



**What do *you* remember? A rough
guide to the war in Northern
Uganda 1986 - 2000**

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COPE fieldwork findings, Northern Uganda

'What do you remember?'

A rough guide to the war in Northern Uganda 1986 - 2000

Chris Dolan

The following offers an account of the war based on the memories and experiences of a wide range of people living inside the war zone. In February 1999 ACORD staff visited eleven community based organisations with which they had a long association. They included youth groups, women's groups, farmers groups and self-help groups of HIV positive people. A total of 150 people participated, with an equal number of men and women whose ages ranged from 15 to 65, and whose economic status was predominantly low, though they included some relatively well off NGO staff and civil servants.

We worked through a number of participatory research exercises with each group. The first exercise, which forms the basis of this paper, involved drawing up a 'time-line' on large sheets of paper pinned to the wall. There were columns for each of the years between 1986 and 1999, and four rows: national, district level, community level and individual/family level. Participants were asked to remember at least two events for each level; these were then called out and the facilitators wrote them into the appropriate boxes, translating into English where necessary.

The whole exercise took no more than thirty minutes for each group, and was intended to elicit what people remembered most readily as a starting point for discussion about the roles and responsibilities of 'traditional' and 'modern' leaders (see conference paper). There was no probing for details, except occasionally to verify where something had happened and how many people were involved.

When combined into one account, these raw facts create a deeply shocking and disturbing account of the Northern Uganda war. It is not a comprehensive account,¹ and some key issues, such as the decentralisation process of the late 1990s, receive no mention.² Nevertheless, it lays bare a horrific picture of what has been happening over the last fourteen years, particularly to communities and individuals. From this primarily local level account it is possible to see the broad dynamics of the conflict, its periods of severe violence and relative lulls, its gradual increase in intensity, and the growing visibility of international dynamics and actors.

¹ For an account of the pre-1986 history, as well as an overview of the conflict within the broader national context from 1986 onwards, see COPE Working Paper No. 20 'The Fragmented Pearl: An exploration of conflict as process - why is war in Uganda not a 'complex political emergency?'

² I have though added some minimal account of events in 1999 to make the case that December marked the end of one phase of the war and the beginning of another

The account challenges a number of different images which are often used to describe the situation: it is evident that this is not a case of intra-ethnic conflict, of 'Acholi killing Acholi', though there have been elements of that. Neither is it simply a case of a few 'loose molecules' 'bandits', 'thugs' or 'undisciplined individual soldiers' disturbing an otherwise well-ordered society. It is also clear that for many years this has not been strictly an 'internal war' the causes and effects of which are contained within Uganda's borders.

As important as the 'history' which emerges from this exercise, are the questions which such a history, although constructed entirely from ostensibly 'subjective' memories, forces us to ask - not only about the events themselves, but about the weight and significance which must be accorded to these memories. While the personal events in and of themselves are often sobering, the way in which the thoughts and feelings about them will contribute to the future in the war zone also gives pause for thought: how will these memories inform the future actions of individuals and groups, the informal education of their children, the extent to which politicians can manipulate questions of identity? How will people link their personal experiences with their often acute observations, inferences and interpretations of the broader dynamics?

Broad Dynamics of the Conflict

In terms of the dynamics of the war, a number of trends can be identified. It is possible to characterise the war as having four phases:

- Phase 1: August 1986- May 88
- Phase 2: June 1988 - March 1994
- Phase 3: April 1994- early December 2000
- Phase 4: Late December 2000 - ongoing

Each of these phases follows a similar pattern, beginning with acute violence, which gradually reduces - though it never disappears - until a failed 'peace initiative' releases a renewed wave of ever more intensive violence from those who were part of the preceding war, but not of the 'peace process'.

The first phase, beginning in late 1986 after the National Resistance Army (NRA) had taken control of northern Uganda, was marked by the formation of a number of different insurgent groups: the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), Severino Lukwoya's Lord's Army, and Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). While Lakwena's HSM was militarily defeated in October 1987, and the UPDA was brought out of the bush through political negotiation and the signing of a peace deal in May 1988, some of the remnants of both groups fed into the developing strength of the other two, the Lord's Army and the LRA.³

³ Members of the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) fled northwards following the overthrow of first Obote in July 1985 and then Tito Okello in January 1986. While some went as far as Sudan and formed the basis of the UPDA, also known as 'cilil', others went directly into Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement/Mobile Forces which began in August 1986, only months after the NRA had established control over northern Uganda.

The second phase, following the incomplete peace of phase 1, began with heavy levels of violence, which then fluctuated over the following years, with a noticeable lull in 1991. The attempts to broker peace with the LRA by the then Minister for Pacification of the North, Mrs Betty Bigombe, raised hopes in late 1993 that peace was just around the corner. Instead, the collapse of the talks in early 1994 led to a dramatic resurgence of violence by both rebels and army.

This renewed violence, or phase 3 of the conflict, continued until early 1999 when there was a noticeable lull, and some changes in the political climate again led to hopes that peace was just around the corner: an amnesty was put in place, to run for six months, and the American Carter Centre brokered a 'peace agreement' between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments, which was signed on 8 December 1999. Within two weeks of this deal, which did not appear to have involved the LRA (the 'visible actors') themselves, the LRA re-entered Uganda from Sudan, civilians who had tentatively moved back to their home areas some six months earlier were being moved back into 'protected villages' by the army, and vehicles were being ambushed and burnt on all roads out of Gulu except the Kampala highway. Phase 4 had clearly begun and is ongoing.

The extent to which northern Uganda is situated in the middle of a web of conflicts in the region is clear from the way in which people increasingly allude to the dynamics of conflicts in neighbouring Rwanda, Sudan and DRC. 1990 is described as the year 'the NRA marched to attack/invoke Rwanda and overthrow its government', as well as the bombing of Moyo by Sudan in the same year.⁴ John Garang, leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, was seen staying in North View Hotel in Gulu in 1991, and the Pope prayed for peace in Gulu in 1993. 1994 was remembered as the year in which the 'Rwanda Patriotic Front and the UPDF overthrew the Rwandan Government'. Village women observed the break-down of Sudan-Uganda relations in 1995-6, and Madeleine Albright made public what everybody already knew when she visited in 1998.

There appear to have been gradual changes in the nature of violence meted out over the course of the war, which could be characterised as an *intensification* of methods of violence. Phase 1 saw some appalling incidents of brutality, some of which have been explained by various academic observers as acts of revenge (NRA), or as acts of

Some members of UPDA moved across into HSM, but when the HSM was defeated in October 1987, some of its members joined or rejoined the UPDA while others joined forces under Alice's father, Severino Lukwoya, and still others joined Joseph Kony's group.

Confusingly, Lukwoya's group was known as the 'Lord's Army', while Kony's group began as the Holy Spirit Movement, changed its name briefly to Uganda People's Democratic Christian Army, before settling on the name Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which remains in force today. To add to the confusion, Joseph Kony also claimed to be possessed by the spirit of Lakwena...

During the period from late 1986 to mid 1988 the UPDA, Alice Lakwena's HSM, and Joseph Kony's HSM were all in existence. From mid 1988 up to his imprisonment in 1989, Lukwoya's Lord's Army operated in parallel to Kony's HSM, which then transformed into the Lord's Resistance Army.³

⁴ This interpretation is supported by Gerard Prunier's account of the RPF's 1 October 1990 invasion of Rwanda, in which he argues that '...the RPF had about 2,000 men. Most of them were NRA soldiers, although there was a small civilian contingent' (Prunier: 1998:130)

'moral cleansing' (Alice Lakwena's HSM). Phase 2 however saw the systematic use of maiming and mutilation, abduction, and landmines, and increasing involvement of external sponsorship. Phase 3 has seen the systematisation of internal displacement through the creation of 'protected villages', and Phase 4 is likely to see more and more intense involvement of international donors and NGOs, ostensibly in the search for peace, but potentially in the spoils of war (lucrative grants for peace building, peace education, reintegration etc.).

There is thus a sense in which 'partial' or 'incomplete' peace building attempts do not merely fail and thereby leave the situation as it was before they collapse: They are correlated with a worsening and intensification of the situation rather than an improvement. It is an important lesson for donors interested in 'peace-building' - perhaps *the* lesson - that their interventions can help to make war, not peace.

Living in a war zone

As the war progresses, there is a shift in the balance of accounts, with more and more emphasis on national and international events as we approach the present. This is partly related to the depth to which personal experiences in the early years of the war marked people for life, and also due to the changing nature of the war over the years.

Although the exact date of certain events at the national level becomes blurred, the fact that something occurred, such as the writing of a new constitution, is not forgotten. Much more significant than occasional mistakes about dates, is the fact that both men and women, even if living in isolated villages without easy access to public media, have a deep insight into who the players are, and what strings are being pulled.

