teachers, and receive less instruction. They are more likely to do poorly on academic tasks and more likely to be held back.

Furthermore, a strong link exists between negative childhood experiences and illicit drug use later in life. The greater the number of abusive events experienced, the more likely the individual is to initiate drug use at an early age, have drug problems, be addicted to drugs, or use intravenous drugs in adulthood.

Perpetrators of child abuse include parents, brothers and sisters, relatives,

teachers, religious leaders as well as strangers. At times they have gone scot free when their actions have not been reported to the authorities or settled 'amicably.' Measures, however, have been put in place most especially arraignment of the offenders in courts of law. While on the other hand, victims of child abuse undergo counselling.

Thus at the end of the day, to preserve the future, children's rights must be upheld in the highest esteem.

INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

By Julius Philip Omona.

Any person who has been arrested on account of reasonable suspicion for anything that appears to be unlawful is to be regarded as innocent until proven guilty by a competent court of Law. This principle first appeared in the Geneva Convention of 12th August 1949, Article 75 (4d) and later adopted by the Uganda Constitution of 1995: Article 28(3a). According to this law, therefore, the person arrested remains a suspect but presumed innocent [not guilty] until proved otherwise before a competent court of law. Thus it follows that any form of torture physical or mental, intended to inflict, instigate, exact inhuman and degrading form of treatment on the accused is illegal (Uganda Constitution -1995 Article 24).

"Innocent until proven guilty" is a legal concept which is not my intention to discuss here. Nevertheless I merely wish to present my concern about its application in some places of detention. One time I visited one such place. To my disappointment, I saw the following: The cell rooms were too small –maybe because the detainees were too many at that time and they could hardly sleep. They were stripped of their shirts and were left to brave the cold nights bare chested, against the open doors-except for the iron bars.

The detainees also complained of getting very little food. A bucket was placed in every cell room for urinary and waste matter purposes. On the one hand, it is a good facility but also quite healthy save for the congestion. In short, the detainees lacked almost all the comfort a non convict enjoys at home. Even a person who has already been sentenced and imprisoned is more comfortable than the person in the police cell.

Now basing on the belief that one is still innocent before conviction in a competent court of law, I would imagine that a detainee should enjoy every privilege a non convict enjoys except for missing his/her home on account of detention. Otherwise, the practice actually is "Guilty until proven innocent".

My suggestion, therefore, is that, those who are in authority should show concern and try very much to improve the living conditions in the detention cells so that the detainees should really feel innocent before they are proven guilty by a competent court of law. But not to begin suffering the consequences of guilt ahead of the disposal of the case. We must not forget that the cell is the home of everybody: If today it is somebody else's turn, tomorrow may be mine or yours. It is for these reasons that we should, therefore, not do to others what we don't want to be done to us (St.Mark-12:31).

THE UGANDA ELECTION 2011: LESSONS TO LEARN FROM KENYA AND ZIMBABWE

By Nyeko Paulinus

Chairman Board of Directors' HURIFO.

In 2011 Uganda will hold elections, Parliamentary, Presidential and Local Council elections. In the 2006 elections, the Parliamentary and Local Council elections were generally free and fair.

However, the Presidential election was claimed by the opposition candidate Dr. Kizza Besigye to have been rigged in favour of the incumbent President, Yoweri Museveni. The opposition took the matter to the High Court which admitted that although there were irregularities in the elections, these could not have substantially altered the outcome of the elections which was in favour of Yoweri Museveni.

In the recent past, the world has witnessed two important elections. One took place in Kenya on 27th December 2007 and another one was held in Zimbabwe in March 2008. For those who have been following the events in these two countries closely, it is not necessary to narrate the tragedies that followed those elections. In the case of Kenya, many prominent persons had to intervene until eventually Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations had to step in and negotiate a deal between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga. We are yet to see how the government of national unity will perform.

In Zimbabwe, the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai declared that he had won the election. The world waited eagerly for the Electoral Commission of Zimbabwe to declare the results of the elections but in vain. Instead, Robert Mugabe demanded that a recount of the votes be made to which the Electoral Commission succumbed. This action puts the credibility and the impartiality of the Electoral Commission in question. How could the recount be done when the results of the election in the first instance was not declared? As a result of this manipulation, the Electoral Commission said Morgan Tsvangirai had won 50.3% while Robert Mugabe had got 42.9% and Simba Makoni 6.8%. The percentage won by Tsvangirai, however, fell short of the stipulated constitutional requirement which demands that to be declared President, the

candidate must get 51% and above. The Electoral Commission, therefore, declared that a re-run be carried out.

The re-run took place on June 27th 2008 in which Robert Mugabe was the only candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai having stepped down because of harassment, intimidation and even killing of his supporters. He reasoned, rightly, that the participation of his Party in the sham election would risk the lives of his supporters. It was reported that by just about a week to the elections, 90 members of the opposition supporters were killed by ZANU-PF thugs. As expected the sole-candidate in the re-run was one Robert Mugabe who was unashamedly declared the winner. Many sober minded Governments and people condemned the elections and called for actions on Mugabe.