While it is perhaps not surprising, it is nevertheless deeply striking and significant that the memories of what happens locally and within the immediate family circle remain engraved for many years, and are very near the surface. Given no warning and no time to prepare their accounts, people can still, if asked, recall without hesitation how many sacks, and of which type of grain, were looted thirteen years ago. In the majority of cases they can also identify which group committed which abuses against them.⁵

What initially appears to be a blurring of different groupings or of people's memories about the different rebel groupings (UPDA, 'cilil', Alice Lakwena, Holy Spirit Movement, 'Lakwena', LRA) is more likely an accurate reflection of the rapidly shifting names and composition of the different groups. Although these groups did have distinct identities, they did in a sense have 'shared membership', and at times used the same or similar names. Furthermore, although they did not all appear strictly simultaneously, they existed in parallel and overlapped with one another at various points in the years 1986-1989. This is also true for the change from NRA to UPDF, and the creation at different times of 'Local Defence Units', Arrow Groups, and 'Home-Guards'.

⁵ This is not to discount the fact that over time people will to some extent re-interpret what has happened, and the inevitable influence of the circumstances in which the information was given on what, how and why some things were mentioned and others left unsaid.

While it is tempting to use the blurring to allow a simple polarisation into 'pro' and 'anti-' government forces, there are two points to be born in mind. Firstly, all have been involved in damaging people's lives and livelihoods. No grouping emerges with a clean record, whether UPDA, NRA, HSM, LRA, UPDF, homeguards or LDUs. Supposed 'protectors' such as the Home Guard are themselves abusers, and being a victim of one group does not protect you from attack from their enemies.

Secondly, some civilians have themselves at one time or another been directly involved in one or other or several of these groupings. It is not uncommon for 'army' to become 'rebels', as happened following the overthrow of Obote and Okello, nor for 'rebels' to become 'army', as happened following the peace agreement with the UPDA in 1988, nor for individuals to shift from one 'rebel' group to another, as in the case of members of Alice Lakwena's HSM becoming members of the LRA. Therefore the lines between perpetrators and victims are not always easily drawn, nor are they necessarily fixed. Some people have undoubtedly been in all three roles; 'rebel', 'army soldier' and 'civilian'.

Against this complex background, what role do the memories of appalling instances of abuse and atrocities play? What is the relative importance of losing a relative and losing a livelihood? When someone points out that a son was abducted in 1987 and has not returned, should this be read as a sign of courage and hopeful optimism, or as an indicator that the person is in a state of denial, unable to admit that their child is almost certainly dead by now?

What is the basis for confidence in anybody? Whom do you hold accountable for what, and who will help you to hold them to account?

If a woman who is currently looking after her sister's orphaned children believes that her sister died of AIDS as a result of being raped by the army, is her primary need one for reconciliation with returned rebels, or with the army she encounters every day on the streets of Gulu?

If a bare-footed woman sitting on the floor deep in a rural area without newspapers or television can tell you with accuracy the hotel in Gulu in which John Garang stayed in 1991, and the period when relations between the Ugandan and Sudanese Government truly broke down, is it possible to maintain the pretence that this is an 'internal war' or the simple 'thuggery' of 'bandits'?

If people make a clear connection between war and rape, war and poverty, poverty and moral decay, moral decay and the phenomenon of girls becoming camp followers', and between all of the above and the rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, is it responsible for donors and NGOs to focus primarily on safer sex education and how to slip on a condom?

If people refer to the attempts and disastrous failures of the elders to engage in dialogues for peace, is it politically appropriate or morally responsible to vigorously advocate for their revival?

If NGOs have been involved in different forms of relief since the late 1980s, why is it only recently that people have become aware of the problems of northern Uganda?

Can the relocation of the foam factory from Gulu to Jinja in 1991 be taken as an indicator that the commercial sector had a clearer view of what was happening than governments, NGOs, academics and human rights organisations? It is a shocking indictment of the latter groups that this history is so little known - and that early 1999 looked very similar to early 1989 in terms of ongoing violent conflict and a relief infiltrated economy.

Phase 1: 1986-1988

1986

In 1986 Museveni's National Resistance Army took power, gradually moving north from Kampala to take over the whole country. By the time they reached Gulu town⁶ most people had fled deep into the rural areas, and the remnants of the United National Liberation Army fled to south Sudan to regroup. From there the UPDA, also known as '*cilil*' (*grass*) launched a bush war/rebel activities against NRA/M Government in the latter part of 1986.

The UPDA and NRA fought heavily in Gulu (m), with both sides committing a range of abuses. One woman claimed that already in 1986 the NRA was working with Karamajong in cattle rustling from Kitgum, another that the NRA forced people from Olwiyo and Purongo to Karuma in Masindi district (f).

One major incident was a confrontation at Corner Kilak some distance outside Gulu town. One person argued that the Holy Spirit Movement fought there with NRA, resulting in more than 3000 deaths of civilians, gov't soldiers and rebels. Another participant believed there were 1000 deaths, including both NRA and UPDA victims (f).

The ICRC was expelled from Gulu for allegedly supporting rebels, there was an increase in diseases including malnutrition and HIV/AIDS in the district, and, argued one man, 'intermarriage diluted the genes of Acholi people'.

There was a belief that acts of revenge were being taken against Acholi in Kampala and elsewhere; these could be direct, such as the use of burning car tyres to kill people, or indirect, such as displays of skulls in Luwero to discredit them (m). Women remarked that ordinary people then, as now, were opposed to both sides and that it became very difficult to bring up children, indeed some of the children 'learnt to use guns' at that time. Several respondents also equate this first period with the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic and of NGO activities in the district. The bitterness of people is suggested by one man's allegation that the NRA went to Obote's father, beat him to death and defecated in his open stomach (m).

The individual experiences at the hands of both the NRA and UPDA were terrifying. One participant recalled that in 1986 the NRA abducted his cousin who never returned (m), another that the NRA killed his brother (m), another that the NRA shot at them

⁶ By March 1986

during the funeral rites of her father, burning house and food-stuffs (f). One woman recalled how 'two of my brothers were killed by NRA, one with a molten jerry can, the other through beating', another that 'my father and brother were killed by NRA, their bodies destroyed by fire. All our properties also destroyed and I ran away' (f). A third reported how 'NRA tied my brothers in '3 piece' (*Kandoya*) and shot him'. A fourth remembered that 'FEDEMU killed my brother. I was arrested by Jinja police and they said Jinja is out of bounds for Acholi people, I was given five hours to leave' (f).

One man pointed out injuries received from an NRA bomb, another how he was 'arrested by NRA in a confrontation near my village, taken to the barracks and released after 2 weeks'. One woman reported how 'two of my children died of hand-grenade attack by NRA' (f), and another how 'we were cut off at Corner Kilak; I had to flee to Sudan via Gulu, and witnessed the NRA raping and looting trading centres'.

As well as these direct threats to people's lives, numerous people, both men and women, remembered the NRA coming to their village, burning houses and granaries, and looting properties, with specific accounts of a headmaster being killed (m), Awere senior secondary school truck being taken, and cattle being rustled from Pabo by NRA 56th battalion (m).

However, the brutality was clearly on all sides. There were numerous accounts of UPDA robbing property, looting cattle and goats, and killing husbands, fathers, brothers. Participants reported that the UPDA burnt huts at Koro Lapainat, looted money and cattle from Koro (f), looted animals from Palaro parish (f), and killed a local councillor (f). One woman reported how 'four of my children were abducted by Lakwena, and returned after 4 months, another how 'HSM abducted my brother, who was employed by customs, another how ' Holy Spirit Movement killed my child, I then took refuge in Pabo' (f) One of the men reported how 'HSM abducted and killed my son. I was displaced to town' (m)

Many of the reports for 1986 indicate how people were affected but do not specify who was to blame. Some respondents were themselves 'arrested and taken to the bush' for varying lengths of time, others lost family members and suffered separation: 'two of my brothers were killed (f)', 'I was cut off from family' (m), 'My family was scattered and I was injured in the leg' (m), 'I was ambushed in the last train to Pakwach' (m), 'I was displaced from Kampala road to Gulu town due to harassment' (f), 'I was displaced to town' (m), 'My education ended for lack of money' (m), 'My education was disrupted' (m), 'the Mukungo of Parabanga was killed' (m), 'Soldiers looted my home' (f).

1987

There was little recall of national events, although one woman claimed to have 'lost 2.5 million Uganda Shillings during the currency change' (f),⁷ and some felt that when NRA-UPDA battles began in 1987, other Ugandans condemned Acholi for rebelling against Government (m).

⁷ In May 1987 a three year Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) was agreed with the IMF and the World Bank (Harvey & Robinson, 1995:4)

At a district level there was an intensification of fighting between UPDA and NRA, and the rise of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement (HSM/Lakwena), until, as one woman remembered, 'Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement attempted to reach Kampala, but was stopped in Jinja' (f).⁸

There were several UPDA attacks on Gulu barracks and town. Public infrastructure began to come under attack, with reports of school furniture being destroyed and Lakwena (the rebels) started to prevent education by forcing schools to close (m), as a result of which education levels dropped. Dispensaries were also closed in rural areas (m). The isolation of the north increased, with the Kampala road blocked (f), and the railways no longer working (f). The Special District Administrator Justin Moro died.

The looting of properties by NRA and rebels alike continued apace. 1987 also saw the gearing up of cattle rustling which over the following three years was to wipe out what had been the basis of the agricultural economy up to that point, an exercise from which the area's economy has never recovered. Specific large scale instances noted in the PRA exercises included 'Karamajong rustled 1700 cows from Palaro parish' (m), 'Karamajong rustled 1700 cows from Binya parish' (m & f), and 'Karamajong rustle 1100 from Lakwor parish' (m).

What this meant for individual households is quite clear: 'Karamajong rustled 36 of my cattle', 'Karamajong rustled 150 cows from me' (m), 'K'majong rustled 5 cattle' (m), 'K'majong rustled 45 cattle' (m), 'K'majong rustled 60 cattle' (m), 'K'majong rustled 35 cattle' (m), 'K'majong rustled 6 cattle' (m), 'Karamajong took 38 cattle belonging to my grandfather' (f), 'Karamajong looted 30 animals' (f), 'Karamajong looted 30 animals' (f), 'Karamajong rustled our cattle, goats and fowl' (2).

While the majority of rustling is still attributed to the Karamajong, pastoralists whose home area is in the north-west corner of Uganda, bordering Kenya to the east, Sudan to the north and Kitgum district to the west, this was not unambiguous: 'NRA rustled 67 of our cattle', 'NRA looted 30 of our cattle' (m), 'NRA looted 91 cows from me' (m), 'NRA looted 4 acres of cassava at Kamcoo' (m). According to one respondent such loss of property pushed a close family member to suicide; 'My brother drowned himself after NRA took 100 cattle' (f).

The scale of brutality meted out to civilians appears to have increased drastically in this year. Although some people did not specify exactly who was responsible ('My sister was abducted' (f), 'rebels nearly killed me' (f)), the majority of respondents were unambiguous; 'NRA tortured me because of my brother's gun' (f), 'My husband was arrested by NRA and imprisoned at Luzira and I was further disturbed by Government soldiers' (f), 'My husband was arrested by the NRA for two weeks. He came back ill and died three years later' (f), 'NRA tortured my sister and looted most of our household properties' (f).

The accounts of continued killing at district level are many. Examples given included the following; 'There was a massacre at Cwero during an NRA-LRA confrontation' (f), 'NRA shot 16 youths in (Gulu) town' (m), 'NRA set up roadblocks in town at which people were tortured' (m), 'NRA carried out an operation in which doctors and

⁸ She and her force of 7-10,000 men and women were defeated in October 1987 (Behrend: 113)

the sick were also arrested at Kalongo (in neighbouring Kitgum district)' (f), 'NRA shot at children during a confrontation with the UPDA - six girls died, and the number of boys is unknown' (f). 'NRA killed many people at Patiko', 'NRA massacred 47 people at Kigoka' (m), 'NRA arrested and killed 27 people in Koch Lee and confiscated goats' (m), 'NRA conducted mass arrests, tortures and killing in Koch Goma', 'NRA defecated in people's pots and there was wanton destruction of property', 'NRA killed 20 people attending funeral rights' (m), 'NRA arrested 19 community members and shot them by the roadside without explanation' (m).

One woman reported how boys and girls were collected together in Palaro parish and put in UPDA/NRA confrontation in which many died. Another how children were massacred while dancing in Lawiyeadul village. Yet another reported how 'seven boys were killed and buried by NRA after digging their own grave', while one man noted that 'NRA rounded up people and killed some, others were burnt alive', and another that '5 people were abducted and burnt in their house by NRA'.

Several of our respondents had lost immediate family members as a result of this violence: 'NRA killed my husband, took 28 cattle, and burnt 4 huts and six granaries' (f), 'NRA killed my mother', 'NRA killed my son', 'NRA killed 3 sons at Laminator' (m).

Again, the brutality was on both sides, with the 'UPDA responsible for attacks on Gulu town' (m), '9 women and children were killed by the UPDA, then left unburied and eaten by pigs (f), 'UPDA conducted mass killing in Alero', 'UPDA and NRA looted my foodstock', 'I was forced to join UPDA rebels for three months' (m), 'I took refuge in town due to UPDA/rebel robbery' (f).

Others talk of the LRA, saying that the 'LRA burnt all our houses and hacked one youth to death' (m), 'the LRA killed our neighbours' (f), 'the LRA abducted and killed our Rwot Moo (Leoben Ocaya)' (f),⁹ 'LRA threw grenades at our cattle, three died' (m), 'LRA burned our home burned in March' (f), 'LRA stole household items, a child of mine was abducted but later escaped, this led to my displacement to town' (f), 'LRA killed my son' (f), 'LRA abducted my son, who was married and had a daughter. He is still in captivity' (f).

Some of our respondents were themselves part of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement which was active at this time. 'I was a fighter in HSM, involved in property destruction', and one woman recorded that 'my husband was taken by HSM to fight alongside her (Alice Lakwena's) group, later taken a prisoner of war and jailed in Luzira Upper Prison'.

Several of our respondents had suffered directly at the hands of HSM: 'I was abducted by HSM and escaped', '2 of my brothers were killed by HSM' (f), '2 brothers killed by the HSM' (f), 'I was beaten, my was son abducted. He returned after one year. 5 goats were taken by Lakwena (f), 'Lakwena burnt our houses' (m), 'Lakwena took my 28 cattle, beat me and took four goats' (f),

1988

⁹ *Rwot Moo* literally means 'oil chief', namely the clan chief who has been anointed with shea nut oil

By this year there was a 'very low/absent revenue base', and 'inter-district trade had become impossible (ongoing)' (m). The 'LRA were in the bush' (m), and although a peace agreement was signed in Gulu town's Pece Stadium between NRA and UPDA, this was only after an even greater intensity of fighting, looting, destruction and brutality than that recorded for the previous year.

All parties continued to be involved in the looting of cattle ('NRA, Karamajong, UPDA all involved in looting of cattle' (m), 'Karamajong rustled our cattle' (f), 'Karamajong took 28 cattle' (f)), and this had already started to affect social practices, with one respondent noting that 'the cattle rustling resulted in a change to cash dowry payments'. The destruction of primary schools in rural areas also continued (m).

NRA abuse and atrocities continued: 'NRA confiscated land without compensation (100 homesteads affected)' (f), 'NRA tortured people with fire in a big pit in Buchoro (3 die) and Pabo' (m), 'NRA killed eight men and dumped their bodies in a stream' (f), 'our school was burnt and the building left unattended', 'the bomb splinters from NRA training injured community members', 'NRA destroyed buildings at Koch Goma using armed personnel carrier' (m), 'there was an NRA mass arrest in which 29 were massacred in Koch Kweyo' (m), 'NRA arrested and killed 2 boys in Keyo' (m), 'NRA arrested and killed 18 elders from Palaro parish' (m), 'NRA operation killed 11 people from Binya parish' (m), 'in an NRA operation in Odek many were killed, women raped, food stuffs and properties looted' (f), 'NRM Government forced us to Gulu town' (m), 'NRA raped three women, people left their homes in Orum' (m)

As in previous years, the cost of army abuse to our respondents was very high indeed: 'the NRA killed ten people. I fled the village. They also rustled 100 heads of cattle' (m), 'NRA burnt all our huts(f), 'NRA took our cattle' (f), 'NRA took 100 cattle' (f), 'My arm was shot by NRA and had to be amputated' (f), 'My father was abducted by NRA and escaped after 2 days' (f), 'NRA burnt our homestead and killed one boy' (m), 'the NRA rustled my parents' cattle' (m), 'there was an NRA operation in which foodstuffs were looted, 8 huts burnt, and five people killed' (m), 'an NRA operation killing my brother, items looted from our home (m), 'NRA operation raped my wife, I was beaten and robbed of my properties' (m), 'NRA killed my uncle' (m), 'My father was killed in the NRA operation' (f), 'My brother was killed in NRA operation' (f), 'Properties were looted and my brother killed by NRA' (f), 'our home was destroyed in a Government operation' (f), '8 sons of brothers were killed by NRA. They also took 30 cattle' (f). 'NRA soldiers raped me' (f).