At the African Union Meeting in Egypt, many leaders suggested Zimbabwe should form a Government of National Unity with Tsvangirai as was the case in Kenya. Mugabe says he is willing to enter into negotiation but not willing to be dictated by the International Community. Mugabe should not appear to have the liberty to ignore the voices of the International Community and many other prominent leaders and the citizens of the world who have raised their voices on the manner in which the opposition party in Zimbabwe has been treated and the conditions in which elections were conducted. However, at last it is encouraging to note that Mugabe has bowed down to the international pressures and through the mediation of Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, has signed a framework deal with Morgan Tsvangirai to support negotiation on the government of national unity. This is a positive move which should be encouraged and supported by the international community and those who cherish peace, democracy and the rule of

law. One pertinent issue, however, that must be resolved in the negotiation is the overt partisan nature of the army, the police and the veterans of the liberation of Zimbabwe from the white colonialists. These groups of security forces have, unfortunately, turned out to be oppressive tools of the government instead of being protectors of the people. Therefore, if their actions are not curtailed, Zimbabwe will remain one of the black spots on the rule of law and constitutionalism in Africa.

It is a well known fact that Robert Mugabe liberated his people from the racist government of Ian Smith. However, his long stay in power has done more harm than good to Zimbabweans. Mugabe is now ruling by the minority blacks around him, i.e. the Army, the Police, the former Veterans, relatives, sycophants etc. to whom he gave away the white farmers' land. These people have failed to manage these farms, which were the backbone of the economy; most land is lying idle. Hence, the economy has collapsed and inflation is running at over 2.2 million percent, the world's highest. As a result, the governor of the Central Bank of Zimbabwe says Zimbabwe will devalue its currency by slashing ten zeros from its currency with effect from 1st August 2008. This means ten billion Zimbabwean dollars will be reduced to only one dollar. However, economic analysts say that would do nothing to help the economy. Consequently, many Zimbabweans, totaling over four million, have run away to neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. If a government of national unity be formed, a humane way should be found to settle the issue of land in a way that both whites and the blacks will benefit.

Political analysts say that the lack of democracy is linked with the total collapse in the economy. They conclude that if Mugabe does not leave power, the

economy will get worse. At the age of 84 years, Mugabe would earn himself lots of respects if he stepped down to allow another leader to take over power. If he adamantly clings to power after being bruised and suffering defeat in the December 2007 election, by the opposition party, he is creating a very dark future for Zimbabwe after his demise.

From the two elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe, a new phenomenon seems to be emerging where incumbent Presidents, who do not wish to relinquish power, after being bruised and suffering defeat, as a last resort to clinging to power, hope and indeed opt for power-sharing with the opposition to portray to the world the impression that they are accommodative to the opposition, and yet this is a way of suffocating democracy! For a stable democracy, therefore, such power-sharing arrangement should not be encouraged, otherwise it will spread over the whole of Africa like wild fires.

In Kenya the good thing was that the army remained neutral unlike in



A voter participates in a previous election

Zimbabwe where the situation has been complicated by the army saying they would not accept any other leader except Robert Mugabe. Certain countries in Africa seem to have reached a state where if elections

continue to be messed up, the army is likely to step in. In other words, a cycle of military coups seems to be in the offing if governments continue messing up elections through rigging and intimidating voters. They provide fertile grounds for the army to be tempted to take over power.

In the light of the above, it is important that we avoid a scenario where the army is forced to intervene and take over a government because presidential candidates are quarrelling over the results of the election. This precisely means that any elections must be conducted in a free and fair manner. For free and fair elections to take place, therefore, a number of issues need to be addressed. Some of these pertinent issues will be discussed below if Uganda has learnt any lesson from the Kenya and Zimbabwe experiences to help prepare adequately for free and fair elections in 2011.

Need to Amend the Electoral Act: There is need to revisit the Electoral Act so that where amendments are needed these should be effected. One area which comes to mind is the composition of the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission is supposed to be impartial. However, in the 2001 and 2006 elections complaints were raised about the impartiality of the Commission. The Commission has often been accused of leaning towards government. We need a Commission with a balanced representation. This can be done by appointing representatives from the political parties in the Commission. Anything short of this will always make people to believe that the Electoral Commission is not impartial.

Registration of New Voters: There is urgent need to register those voters who have reached the voting age since the 2006 elections so that they are included in the Voters' Register.

Up-dating Voters Register: The Electoral Commission must up-date Voters Register now, issue voters with new cards bearing the most recent photographs and display the Voters' Register so that people can check their names and report any anomalies for correction. This exercise is very important and must be done with the urgency it deserves. It has been a common practice for the Electoral Commission to do this at the last hours resulting in a lot of confusions and disappointments to the voters.

Civic Education: Civic Education is a right and, therefore, is an important aspect in the electoral system. Civic Education should always be an on-going exercise so that people are fully aware of their roles and rights as voters. Unfortunately in all the past elections in Uganda, Civic Education has been but reduced to a mere voter education and done at the last hour and is not taken seriously. In light of the above, therefore, Civic education should start now. Credible organizations should, therefore, be accredited to conduct Civic education as a matter of urgency throughout the country up to the grass root levels.

Level of Ground for Political Parties: For elections to be free and fair all political parties must be given level ground for campaign anywhere in the country. Right now there are a number of restrictions on the activities of opposition parties. Some of these restrictions are not even backed by the laws. They are deliberately put in place by the government to restrict the activities of the opposition parties. Such restrictions do not augur well for free and fair elections and for democracy.

Election Monitoring: Elections must be monitored so that cases of irregularities can be identified and reported. Such

cases of irregularities can be very useful when petitions are filed in Court as evidence by candidates who feel they were cheated in the election. For all our elections, we have been relying on external monitors. These are foreigners who come and stay in the comfort of Kampala hotels and in the end issue statements like "Considering the circumstances prevailing in the country, in our opinion, the elections have been generally free and fair". This is a typical statement which these foreign monitors have issued in the cases of all elections in Uganda and countries in Africa where they have monitored elections. Are these monitors serious? Do we have to continue relying on them and yet despite their reports there are always dissatisfactions among the population on the results of the elections?