Rebel activities were increasingly evident at this time: 'UPDA battled seriously with NRA at Adak, with many casualties on both sides' (f), 'LRA killed a Resistance Council official', 'LRA abducted 30 children, only 10 returned' (m).

The HSM (under Joseph Kony) were active, with one respondent noting an NRA-HSM encounter at Opit, another an attack on Gulu town and barracks in which HSM 'broke into Gulu main prison and took off with prisoners' (f). Three women respondents recalled how during these attacks 'girls were abducted from St Mary's Hospital, also from Sacred Heart School', another how 'Holy Spirit Movement killed when they attacked Gulu town', '20 +, including seven children, were killed in Ongako' (f - those responsible not specified).

The cost of rebel activities to individual respondents was high in material terms: 'UPDA looted 36 goats from Koro', 'UPDA burnt 1 hut, 2 sacks of millet, 8 sacks of sunflower, household properties and two granaries' (f), 'UPDA burnt five of my huts', 'UPDA burned our huts and destroyed household items' (f), 'Our huts were destroyed by fire' (f), '44 of my cattle were rustled by Lakwena' (m), 'LRA burnt our houses, stole our goats and abducted' (m).

Often the looting went hand in hand with killing: 'Lakwena killed three of my brothers & robbed our household properties' (f), 'Lakwena robbed 10 goats, 50 cattle were rustled - and my husband was killed' (f), 'LRA killed my brother, 15 of his cows were looted by them'. 'LRA killed my grandmother' (f), 'LRA looted our properties looted, beat my parents, and killed my brother. He was then cut into pieces like Muchomo (roasted meat)' (f).

1988 saw a marked increase in accounts of abduction: 'UPDA abducted my brother' (f), 'UPDA abducted and killed my father' (f), 'I was abducted by Lakwena for 2 weeks (m).. for 17 days (m)... for 2 days (m). 'LRA killed my father and abducted my brother who returned a year later' (m), 'I was abducted with my brother, I escaped, he was killed in 1991' (f), 'I was abducted and lived in captivity for three months. Some of my property was taken, others destroyed, one child who was taken returned after six months' (f), 'two of my grandsons were abducted, one returned after a year and a half, the other is still in captivity' (f)

The combined visible effect was displacement: 'I was displaced to town due to LRA threat' (f), 'I was displaced from Pabo to Gulu', 'LRA burnt homestead, livestock and properties - we were displaced' (f), 'Bomb blasts at home resulted in displacement' (f).

Phase II: 1989 - 1994

1989

This year saw some qualitative shifts in the dynamics of the conflict. Cattle rustling continued, still largely attributed to the Karamajong (Karamajong rustled my cattle (Pabo - f)), although one respondent said his cattle were rustled by 'so-called' Karamajong (Bungatira - m), implying some doubts about the allocation of blame in that direction. These were though, as another respondent pointed out, the final stages of the cattle rustling process, as the majority of cattle had by this point been taken (f), and 'people were being resettled'. The first signs of public protest are indicated by a 'women's demonstration for peace in Gulu town' (f).

The peace agreement of 1988 did not mark the end of army abuses. 'There was an operation by NRA in which many people killed, others arrested and taken to Luwero district at Namisuso' (x2), 'NRA defecated in foodstuffs and cooking places' (m), 'NRA fired big guns and bombed indiscriminately, destroying Lii primary School in Koch' (m), 'NRA raped male civilians' (m), 'NRA operation at Acet killed many people', 'NRA ambushed civilians fleeing to town and killed them' (m), 'NRA were shooting dead anybody they came across in Koch Ongako' (m), 'NRA arrested and killed two people' (Koch Goma - m).

Individual respondents had suffered severely at the hands of the army: 'NRA burnt 4 of my brothers alive in their huts, accusing them of being collaborators' (f), 'NRA burnt property including 4 huts, 3 granaries, 40 iron sheets, because the rebels had camped in the area' (f), 'our cattle were taken by NRA 56th battalion' (Pabo), 'NRA arrested 28 people of whom 27 were hacked to death. One acre of cassava and our homestead were also destroyed' (m), 'NRA destroyed 15 beehives' (Koch Goma - m).

At the same time the LRA's activities were on the increase: 'LRA caused high death rate', 'LRA intensified fighting in Gulu', 'LRA entered Gulu prison barracks, 21 inmates were taken, as were 28 cattle, of which 3 were killed by aerial bombing from a helicopter gunship' (f), 'LRA burnt huts and killed people at Pabo', 'LRA food looting and abductions were taking place' (ongoing).

As in earlier years, individual respondents were directly affected: 'my son & others were arrested and taken to Luwero by NRA' (m), 'LRA abducted 20 youth, some of whom are still not back'. Abuses ranged from the minor ('HSM looted a sack of groundnuts from home (Koch Goma)' (m)), through the medium ('I was abducted from school by LRA for 4 days (Kweyo)', 'I saw 3 people abducted by LRA - they later returned'), to the major ('our home was set ablaze by LRA (Kweyo)', 'My grandfather was inside a house set ablaze by LRA, but escaped' (Kweyo), 'My brother's son was killed by LRA' (f), 'HSM killed one of my brothers' (m), 'LRA burnt 7 huts: 2 children burnt alive inside, 3 killed on the spot, 2 in the bush (total 7)' (f))

Other respondents had suffered appallingly as a result of the overall situation but did not specify at the hands of which group: 'My father was killed (Lukome)' (m), '2 of my children died (Pabo)' (m), 'I was hit by a landmine and my leg was amputated' (f), 'My sister's son was staying with me when he was abducted and killed (Odek - f), 'My husband was abducted and our properties looted (WL - f).

As in 1988, a major result was displacement: 'Displacement to town' (WL - f), 'I took refuge in Gulu town (from Pabo)' (f), 'I fled to Kampala for fear of insecurity' (WL - f). Although 'civilians were killed in Pabo (f)', some 'civilians from town were forced to Pabo, where they were given *mbati* (iron-sheets) (f). There appears to have been deliberate destruction of crops in the fields as well (f).

1990

Four respondents noted that this was the year the 'NRA marched to attack/invoke Rwanda and overthrow its government'. It was also the first occasion on which Sudan bombed Moyo. One respondent felt that at this point 'immorality levels were rising' and that this was ongoing.

In the district people experienced 'ongoing resettlement' and 'forced recruitment into militia by the NRA'. A few individuals benefited from a loan scheme for rural farmers, and the 'LRA tried to enter Gulu barracks but was repulsed'.

NRA abuses continued. Although the level was reduced, the nature of abuses remained appalling: 'NRA operation made mass arrests, and one man was hacked to death' (f), 'NRA soldiers leaving a detach in Alero invited community to eat food

mixed with human flesh', 'NRA burnt 12 people in Koch Amar', 'My sister's son was buried alive by NRA' (Koch Opiri - f).

Rebel looting and killings continued ('LRA looted all my granaries and beat me seriously' (WL - f), 'LRA robbed me at home' (Odek - m), 'Rebels looted my properties from my *alup* (temporary shelter in the bush)' (WL - f), 'Our homestead was burnt, resulting in famine' (Lukome - m), '6 of my children were killed by Lakwena' (Bobi). Abductions also continued: 'my uncle was abducted by LRA, stayed for 3 months' (Kweyo - f), 'LRA abducted my brother's son and killed him' (Odek - m).

1991

This year saw Acholi students at Makerere shot at by Uganda Police Force, the relocation of a major foam factory from Gulu to Jinja (m), and numerous NRA operations to which some respondents attributed an increase in STDs, allegedly due to 'indiscriminate rape of men and women by NRA'.

Several people referred to the rape of men (*tek gungu*). One woman specified that it occurred in Amuru, Apar, Para, Purongo, and another respondent talked of the rape of a woman in Palenga during an NRA operation there. There were also numerous army 'operations'. One mass operation resulted in many being 'arrested & taken to Onywange village where they were tortured for one day before being released' (m). A mass operation in Gulu resulted in 18 men being taken to Luzira (this was told by four different respondents in different groups). One respondent claimed that they later returned but died from having been fed broken glass while there. In the Gulu operation people were forced into the Pece stadium and screened. Other operations took place in Patiko and Palenga.

These 'operations' were clearly traumatic experiences, with dead bodies 'left to rot in the sun' in Amuru, people 'made to lie down facing the sun until they 'confessed' (f), an instance of miscarriage in the Gulu stadium (m), and the discomfort of spending 'a night in Pece Stadium during NRA mass operation' (m).

Several twists are added to the situation with reports of SPLA officials seen in Gulu. John Garang, for example, was known to be residing in North View Hotel at one point (m). There is also the first account of 'robbery by Local Defence Unit (LDU)' (m).

The year was marked by the beginning of 'LRA maimings and mutilations, including the cutting of lips and noses'. This was in addition to the more 'usual' activities of looting, killing and abducting: 'LRA burnt 18 houses at Oilango village, Lapainat parish, 3 killed' (f), 'My sister's daughter was abducted by the LRA and died in Agweng, Lira district' (f), 'My brother was shot by LRA, but survived' (f), 'My brother was abducted by LRA but escaped after 2 weeks' (Kweyo - m), 'My son was abducted and killed by LRA' (Odek - f), 'My brother was killed by rebels' (f)

1992

At a district level our respondents remembered this as the year in which 'landmines were planted along the roads' (f), 'the NRA introduced tight roadblocks and

punishment (men were arrested, tortured, taken to barracks; some were killed)' (f),¹⁰ the 'LRA used padlocks to lock people's mouths' (Kweyo - f), the LRA abducted some girls from Sacred heart School, some of whom returned. It was also noted that there was 'famine as a result of the war', and that there were 'relief distributions by NGOs (ongoing)'.

Army misconduct at community level seems to have reduced considerably, although there was one account of how the 'NRA made mass arrests in Abwoch, people were taken to Ongaku for two days' (Kweyo - f), and another of an NRA operation in which 'people were arrested and taken forcefully to Paikat. One woman miscarried after being kicked in the stomach' (Koch Goma - m). One of our own research assistants recounted how the 'NRA from Loro detach stole 1 million shillings from me during an ambush on the Gulu-Kampala bus' (m). 'Elders tried to cleanse the district, but failed' (Agonga).

LRA activity continued, but was also much reduced by comparison with previous years: 'My sister's daughter abducted by the LRA, died in Agweng, Lira district' (f), 'My sister was sexually abused by LRA' (Agonga - m), 'LRA stabbed me in the chest and looted household goods' (Kweyo - m), 'I was abducted by LRA and released after one day' (Kweyo - f).

A couple of other incidents were mentioned: 'Local Defence Unit arrested a woman and beat her seriously, and she was released after paying 10,000/= (Koch Goma - f), and an HIV positive woman described how 'my husband was killed and I was injured with a panga (Dyere Tek - f)

1993

The most memorable event of this year was Pope John Paul II's visit to Gulu to 'pray for peace in Gulu'. NURP projects were initiated (???). A less welcome development was 'unofficial recruitment of homeguards/Local Defence Units who were later absorbed into the UPDF'. One respondent believed that this was the year in which the new constitution was enacted, though this in fact occurred in 1995, and another regarded it as the year in which the Government initiated 'women's emancipation', though the details were not given.

One person remembered this as the year in which 'arrow groups' (*atere*) were formed by the Gulu RDC. The situation was still highly insecure, with 'ambushes and vehicle burnings', ongoing 'burning of people in houses, and killing of civilians' (m), and accounts of 'abducted children being sold as slaves in the middle east (documented in RDC's office; two returned - Lukome - m), and '(abducted) children being killed *en route* to Sudan if they got sick or tired (Ongoing - Lukome - m)

The army continued to carry out 'operations', with one respondent recalling youths being 'executed at Onywange village and many dying of hunger' (m), and another recalling a 'UPDF operation in Pece (in which) women had to squeeze breast milk into cups to be taken to their babies which were being kept separately' (Dyere Tek). One woman recalled that the 'NRA killed my brother' (Odek - f), another that 'My sister died of AIDS, probably due to having been raped by NRA; she left many orphans' (f).

¹⁰ The Government's 'Operation North', a campaign to eliminate the LRA which involved sealing off the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Apac, began in December 1991

There were several accounts of forcible expropriation of property by the army: 'NRA took our maize mill' (f), 'NRA took my brother's son's maize mill' (f), 'NRA took my uncle's maize mill' (f), 'My brother's house was used as an army office; to date there has been no compensation or rent payment' (f).

LRA activities continued as before: 'LRA stole a goat' (Lukome - m), 'My sister was abducted by LRA, stayed for 2 days' (Kweyo - f), 'my sister was killed' (Pabo - m), 'LRA killed my father and destroyed his bicycle' (Odek - m), 'I stopped schooling due to lack of money' (Odek - m)

Some people were truly caught between the two sides: 'LRA abducted my child and when he came back the NRA arrested him during an operation in town; he has not returned to date' (WL - f). The threat to personal security came from all sides, even from those supposedly providing protection: 'I fled following an attempt by the LDU to abduct me' (Agonga - m).

Nevertheless, it was the year in which 'peace talks between Government and LRA began', as a result of which, in December 1993, Gulu enjoyed 'the best Christmas celebrations of the war (because people thought peace was coming)' (f).¹¹

1994

This was the year everybody remembered without fail as the year in which the peace talks failed. One respondent felt that the 'peace talks led by Betty Bigombe flopped because some people brainwashed Museveni and he gave a 7 day ultimatum to the rebels' (f). It was also remembered as the year in which the 'Rwanda Patriotic Front and UPDF overthrew the Rwandan government'.

Within the district, several respondents recalled this as the year of the massacre of several hundred people in Atiak market place by the LRA (Two respondents (m & f) lost a brother in the massacre, another her brother-in-law (Odek - f)).¹² There was rising displacement, outbreaks of 'meningitis killed many people' (m), and one respondent remembered this as the year in which World Vision opened a reception camp for abductees' (??).

One respondent recalled that the 'NRA arrested and killed a medical assistant at Odek division' (Dyere Tek), another that the 'NRA killed a man on the road while he was riding a bicycle' (f). Violent operations continued, with one at Binya in which 'food items and domestic animals were looted' (Odek - m), and another in Odek where the respondent recalled that 'foodstuffs were looted, women raped, boys hung upside down from trees and beaten until they died' (Odek - f). There were also allegations of forceful recruitment of youth to the homeguard (Kweyo - m).

Individual abuse at the hands of the NRA continued: 'NRA burnt my homestead and tortured me' (Odek - m), 'NRA robbed me and beat me up' (Pangeya - m), 'NRA looted all our foodstuffs' (Odek - f), 'NRA took my husband and killed him' (Odek -

¹¹ These began in late 1993 following the establishment in 1992 of the Acholi Pacification Council headed by Mrs Betty Bigombe.

¹² The massacre in fact occurred in 1995, not 1994. Estimates of the number killed range between 200 and 400.

f), 'NRA soldiers beat me up and pulled out my mother's eyes (she later died), destroyed our properties; I fled' (Odek - f)

Similarly at the hands of the LRA: The 'LRA killed a teacher in Kanguru P7 school' (Koch Goma), 'killed one of my brothers during looting and abduction (Odek - m), robbed an ACORD vehicle, and 'hacked' four boys to death (m). 'LRA robbed me' (Lukome - m), 'LRA abducted my brother in law's son from Sir Samuel Baker, he returned one year later' (f), 'LRA abducted my brother's son. He was rescued by NRA but died of cholera on the border with Sudan at Ngom Oromo (Odek)' (m), 'I took refuge in town when my abducted child escaped from the LRA and they were pursuing him (WL - f), 'My 12 year old daughter was abducted; not yet back' (WL - f), 'Rebels shot at me and later abducted me' (Pabo - m).

Not all memories were obviously war related: one person recounted how 'my father was killed through poisoning' (Agonga)

Phase III: 1995 - December 1999

1995

This year saw the severing of relationship between Uganda and Sudan, the establishment of a new constitution,¹³ 'Government credit schemes such as Poverty Alleviation Programme, ECS' (Koch - f), the empowerment of women in politics (Koch - f), and inflation of prices with 'household items and clothing becoming very expensive (Odek - f)

It also saw the beginnings of an escalation of violence which would continue into the following year. Individuals were displaced to Gulu town (f), and there was continuing forceful recruitment to the homeguard by NRA (Koch Goma -m, Dyere Tek - m). There was a further meningitis outbreak (f), ongoing destruction of dispensaries (Agonga), and 'massive planting of anti-personnel mines' (f) 'along roads, paths, water points, granaries' (Lukome - m) - indeed, one of our respondents told how 'I was hit by an anti-personnel mine and lost my lower leg' (f).