In view of this, I would like to point out that the voters themselves can be effective monitors. During elections, we as voters must be alert and vigilant on cases of intimidation, bribing voters, stuffing ballot boxes with ballot papers in favour of a candidate etc. For example in the 2006 elections of LC5 Chairman in Gulu had it not been for the vigilance of the youth in Gulu, Norbert Mao would have been cheated of his victory. In one instance the youth kept vigil at a home where some ballot boxes were alleged to have been kept until the votes were counted and the results of the election declared in favour of Norbert Mao as Chairman of Gulu Local Council. We should also develop credible institutions in the country which have the capacity to monitor elections throughout the entire country.

Participation of the Army in Politics: By allowing soldiers to be represented in Parliament we are militarizing government and that is not very healthy for democracy. We very well know that Obote's II administration dragged the soldiers into Uganda's body politic by giving a slot of 10

representations in Parliament to the Army. This seemed to have been done under a partnership like arrangement. Much as most of the ills of this country are being blamed on the past leaders like Amin, Tito Okello and Obote, the mistake Obote made of putting 10 soldiers inside Parliament was inherited by Museveni for his convenience. There is absolutely no justification for dragging the army in the parliament where their presence only helps to intimidate members of parliament. In any case performance rating shows very clearly that they have not made any effective contributions in parliament by way of debates. In fact, one of them one time is said to have stated that he doesn't see why he was in the parliament. Even involving the army in the maintenance of peace and order during elections, which is the responsibility of the police, is tantamount to intimidation of the voters as it happened in Kinkizi, Rukungiri, in Western Uganda. The army should be kept out of polling stations during elections. If they have to vote, then they should register in their districts of birth and go to vote there during elections. It is utterly unfair for a soldier hailing from Mbarara to vote for a candidate in a constituency in Gulu or any other district which is not his birth place.

In conclusion, it must be reiterated that the above issues must be addressed with the urgency they deserve if Uganda is to hold free and fair elections in 2011. Anything short of this, will precipitate the kind of scenario that Kenya and Zimbabwe witnessed in the recent elections. It should also be noted that the results of the past elections in Uganda have left many voters wondering if they should continue wasting their time going to vote when the results of such elections will not be in favour of the candidates of their choices because of the massive rigging machineries that are always eminent. These fears have recently been confirmed by the utterances of Major General Otafiire and Army Commander Lt.

General Nyakairima to the effect that; "The NRM party will not hand over power even if it loses in the democratic election [*Daily Monitor, Friday, June, 27,2008*].and "Army won't allow bad people to rule [The Monitor September 1, 2008] respectively. Ugandans should not take these statements lightly, having come from indeed very high ranking personalities in the ruling movement government.

THE PEACE POEM (Part II)

By Anena Lucy

There is a peace talk held today
The land's future is being decided
Everyone must keep his cool
Or all will end in a disastrous coup.

Why is peace so elusive?
Do we really have to triple our effort
For something that must come naturally?
Everyone, I know, needs it.

Why does peace have its price?
Why do we bargain? Why make deals?
Is it a commodity only simple, which men
can afford?
Or is it non-existent after all?

Strange how things work out
For peace, someone must die
For peace, people have to fight - ironical!
Peace we crave and peace there's none

LRA and UPDF peace leaders are
gatherings
For peace talks- with all eyes watching one
another
Acholi Lovely land - He waits.

Our country is facing economic collapse
Absolute financial collapse if they don't get
help
Because of social and political instability

There are many new deadly and dreaded

diseases on the rise-
Killing millions- Wars- wars in individual's
hearts
Families warring with each other, between
Banyankole and The Acholi
But now it is for the whole country Uganda
There is increased prejudice and hatred
Between Northern and other regions

Famine, Drought, becoming more severe,
Killer Floods like never seen before.
Mass destruction, flooding, fires out of
control
In the midst of this Country
In the eye of a leader there is peace
Calm and stillness always.

Someone, whose name I remember not,
Held in high esteem by friend and foe alike,
Said, ' There is no good war, neither bad
peace.'
How true! How obvious! It seemed
at first glance.

But then, peace also is not peaceful at
times.
Peace! Peace! Peace!
All peoples, of all age
All creatures of all orders
And philosophers throughout the ages,
Sang, praised and sought it;
preached from church altars,
It was taught from High platforms in halls of
gatherings.

But peace has not always been peaceful.
Peace, much desired, much sought after,
as it is;
Is detested, derided and avoided just as
much.

For peace also needs to be peaceful.
And for peace to be so peaceful we need
to build on peace.
If peace should be peaceful, then it must
be peaceful.
And this- possible only when people are at
peace with ourselves-;
since one cannot give what he hath not.

How can you talk of peace when you are still
Firing across the borders of our land?
How can you talk of peace when still you kill
Innocents, whose blood stains the valley's sands?

How can you talk of peace when you support
Unfair, subversive means to achieve ends?
How can you talk of peace when you export
Militants trained and never make amends?

How can you talk of peace when you assumed
Power by shedding blood-illegal means?
How can you talk of peace when you presumed
The land belongs to you and only you?

How can you talk of peace when you aren't sure
Of your own standing Point For Peace.....,
Points For Peace.....,
Sign on to our quest.....,
Speak for humankind.....,
Profess what's best.....,
Write your phrases.....,
Rhymes and such.....,
To reach the objective.....,
Our Land needs so much.....,
Speak out to people.....,
Of all tribes and religions.....,
Beg them to let go.....,
Of all the adverse divisions.....,
That interfere with our ultimate goal.....,
Of "Peace To Northern Region especially Acholi Sub-Region"

Points For Peace.....,
Points For Peace.....,
Our voices must be heard.....,
Through our craft of creativity.....,
Let's compose it proudly.....,
And echo it loudly.....,

So everyone will see clearly.....,
Love can be a reality.....,
Then we'll reach our ideal.....,
And God will bless one and all.....,
With "Peace To The Region and the Nation at large"!!
And nation's future

Peace means war when you talk of safety and security
When I get an implant, and get spied upon endlessly.