The LRA's abduction of some 110 school girls from Aboke School in neighbouring Apac district created 'hostile relationships with Langi and Madi' (Agonga) - despite the fact that Gulu district was worse affected, with girls abducted by the LRA from Sacred Heart and St. Mary's Secondary Schools (Lukome - f), and another account of how the 'LRA abducted 36 students from Sir Samuel Baker School, who have not yet returned' (Dyere Tek, GDA - m)

There were 'passenger vehicles ambushed along main roads' (Lukome - m), and 'many lips, ears, and arms were chopped off by LRA' (Dyere Tek - f). 'Brutal killings occurred in Atiak, Palaro, Alero, Pabo, Paicho, Patiko, Acoyo, Pawere, Awere (f), the 'LRA burnt many houses at Iriaga, Bwonagweno, one child in P3 burnt to death', and 'LRA burnt houses at Koro, killed 11' (Dyere Tek - f)

¹³ The new constitution was introduced in October 1995. It outlawed the opening of party offices, holding conferences or rallies and sponsoring candidates for election. The NRA was re-named the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF)

On a positive note, the Gulu Support the Children Organisation (GUSCO) opened their centre for returned abductees in Gulu town, and 'Watemu Lapainat association (a women's group) started' (f)

Although there was one personal experience of 'robbery by UPDF' (Agonga - m), responsibility for the majority of abuse at this time clearly lay with the LRA: 'my sister was abducted by LRA' (Agonga - f), 'my children were abducted by the LRA (Pabo - f), 'LRA looted properties in the village, we fled to town (Lapainat - f), 'my three children (2 boys, 1 girl) killed by LRA (trad healers), 'the LRA abducted two girls in Orom (Koch - m), 'the LRA dragged away and killed the headmaster of CooRom school' (Koch - m), 'LRA abducted eight of us boys, robbed 30 sacks of simsim. 3 of us managed to escape, 5 are still missing' (Odek - m), 'Rebels abducted 2 of my children' (Pabo - m), 'Rebels killed my brothers (Pabo - f), 'Rebels looted my properties in town' (Lapainat - f)

There was one instance of mercy, when 'LRA pardoned us at Lawatomer' (Dyere Tek - f).

1996

This year saw presidential and parliamentary elections,¹⁴ with one person alleging that 'the Government forced people to vote under Movement system in Presidential elections' (Odek - m). The 'Government started privatisation of parastatals' (Lukome - m), 'Gulu airfield was rejected for upgrading to (status of) international airport' (Lukome - m), 'recruitment of Home Guards' (GDA) continued, and there were increasing rumours that the Sudan Government was supporting the LRA rebels (Wg - f). Two groups believed that this was the year in which the Aboke girls were abducted. Neighbouring districts were further affected when the LRA ambushed Arua-Pakwach buses; '6 buses and several vehicles were burnt' (m), and one group recalled this as the year in which 'LRA killed many Sudanese refugees at Acol Pii'.¹⁵ One woman recalled that '400 died in another LRA massacre at Padibe/Lokung in neighbouring Kitgum district' (GDA - f).¹⁶

At a district level, the killing of two elders (Okot Ogoni & Lagony) who had gone on a 'peace mission' (GDA - f) to try and persuade the LRA to come out of the bush, was a heavy blow to people's hopes.¹⁷

1996 was a year of mass displacement (GDA), when 'people started staying in camps' (Kweyo - GDA), and the 'UPDF forced people into camps/protected villages' (f). In places such as Purongo it is alleged the 'UPDF used a scorched-earth policy' (f). Most huts in villages were burnt, and people were killed, even in the suburbs of Gulu town (Lapainat - f). Rural schools were displaced to town (GDA - f).

Rape incidents increased again, with one respondent recalling how 'UPDF mobile raped women in a market in Palaro sub-county' (f), another talking of the 'mass rape of housewives by NRA' (Lukome - m), and yet another of men being raped by the

¹⁴ The Presidential elections took place in May 1996, followed by the parliamentary ones in June.

¹⁵ A refugee camp in the south of Kitgum district, home to approximately 16,000 Sudanese refugees. At least 100 people were massacred in July 1996

¹⁶ This in fact occurred in January 1997

¹⁷ This also occurred in June 1996

NRA (Lukome - m). One person also talked of how 'relief food for Gulu people was sold by NRM commanders' (Lukome - m). Signs of social distress became more evident, with 'street children' beginning to appear (Agonga), as well as 'night robbery by armed men' (Agonga)

The LRA created havoc throughout the district; they 'burnt 80 huts in Pece and Coyo' (f), 'abducted boys from Sir Samuel Baker School, some not back yet' (Kweyo - Lukome), 'targeted Lacor hospital using mortars' (Kweyo), 'killed many people in Atiak camp' (Lapainat - f), 'burnt 100+ houses in Kirombe near town' (f), 'fought with the NRA in Gulu Otit along Gulu-Kampala road, killing 45 civilians & government troops' (trad healers), 'fought at Lalogi killing 72 (trad healers), again in Koch Goma (kweyo - f).

There were ongoing landmine incidents: an 'LRA landmine blew up a person at Unyama (Dyere Tek), another killed the 'Jago of Anaka' (f). Others 'hit local government and UPDF lorries' (Kweyo - m). An 'LRA mine blasted a vehicle, six soldiers died and civilians were injured at Lukwot upon return from presidential elections' (Koch - m). Travel was rendered further insecure by ambushes: 'LRA ambushed vehicle at Koch Kweyo, two people died' (Koch - m)

LRA 'amputations and mutilations' of 'legs and arms' continued (Lukome - m, GDA), as did 'constant raids on police barracks in Gulu town by LRA' (GDA - m). The 'LRA abduction of children intensified' (Lapainat - f), and they 'killed 47 boys at Lamogi after abducting them' (trad healers)

In addition to the Government's pressure on people to move into 'protected' camps, there was considerable incentive to seek protection as abductions of children continued apace: 'LRA abducted 10 boys (10-12 years old), they returned after 2 weeks' (f)', 'LRA abducted 2 school girls' (f), 'there were mass abductions by LRA' (Lukome - m), 'LRA abducted teachers and pupils' (Koch - f), 'LRA abducted a girl' (Koch - f), '2 boys were abducted but returned' (f).

To the extent that the Government used 'scorched earth' policies to make people move,¹⁸ it was complemented by the LRA's strategy of looting and burning: 'LRA looted our neighbour's shop three times'(f), the 'LRA looted Goma centre, burnt huts, killed 1' (Koch - m), 'LRA burnt 80 huts' (f), 'LRA set homesteads & militia barracks ablaze' (Kweyo - m), 'Houses were set ablaze by LRA' (Kweyo - f), 'LRA burnt many huts at Limo' (trad healers), 'LRA burnt 237 huts at Pece-Pawel (trad healers), 'huts burned' (Pabo - m), 'homestead set ablaze (Lukome), 'LRA burnt over 10 huts in our camp' (Odek). One respondent described how she was 'abducted by LRA and participated in burning many huts at Koro Lapainat' (Lapainat - f).

There was widespread killing: 'Massacre at Purongo' (GDA), 'Mass killings by LRA, bodies laid along Gulu-Kampala highway' (GDA). The LRA '...killed a boy (Kweyo - f), '...killed 8 people and burnt more than 10 houses (Lukome - f), '...killed more than 20' (Lukome - m), '...killed 19 boys at Parabongo school' (trad healers), '...ambushed and killed people in Ongako (Koch - f). '...killed 6 boys, 3 from Goma centre' (Koch - f).

¹⁸ Several reports collected during the course of our fieldwork confirm that such strategies were used to induce people to move to 'protected villages', as well as aerial bombings

The personal cost to our respondents appears to have been higher than in any of the previous years, and the army an increasingly insignificant player in deliberate abuse. Although a couple of incidents of being caught in the cross fire are mentioned ('NRA rocket launcher blew 3 people to death' (Dyere Tek - f), 'UPDF troops hit and shattered our house' (Kweyo - m), 'UPDF killed a boy bathing at Geyo centre' (Koch - m)), the vast majority of personal experiences in this year relate to LRA activities.

'Two of my children were rescued from LRA by UPDF' (Pabo - m), 'My brother was killed in the camp' (Pabo), 'LRA abducted and killed five people from my home, also burning 7 huts; I took refuge in town' (Lukome - f), 'LRA tortured me, leading me to move to town' (Lukome - f), 'My son was abducted for one month by the LRA' (Lukome - f), 'My house was set alight while I was inside, but I was rescued by one of them (rebels)' (Lukome - f).

The LRA '...burnt all my huts and took all my goats and chickens' (trad healers), '...camped at my home in Ongako, killed and ate goats, uprooted cassava' (Koch - m), '...killed my pregnant daughter' (Odek - f), '...looted everything' (GDA - f).