Yes, when peace means war is when peace arrives
At what cost does this infernal peace cost for you and I?

This is not a peace that was so beautifully written about
But a peace that is a piece of shit, covered in your doubt

Have you not read the news, that it's for our very well being
They line you up like goats, mark you, and keep you from fleein'

Ah, what government would do such dastardly things to I
But it is I, the Government, that is allowing it I decry.

So when you think peace has finally reached the Region
You may find yourself locked and around your gun curled.

Yes, Oh I know, as long as I don't break any laws I'm just fine
It's only the Terrorists, And Bandit that do time.

Well not to sound all arrogantly and full of violent and hate
someone is watching you reading this poem
Go and work before they pounced on you.

DISTRICT TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS VOLUNTEERS.

By Emmanuel A.Okello

The District Speaker, Amuru, Michael Lakony has pledged the district's support towards Human Rights Volunteers.

He said this while closing a human rights volunteers training workshop for Gulu and Amuru district held at the Gulu District Council hall from June 16th – 22nd, 2008.

“We shall work together with you volunteers and bring violators of human rights to book,”Lakony said.

He further urged the volunteers to persevere in their work since they would find lots of obstacles along their way in the pursuit of fighting for people's rights.

The volunteers were also asked to make good use of the material and knowledge acquired from the workshop since keeping it away from people would be like putting a lit lamp under the bed.



The District Speaker Amuru, Michael Lakony (C) while closing Human Rights Volunteers workshop. Looking on are the Executive Director HURIFO, James Otto (L) and Chairman Board of Directors, Paulinus Nyeko.

Lakony added that if the Volunteers found it difficult along the way, they should contact the authorities and HURIFO so that they can all work together. This call

sounded in the saying that he gave, '*latong pa latek ladit aye gamo.*' (Loosely translated as ...a rigid person can best be handled by his /her match OR a cruel person can best be handled by his/her match)

The training is meant to provide the volunteers with the necessary skills to and knowledge by reaching out to all the disadvantaged communities and providing awareness and understanding of the human rights and corresponding obligations and responsibility under the law as well as in cases of mediation when the need arises.

STANDOFF BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND INSPECTOR GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT

By James A.A Otto

In the name of encouraging a 300 million dollar investment, the 56 hectares housing both Nakawa and Naguru estates has lately generated lots of acrimonious exchanges between IGG's Faith Mwendha and Minister of Local Government more Major General Otafiire.

The 80 year old Nakawa and 50 year old Naguru estates which has been a home to 7,000 of low income earner residents in the Kampala city suburb faces demolition very soon. The tenants some of who have lived all their lives and/or born there have voiced their concerns against such a move which if taken, will see current tenants thrown out onto the streets with their families without any alternatives as regards to shelter.

The tenants' concerns seemed to have attracted the attention of the Inspector General of Government, Justice Faith Mwendha, as it should, while at the same time, the no nonsense Local Government

Minister, Major General Kahinda Otafiire was reportedly resolutely active on the other side of the tag of war.

It is true that the dilapidated Nakawa and Naguru estates built before Uganda attained Independence was in dire need of replacement possibly with ultra modern structures. Such structures when planned properly, could offer solutions to the current housing needs of the low income earners of Kampala city. The low income earners are not able to afford a decent housing any more inside the city save for the slum areas. They have to reside in areas like Mukono, Bweyogere, Kireka and Matuga, Kisasi, Nsangi among others – so far away from the city centre. This as we all know has great impact on the productivity of these workers – who come late to work [10.00 a.m.] and leave early say around [4.00 .p.m.] in order to evade the taxi fare hikes during peak hours.

It is the likes of those that the looming mass eviction out of Nakawa and Naguru Estates is likely to affect. It is the same community [Nakawa and Naguru tenants] whose voices are not at all heard. It is the same community [Nakawa and Naguru tenants] whose interests as sitting tenants are not at all taken into account. It is the same community who need and must be consulted before a decision on matters that affect them are taken.

In the redevelopment of Nakawa and Naguru estates saga, a duel has since emerged between Justice Faith Mwendha on the one hand and the no nonsense Major General Otafiire ,Minister of Local Government known for his acid tongue on the other side of the duel. What could be the bone of contention between the duo who are top officials of government to warrant drawing of acrimonious sword of distasteful words? At least as far as the Nakawa and Naguru estates saga is concerned, two issues seemed to have

emerged very clearly; the first is that Justice Faith Mwendha is raising issues around points of law where she rightly insisted that the laws governing tendering and disposal of public asset must be followed. To this end, she issued an order staying the eviction to allow her office investigate claims that the deal with the private developer was irregular [The Daily Monitor ,July 14, 2008]. The second issue is where we saw Major General Otafiire towing and seemingly defending political position taken reportedly, at cabinet level. The Major General is being apparently judgemental, especially, when he declared himself winner in this duel before the start of the actual fight. The third issue which has been grossly marginalised is the voices, concerns, interests and indeed fate of the 7,000 tenants who are not in any way directly accommodated in the agenda of the duo embroiled in the fight.