Others described how 'my properties were destroyed by LRA' (Odek - f), 'My nephew and six other students were killed by LRA in Ongako' (GDA - m), 'My brother, his wife and children were abducted by LRA and forced to witness murder' (GDA - f), 'We were ambushed at Alero by the LRA, one died' (GDA - f), 'we were ambushed, some died, some were injured' (GDA - f), 'My hut was burnt, I got my passport' (Pabo - m), 'Our homestead was burnt down, killing people' (Agonga - f), 'there was displacement due to fighting' (Agonga), 'I was hit by a landmine while riding a bicycle' (Kweyo - m)

As in 1991, there were signs of public protest, with "Peace prayers (Agonga), Peace prayer and march in Gulu' (GDA - f), and the 'Rwodi Moo (anointed chiefs) performed rituals to cleanse the district' (Agonga). The killing of the two elders, however, discouraged many from taking such initiative.

1997

By this time the nature of the Uganda-Sudan relationship was increasingly clear: One woman described 'broken relations between governments of Sudan and Uganda' (Odek - f), another how 'Sudan accused Uganda of hosting rebels' (f). The traditional healers were aware that 'Ugandan troops went to Sudan to fight (the LRA) rebels, and many UPDF were killed' (Lukome, trad healers, Koch Goma, Odek). Others talked of 'a border war between Uganda and Sudan' (GDA), and others of how 'the NRA brought Dinka/SPLA to Gulu, they planted landmines at Bibia'. 'The SPLA were hosted and seen in Gulu town (Garang himself and various vehicles)' (f)

Some respondents believed that Parliament discussed a blanket amnesty for the rebels (f), and a 'Presidential amnesty began' (trad healers). At the same time, the Allied Democratic Front (ADF) began to be active in Western Uganda (f). The diaspora organised the first *Kacokke Madit*, or 'big meeting' of the Acholi diaspora, which took place in London (Agonga, GDA). Universal Primary Education was introduced, and a woman leader elected (Pabo - f). 'Privatisation of markets made access difficult and

increase poverty levels' Odek - f). 'Five buses were ambushed on Kampala-Pakwach Road' (GDA).

Within the district, 'forced movement to camps' continued (Agonga, Odek - f) and 'people were hosted in camps following Government directive' (Lukome - m). Two public figures were killed, the Bishop of Kitgum's wife by a landmine (GDA), and the Assistant RDC for Kitgum who 'was killed on Kalongo-Kitgum road by rebels' (GDA)

'Everybody was now living in camps' (Pabo - m), 'rebel activities had affected crop production' (Pabo - m), there was 'severe food shortage (Lukome - f), and increasingly 'low morals of children, especially girls, due to displacement'. The 'abject poverty made it easy for UPDF to persuade girls to become camp followers' (Agonga).

Tensions between civilians and army were worsened by the 'UPDF Divisional Commander scorning Acholi people' (Lukome - m), and the stoning of three boys in front of Gulu market by the UPDF and a mob instigated by Major Sula Semakula (GDA). Other incidents include the 'UPDF shot dead a man who failed to give them money they demand' (f), 'UPDF fired heavy guns at our village, killing two women, injuring many others' (Lapainat - f), 'Helicopter gunships bombed Lukwo, destroying many homesteads' (Odek - f). As in earlier years, our respondents had their own personal experiences: 'I was hurt in the hip by a UPDF bomb (wg - f), 'My brother-in-law was shot dead in the market place by the UPDF (wg - f), 'UPDF shot my son dead' (Lukome - m), 'UPDF tortured me and robbed my properties' (Pageya - m).

LRA atrocities continued as before: 'LRA burnt 82 IDP huts in Limo, 13 year old girls burnt to death' (wg - Kweyo - f), 'LRA burn 99 huts in Go-down, Layibi' (f), 'burning of vehicles' (Pabo - m), 'LRA abduction of children intensifies' (Lapainat - f), '9 children abducted (1 girl, 8 boys: 7 of the boys return, the other one killed' (f), '11 boys killed by LRA and displayed along Kampala-Gulu road' (trad healers), 'LRA set landmines in Awere, kill 1, injure 1 (f). One of several prohibitions, the 'riding of bicycles', was made known by the LRA (Agonga).

LRA killed 3 men (f), 'LRA killed civilians' (Pabo - m), '9 civilians captured from town by LRA, killed at Koro on the railway line' (Lapainat - f), 'mentally deranged children coming back from captivity by LRA' (Lukome - m), 'LRA burnt many huts at Laliya, one blind man and one child burnt alive inside' (trad healers), 'LRA killed two men while hunting (Koch - m), 'LRA killed 4 people from Nyamoloko in Kal parish (Koch - m) vs. LRA killed 7 at Nyamoloko (Koch - m), 'LRA abducted from Gulu town; 3 killed, 3 return, 2 not back to date (Dyere Tek - m), '36 people killed in Lokung, some injured, some never return' (Dyere Tek - f)

Direct personal experiences of this violence were many: 'My cousin was abducted and killed by LRA (Kweyo - m), 'Rebels cooked at my place and looted my properties completely (Lapainat - f). The LRA '...abducted 3 of my children (trad healers), '...came and killed 2 of my children (Pabo - m), '...looted my home four times and beat me with pangas (Odek - m), '...abducted 2 of my daughters, they are still missing (Odek - m), '...prodded a stick up my private parts and abducted my son; he is now back but weak (Odek - f), '...abducted and killed my 20 year old son (Odek - f)

This context of severe violence, had numerous negative spin-offs: 'Organised robbers looted properties' (Odek - f), 'My brother was abducted by armed robbers. He escaped but the robbers returned and looted our home' (Kweyo - m), 'Unknown gunmen tortured me until I was unconscious' (GDA - f), 'children playing with a bomb died when it exploded' (Lapainat - f).

The obvious response was to move: 'I took refuge in town' (Lapainat - f), 'we were displaced to town due to UPDF-LRA fighting' (Lukome - m), 'Displaced to town for fear of LRA' (GDA - f)

There were some positive activities by NGOs and others: 'GUSCO started to look after traumatised children (Lapainat - f), alongside World Vision', 'Rwodi Moo from Kitgum came to Gulu (at Cuk pa Cenyjere) and tried to organise for peace talks with LRA' (Lapainat - f), 'Women of Pabo received loans and cows (Pabo - m). On the other hand 'relief food was contaminated with broken bottles, people's teeth and bones' (Lukome - m) - (*this actually seems to have happened the following year in 1998*).

1998

People's memories of national events were very clear for this year. Nearly all respondents mentioned that the Government of Uganda sent soldiers to fight in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and were aware of ADF activities in Kasese (trad healers), as well as the massacre of students in Kichwamba technical institute (Kweyo, GDA).

The relationship with Sudan had high profile, notably the fact that the 'UPDF attempted to seal the Sudan border' (Agonga) and 'invaded Sudan' (Odek), and that 'Madeleine Albright's visit promised support to Uganda against Sudan' (GDA). The Sudanese were said to have bombed Pakelle, Adjumani and Moyo (Kweyo, Koch, Odek, Agonga). People were aware that after the Nairobi bombings the 'bomb threat lead to closure of US and UK embassies (in Kampala)' (Lukome - m), and people also recalled how a 'UPDF helicopter was shot down by the LRA' (Kweyo).

The sense of insecurity at a national level was highlighted by the fact that the Bishop of Moyo was killed on the Gulu-Adjumani road (wg - f), that there were 'time-bomb blasts in buses (Kweyo, Lukome, Odek), and the conduct of *panda gari* (operations in which people are rounded up and screened in an attempt to identify rebels/bandits/terrorists etc.) in both Gulu and Kampala (GDA).

The passing of a new land bill was clearly also cause for concern: One woman argued that 'land has been removed from the owners, anybody can buy it and now the original owners have no rights' (Odek - f). One woman also referred to an 'outbreak of cholera in most districts' (Wg - f)

The importance of the diaspora initiative to convene a meeting (*Kacokke Madit*) in London is evident in the fact that four of the groups made specific mention of it, and were aware of who had attended from the district (Agonga, Lukome, Dyere Tek, GDA).

At a district level, 'people were displaced in search of relative security' (Agonga), and 'many people were forced to camps, though there was no security there. There was land shortage and lack of facilities' (Odek - m). 'Most schools were displaced to Gulu town' (Odek - m), and 'few Primary 7 leavers passed their exams' (Pabo - m), and 'poverty levels went up' (Odek - m). There continued to be 'many landmines and maimings' (Odek - f), 'ongoing ambush of vehicles (Odek - f), and 'organised robbery in Gulu town, with a teacher killed' (Odek - f).

Although there was 'WFP aid to camps' (Pabo, Dyere Tek), and 'WFP support to orphans at centre in Pece' (trad healers), there were also allegations that 'WFP food relief was mixed with ground glass, killing 9 people' (Kweyo). While one group talked of 'new projects being initiated' (dyere Tek - f), including the distribution of dairy cows, people in Odek reported that there were 'no developmental activities' (Odek - m).