In an attempt to determine who is the likely winner in the Nakawa Naguru mess, it is appropriate at this point to know who the umpire is likely to be. As the issue hinges around governance of a country, Uganda, one wouldn't get a better umpire than President Museveni himself – who by the way: plays an oversight role, appoints Ministers and IGG as well as Commander – In – Chief of the Armed forces. This, therefore, means that for either of the combatant to win the battle, it will not only depend on the impartiality of the umpire, but also connectedness and also individual knowledge by the combatants of the umpire. This knowledge must take into account the likes and dislikes of the umpire also deepened by the political interest of the umpire. It is probably for these reasons that Major General Otafiire jumped the gun by making a public remark, while in Mbale, to the effect that “we won't leave power even if defeated in next election” [The Daily Monitor June 27, 2008] though later denied. An astute and veteran politician like Major General Otafiire knows very well

that such an unsanctioned utterance could lend him a dice winning card-for it is the kind of stuff the umpire to the duel would love to hear. As for the Ombudsman whose marriage to the legal profession would not let her sacrifice her professional reputation built over the years tainted, she would rather remain on course in defence of the rule of law. This obviously is likely to lend victory to the Major General on a more-or-less silver platter.

The saying that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers holds true in respect of the 7,000 tenants and their families. No one apart from themselves seems to be speaking for them except Hon. Fred Ruhindi who happens to be their elected Member of Parliament. Seven thousand voices shouldn't have been in any way too small to be ignored. The fact that these voices are ignored could best describe what kind of democracy is obtaining in Uganda. In a developed democracy for instance, there would, obviously, be room for the minority to be heard- especially in matters that are likely to affect them. The struggle by the Nakawa Naguru residents to be heard is taken by the power that be that they as victims are asking too much. Others at the power table would even label the victims of the looming mass eviction as anti-development.

We must all welcome development for the improvement of our own lot. What one may not be sure about is whether all development of such a gigantic nature must only come through foreign investors. I wish to advocate for the voiceless citizens who are still residents of Nakawa Naguru that while we welcome development of our city, we must always be very conscious and cautious of the adverse effects on the people. Development without a human face is less likely to promote human rights and yet development must be about people and as such, should be people centred. As for who of the duo will win the battle, the

theory of share holders versus workers as peddled by some NRM political ideologues can't be ignored - otherwise, your guess is as good as mine.

COUNCILLORS TRAINED ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

By Goretti Okello Odoki.

Since its conception in 1994 Human Rights Focus has been involved in sensitising different categories of people on human rights and steps that could be taken when one's rights are violated. The trainings also targeted human rights perpetrators and those who were intending to become one. The sensitisations took different forms for example training which would bring people together for some days, outreaches to different places and radio talk shows. Different people were trained who included among others camp leaders, women leaders in camp structure, LCI, UPDF (Detach commanders and Political Commissars), LCV Councillors in Gulu and Amuru districts, LC IV Gulu Municipality, women groups and some IDPs in different camps in Gulu and Amuru districts

Last month HURIFO trained a total of thirty six district leaders of Gulu and Amuru districts. The participants comprised of LCV Women Councillors, District Speakers and LCIII Chairpersons. The training took place on 25th and 26th August 2008 at Acholiber Country Hotel, Gulu town.

Among the topics covered included: understanding human rights concepts with emphasis on women and children's rights, an over view of family law, the role of Uganda police in the protection and promotion of human rights, the role of different actors in the return process of IDPs and the new arrangement under the Local Council Structure, land access and management with emphasis on customary land tenure system and Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) as a method of resolving conflicts

The Executive Director, HURIFO, James Otto took participants through the objectives of the workshop which included; empowering of the participants in the area of human rights on how to use Rights Based Approach (RBA) during planning and designing of any programme. They were also encouraged when carrying out service delivery to involve community members at parish level in decision making. Another objective was to facilitate the application of Rights Based Approach in the area of governance and to practice clean and healthy politics. Participants were urged to allow community members participate in policy formulation.

Furthermore, the Chairperson Board of Directors, HURIFO, Paulinus Nyeko who was a facilitator during the workshop informed the participants that they were leaders but not rulers therefore should fulfil the aspirations of the people in their communities.

“People have problems and you should do everything possible with the power you have to solve their problems,” said Nyeko.

He added that during the time of insurgency, there were many human rights violations in Acholi land but the leaders did not help their people much. Nyeko cited the example of the late Michael Kagwa who was the councillor of Patiko, Aswa County, Gulu district who was a human rights activist. Where cases of human rights violations took place, he (Kagwa) would go to the spots and even confront the perpetrators and as a result he was with the people. He emphasised that leaders needed to know something about human rights and it was for this reason that the workshop had been designed.

In his opening remarks, Chief Guest, Chairman LC V Amuru district, Hon. Atube

Omach urged the participants to be human rights defenders and to promote Rights Based Approach in administering their sub counties. He said that leaders were involved in indirect violations of human rights by their actions. Thus being elected by their people meant that they were employed by them and for this reason should do things expected of them within the framework of the law and societies in order for them not to distance themselves from their people.

He continued that there were many cases of human rights abuses and cited forced early marriages as being a very common practice in Amuru district which he said the society just sit and watch. The Chairman appealed for concerted efforts by the leaders to fight cases of human rights violations like land disputes, early child marriages etc and to turn the situation from negative trend to positive trend and become aggressive defenders and ambassadors well empowered, knowledgeable, informed, promoters of human rights and Rights Based Approach. Since the issues discussed in the workshop were touching and experienced by many people in different communities, the leaders were to enlighten their people on human rights whenever they got any forum to talk to them and that human rights should be given a priority.



Participants ask questions during the just concluded workshop

The workshop was closed by The Speaker, Gulu District, Hon. Ojara Mapenduzi who represented the Chairman LC V Gulu District Local Government. In his closing remarks, he recognised the role played by Human Rights Focus in empowering people about their rights. He urged the participants to put into practice the knowledge they had acquired in the training. Ojara compared knowledge with a garden that when one does not give proper attention to his/her garden should not expect high yield. He noted that knowledge, resources and good will go together and pledged the support of Gulu district Local Government.

The fight for human rights can not be done by a single person or office. And for this reason Human Rights Focus is working with different people, leaders, offices, institutions etc to ensure that human rights is promoted and protected as these rights are God given to people by virtue of being human. These rights are universal meaning that they are equal to everybody irrespective of sex, age, culture and are indivisible and inalienable. Let us unite and defend our rights.

ENDS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S VULNERABILITY TO HIV AIDS

By Irene Anying Winnie

"Barely a year after we got married he started having extra marital affairs when I complained I received a beating and my further pleas that we then use condoms also earned me a further beating and yet I had no choice. When I got pregnant with our third child, I went for medical check up I was told I was HIV positive when I informed my husband who had for several months now abandoned the family and eloped with another woman, his response was not only a thorough beating claiming that he does not know where I contracted

the diseases but also ordered me to vacate their home with my daughters....."

There is, however, a saying in Uganda that "bedroom matters are better left in the home". But for many a Ugandan woman, one "bedroom matter" that has stayed too long behind closed doors is domestic violence.

Harriet Apio (not real names) is just one of the many women in Uganda, whose experiences tell one story: that domestic violence has played a critical role in rendering them vulnerable to HIV infection, the human disaster of HIV/AIDS which has devastated the African continent.¹

Domestic violence is "the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners"

For many women in Uganda, as in much of the world, domestic violence is not an isolated and aberrant act, but arises from and forms part of the context of their lives. Domestic violence is one form of gender based violence that many women across Uganda are vulnerable to in their day-to-day lives within the confines of their homes which are actually meant to be a safe haven for everyone.² Domestic violence affects mainly women because it is based on existing gender inequalities and power disparities between women and men in societies.

In a survey done by UNICEF in 2000 in Uganda, 41% of women reported being

¹ • Women make up 58% of HIV-positive adults in Sub-Saharan Africa, 55% in North Africa and the Middle East, and 50% in the Caribbean.

² Statistics of domestic violence are hard to come by in Uganda because the majority of the cases are not reported.

beaten or physically harmed by a partner; 41% of men reported beating their partner. Furthermore, 66% of national sample of interviewees reported in a study done by Uganda Law Reform Commission that domestic violence frequently occurred in their homes with Northern Uganda and Eastern having the highest prevalence rates with 78% and 68% respectively.

HIV/AIDS and violence against women overlap in the following ways:

- Increased risk of HIV infection as a result of coerced sexual intercourse
- Limits to women's' ability to negotiate HIV preventative behavior;
- Increased risk of violence as a result of disclosure of their HIV status to partners.

In violent relationships for example, women and girls have little means of protecting themselves from infection neither can they negotiate for safer sex due to lack of social and economic power. Ideologies of masculinity and 'manliness', which encourage men to display sexual prowess by having multiple partners, by stressing aggressiveness and dominance and lack of responsibility in sexual relationships put men themselves, as well as their partners, at great risk.

UNIFEM (2001) for example confirms that domestic violence is not simply a matter of social justice against women but is both a cause and consequence of HIV/AIDS infection.

A research carried out by Human Rights Watch revealed that Ugandan women became vulnerable to HIV infection as a result of domestic violence in complex and intertwined ways. That most women see domestic violence as innate to marriage, and view sex with their husbands as a marital obligation.

Further traditional attitudes that designate women as the physical property of their husbands deprives them of any authority over marital sexual relations. Customs such as the payment of "bride price" (payment made by a man to the family of a woman he wishes to marry), whereby a man essentially purchases his wife's sexual favors and reproductive capacity, underscores men's socially sanctioned entitlement to dictate the terms of sex, and to use force to do so.

It should also be noted that violence, deprives women of bodily integrity by eliminating their ability to consent to sex, to negotiate safer sex, and to determine the number and spacing of their own children. In many cases, abandonment or eviction from the home holds even greater terror for these economically dependent women, who, confronted by a hostile social environment ignore their husbands' promiscuous acts and acquiesce to their husbands' demands for unprotected sex.

In conclusion there is great need to tackle the role of violence in the transmission of HIV to women. As noted above, Current approaches which lay all the emphasis on fidelity, abstinence, and condom use will not address the ways in which domestic violence hampers women's control over sexual matters in marriage since it mistakenly assumes that women have equal decision-making power and status within their intimate relationships.

Although Uganda has ratified international treaties³ requiring it to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including gender-based violence, and to act with due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of

³ Convention Of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

violence against women and also Uganda's constitution⁴ obliges the government to redress historical inequities and to provide women with equal rights in marriage and equal protection of the law, There is however, no national legislation that provides for the effective prosecution and punishment of acts of violence against women in the home and hence the law is not of much help in case of such abuse.⁵

Another problem with prosecuting cases of domestic violence could be the intimate relationship between the accused and the victims. "Victims are competent but not compellable witnesses",⁶ victims do not usually want their abusers jailed or to suffer too much as noted by one of the victims who had been severely beaten by her husband.

"Taking him to court may not only break my marriage but also make the family suffer because he is our sole bread winner.... All I want is for him to be warned"⁷

ENDS

SCHOOL COLUMN

STRIKE IN SCHOOLS

By: Ojok James Onono

S 5A, Gulu Central high school

Who is to blame for strikes in schools?

What way forward?

⁴ Article 31 1995 constitution of Republic of Uganda

⁵ The Penal Code Act provides generally for assault and homicides

⁶ Section 120 Evidence Act Cap 6, Laws of Uganda 2000

⁷ Comparatively for those whose husbands have resorted to drinking and do not provide for the family opt for him to be arrested to teach him a lesson.

Strikes in schools hit the headlines in most of the country's media, as taking place in the North as well as country-wide, where by allegations of corruption, bad food and poor administration stand out ahead of others as some of the reasons for strikes.

In most cases the students are implicated as being on the wrong side on allegation of using wrong channels of presenting their burning problems. However, to some extent, this becomes compounded when the administration tends not to listen to the suggestions of student leaders that would arouse confusion between the prefects and the students, because they would have failed in coordinating the administration and the students, yet the cause, is poor administration.

More chaos arise when the students are not allowed to express their grievances on an issue they feel should be corrected during the general assembly. The work of the school prefects as elected representatives of the students is made very difficult on basis that they are also students and balancing both the students needs/interest and that of the administration becomes a real challenge. So when a strike starts, prefects will also contribute alongside the other students because the issue they shall have already raised has not been looked into and clarified in the Assembly by the administrators.

On the other hand, students strike because they say that all students regardless would be penalised [pay] and is a must to participate since payment as compensation of the damaged/destroyed school property would never know those who participated or non participants of the strike. The question then remains "Who is to be blamed for strikes in Schools?"

On a reported survey and experiences, both teaching and non teaching staffs are to be blamed for strikes; some head-teachers tend to neglect other extracurricular activities approved by the Ministry of Education and sports that never give room for the talented students to utilize their gifted talents. Most of these schools prefer paying the fines in order not to participate in the competition and causes disorganization in the school as the talented students would transfer to a school that would participate in the competition at the different district levels.

Other teachers also forget the teachers' code of conduct, hence; get involved with their students and when such cases reach the administration they always stand in support of the teacher resulting to the dismissal of that affected students and the other students might rebel for their fellow students for justice denied.

Non teaching staff are also to be blamed because others receive items like soap, sugar and money as bribes from the students that when it reaches a day for special meals, such students would of course have larger quantity that often annoys the other students who would also demand for the same quantity which most times ends on a violent note; like raiding the kitchen and overturning food or even beating up the cooks.

Focusing on the cooks, most of them are dirty and when cautioned, they would answer that the school doesn't provide them with soap and to make the matter worst is that, they serve food bare chest thus the sweats from their cheeks drops onto the food, then the students end up by pouring the food on their faces and that can lead to a strike.

Old boys (OBS) and the Old Girls (OGS) are also to be blamed in case of change or addition on the school rules and regulation that they are always quoted as saying

“during our time, we use to wear jeans the way we like.” Or “Every Friday and Wednesday was for meat and rice but your new head teacher seems to have changed the system” “hats, black skirts, open shoes, mini-shirts were allowed during our time, but this new school rule enforced is not so good because of the tight restriction.”

Thus they would influence their followers to “do something” about it and that “something” turns out to be a strike. But in all, school strikes violate human rights and leads to massive destruction of school and surrounding property.

The way forward is that the teachers should strive towards making students concentrate more on reading and passing examinations other than enforcing rules that do not apply to classroom activities like distribution of school T-shirts with printed numbers in capital letters at the back that are uncomfortable to students. Although all the strikes done in schools are heaped on students, it is very true that students fail to use the right channels of presenting their grievances for instance others do not respect the student leaders who are their elected representatives and capable of presenting their problems to the administration but would often pay them with insult and abuses. This only leaves the prefects with little or no choice but to stand on the side of the administration.

Students also like demanding for things that are not productive in terms of academics like disco dance every Friday of the week and when turned down for its unproductivity, they end up striking.

Another aspect attributing to strikes could be disrespect on the part of some male teachers especially on the authority of female head teachers that causes division among the teachers and could influence the students to strike due to lack of lessons.

As a remedy to strikes, District Officials like the District Education Officer, Resident District Commissioner, and the Chairman Local Council V of the District should initiate timetables for visiting schools with strong emphasis on the uselessness of strikes. This could help mould students and avert strikes in future in schools.

Since the nearby shops and other sellers do suffer in case of strikes, they should be allowed to speak to the students about their grievances because they can resort to poisoning the students with what they sell as a means of settling scores. Students should channel their problems through human rights advocates, district leaders and radio as the main media so that their issues are looked into critically and then all the public would be involved in offering what could be a faster solution other than breaking glasses and burning both vehicles of the schools plus property.

Non Governmental Organization should always organize psycho-social workshop for the students and should be supported by the government that would develop high moral sense of understanding of knowledge gained. For example, Acholi Education Initiative, an NGO organized a psycho-social workshop for its beneficiaries that took place in the main hall of Central High School that hosted Facilitators from concern Parents, GUSCO and Human Rights Focus represented by Ms. Goretti Okello Odoki the Capacity Building Officer at HURIFO. She took the participants through: human concept and activism, counselling skills among others.

This has had a positive impact on the affected students as they understood a better way of resolving by the use of non-violent method counselling skills and made the psychologically affected students to understand another way of life by counselling but not violence.

With these, I think we would be in position to minimize strikes in northern Uganda as a whole.

PICTORIAL



Human Rights Volunteers from Gulu and Amuru attend a training workshop at Gulu District Council Hall.



Fruits of hard work: Members of ADO group at one of the project sites



**Head of Gulu Post Primary Head teachers Association
Sr. Carla Ajio with student leaders.**



**Friends of Human Rights Focus during their send off party organised at Olango
Conference Centre, Gulu**



ADO group also practice bee keeping as a means of increasing income



Grafted mangoes intercropped with beans



Mango seedling provided by Human Rights Focus for ADO project group

Human Rights Focus (HURIFO) – Who We Are:

HURIFO's Mandate

HURIFO's Articles and Memorandum of Associations mandates HURIFO to,
“Create an enabling environment for protecting, improving, and promoting human rights and good governance in Uganda in particular and the world in general.”

The Vision

“Promotion of human rights and good governance”

The Mission

“To contribute to the promotion of human rights and good governance”

Core Values

The core values of HURIFO are:

- *Seek to be impartial at all times in dealing with clients;*
- *Endeavour to operate with integrity, honesty and accountability and in a professional way;*
- *Committed to equity and equality in diversity in the workplace;*
- *Respect and value the contribution of and network with other people;*
- *Endeavour to communicate consistently & effectively with stakeholders in all programs & activities;*
- *Committed to teamwork, collegiality and solidarity*
- *Promotion, commitment and perseverance*

The Slogan

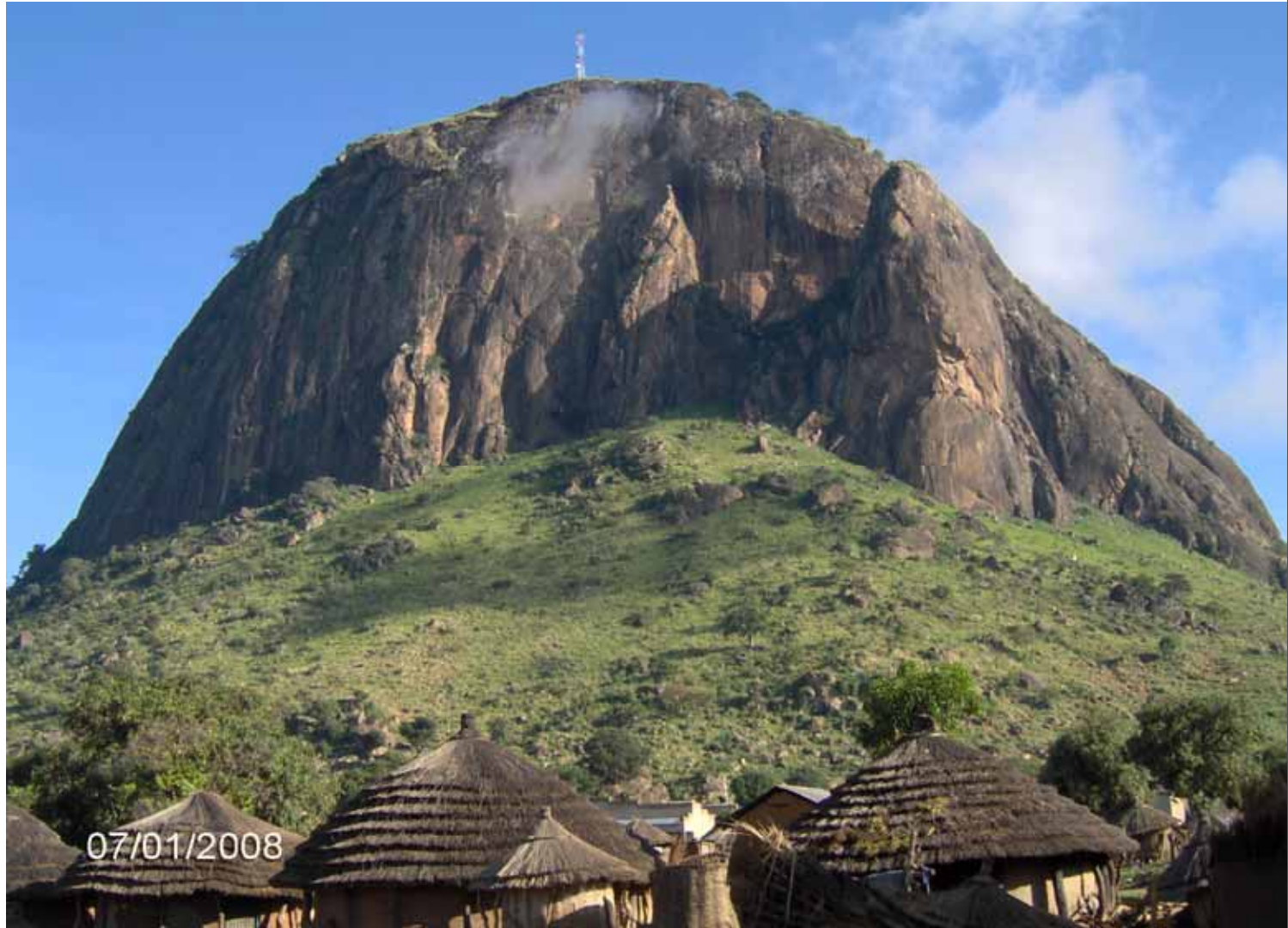
In living out the core values, HURIFO recites a slogan that describes its behaviour. That is:

“Peace and Justice for all.”

HURIFO's Overall Goal

The overall goal of HURIFO is

“To create an enabling environment for protecting, improving, and promoting human rights in Uganda in particular and the world in general.”



**A commanding view of Jabu Labur Mountain popularly also known as Oret
where Kalongo Town Council, Dr. Ambrosoli Memorial Hospital and
Catholic Parish sits
at its foot**