The 'election of local councillors (LCs) from I-V' was noted by many (Pabo, Lapainat, trad healers), as were tensions between the LCV and the MP for Gulu Municipality, Norbert Mao (Odek - m). The consecration of the new Anglican Bishop for Gulu, Bishop Onono Onweng (GDA), was followed by *Bedo Piny pi Kuc* (sit down for peace)(GDA - f), the first meeting convened by the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative. There was also a campaign of 'Northern Spiritual Warfare by Christian Organisations' (GDA - f).

The Government came in for criticism, notably the fact that 'Presidential adviser Kakooza arrested, tortured and took people to Luzira prison' (Koch - m) - and that 'they have not yet returned' (Dyere Tek - m).

The UPDF was reported to have 'shot people at a funeral; 2 died, others were wounded' (wg), to have 'forcibly recruited people' (Lukome - m), and to have ambushed the ICRC when they were 'trying to collect Aboke girls - their (ICRC's) operations were subsequently suspended for several months' (GDA). In addition to recruitment into the UPDF, there were also reports of recruitment into the LDUs/Homeguards (GDA).

At a district level the LRA were reported to have 'shot a vehicle and medical staff died' (wg - f), 'killed many young and old people in Pabo camp' (Lapainat - f), carried out an 'ambush on Karuma road, in which many died and were injured' (Kweyo), intensified the abduction of children (Lapainat - f), 'set several vehicles ablaze' (Kweyo), 'looted Oringa Latigo's house' (Kweyo), and 'attempted to enter Gulu Barracks (2 NRA, 6 LRA killed)' (Odek - f).

In their communities, respondents reported that 'UPDF forced us to camps' (Odek - m), and that 'after the LRA had passed through the UPDF destroyed tobacco which was being fire-cured, as well as other properties' (wg - f). It was reported that 'in Lamola/Paloro parishes many civilians were killed by rockets from UPDF mamba as they were going to market' (Odek - f), and the 'recruitment of Home Guards' (GDA) was also mentioned.

There was no respite from LRA activities with '7 boys were abducted by LRA, 2 returned (wg - f), 'LRA looted dispensary' (wg - f), 'LRA shot two boys but they

survived' (wg - f), 'LRA looted properties of civilians at funeral rites' (f), '3 men were killed by LRA in Orom' (Koch - f), 'LRA attacked the camp killing 4 people' (Koch - m), 'LRA arrested people who later died of cholera' (dyere Tek - f), 'male and female youth were abducted but returned after one week' (Kweyo)

On a positive note, '3 abductees surrendered and handed over to UPDF' (dyere Tek - m), there was 'high food production' in Pabo, and one of the groups benefited from '3 cows given by NASARO, and government assistance with 'school fees for orphans' (Lapainat - f)

However, individuals continued to experience serious abuse at the hands of the army: 'UPDF killed my brother while he was harvesting honey from beehive' (Odek - m), 'NRA uprooted and took all the food from my cassava garden' (Odek - f), 'UPDF took all my food but also destroyed my home, I am now displaced' (Odek - f), '8 UPDF soldiers raped a woman in Laliya' (f).

The LRA was responsible for very extensive abuse: 'LRA took two of my sons, they're still in captivity' (f), '...killed my son' (trad healers), '...killed my father as he was attending some funeral rites' (f), '...injured a visitor at my house' (Dyere Tek - f), '...looted our home and abducted one sister to carry; she was later released' (Kweyo), '...looted cooking utensils from my home' (Lapainat - f).

Others told of how 'I was abducted for one week by LRA' (Agonga - m), 'my properties were looted and I was tortured by LRA (Lapainat - f), 'I was robbed by LRA' (Lukome - m), as above (robbed by LRA - Lukome - m), 'I was seriously beaten by LRA, they took my money' (trad healers), '2 men were killed by LRA while hunting' (Koch - f), 'my auntie was abducted to carry food for LRA for 2 days' (GDA - m), 'one of my sons was abducted from SSS, the other killed' (Odek), 'my brother's son was abducted by LRA, and is not yet back (Odek - f), 'my brother-in-law was abducted by LRA, taken to Sudan where he died' (GDA - f), 'my brother was killed, his private parts were cut off and put in his mouth by the LRA in Bobi' (Odek - f).

Early 1999

As the research was conducted in February 1999, little of note was reported at a national level, though the 'LRA fought with Karamajong in Kotido' (trad healers), the 'ADF killed five in Kasese' (trad healers), and the 'implementation of the Land Bill by the district land board is now leaving landlords without power or authority over their land' (Odek - m)

Nevertheless, by mid-February much had already happened within the district. There had been a vehicle ambush on Anaka road (Lapainat - GDA), the former LCV vice-chairman had been ambushed on Koch Goma road (dyere Tek), and another 'vehicle was shot/ambushed by LRA in Wiayago river' (wg - f). 'Houses burnt in Pabo (70), Anaka (50), Parabongo (6 - wg - trad healers). *Mchaka-mchaka* political education was organised throughout the district (involving LCIII-IV at Awac, Pabo, DFI - Pabo - m), with the UPDF involved at the training held at District Farm Institute (Dyere Tek).

A grenade had killed 2, and injured 4 (Dyere Tek), drunk NRA soldiers had fired guns and killed (Dyere Tek), 2 hunters were killed at Orum on 3 February 1999, and the LCV and the MP for Gulu Municipality were engaged in a 'war of words' (GDA)

Within their home communities respondents had experienced the following in the first six weeks of the year: 'In February LRA abducted one girl and looted items' (f), '2 boys were killed by LRA while hunting' (Koch - m), 'a vehicle was ambushed in Amar and people injured by LRA' (Koch - m). The LRA '...entered the camp and killed one during disco' (Koch - m), '...broke into houses in Pece, abducted one woman' (Dyere Tek), '...abducted 36 boys (5 now back)' (Odek - m), '...abducted 9 boys (8 now back)' (Odek - m). In January 30 youth were abducted (including 2 girls) from Palaro parish. 3 of the boys killed, the rest are now in GUSCO (Odek - f), '5 boys were abducted, only one has returned to date' (Kweyo), 'Four children were blown up by landmines' (GDA), '6 children of LCs played with live grenades; four died, 2 were injured' (Lapainat - f). LCIII of Ongako had three of his children hurt by grenade which exploded while they were playing with it (Koch - m)

In terms of direct personal experiences over the first few weeks of the year, one woman recounted how the 'UPDF rescued my brother from LRA' (Lapainat - f), another how the 'UPDF burnt 5 huts' (wg - f) another how 'four LRA came to my home and tortured me'. The LRA were reported to have 'abducted seven children (1 girl, six boys), the girl returned after 2 weeks' (wg - f), '...taken 20 goats' (wg - f), 'abducted 2 of my sister's children' (wg - f), 'shot dead a catechist and his wife' (wg - f), (Lapainat - f), '...abducted my brother's son and he was shot in the arm which has since been amputated' (f), '...abducted my brother, he was later rescued by UPDF' (GDA), 'my brother-in-law and his two sons were abducted by LRA, they are not yet back' (Odek - f)

One man recounted how 'my child got burnt in *alup* while sleeping in the bush' (Koch - m). *Alup* is a rough shelter constructed in the bush and known only to the person who constructed it. This is where s/he will take refuge with children when there is risk of rebel abductions/attacks. They are usually no more than a hole in the ground covered with sticks and grass.

Mid-late 1999

The violence of the first weeks of the year died down and was for some months restricted to isolated incidents. Numerous NGOs appeared on the scene, notably Red Barnet which received large-scale funding from the USAID to work on issues related to abducted children. Many people tentatively re-settled in their original areas, though keeping their houses in the protected villages. Fallow areas were re-opened and reasonable harvests were made.

The Carter Centre was involved in very hush-hush behind the scenes diplomacy which resulted in the signing of a peace agreement on the 8 December between Museveni and Bashir of Sudan. The long called for amnesty bill was finally passed by parliament to come into force in December, though no structures were set in place before the commencement of the six month bill. On 22 December the LRA re-entered the country and moved southwards, attacking Gulu on 28 December, with no apparent resistance from the army. The roads leading out of Gulu were closed to traffic, and several vehicles which tried to use them were ambushed and blown up.

Lessons: the dynamics of war & peace

- 1) For people living in a war zone there is no one 'enemy'; all the parties to this war have been 'enemies' at one time or another, and many civilians have been involved in one or other of the groupings
- 2) The internalisation of blame (e.g. Langi blame Acholi for abduction of Aboke girls) is an important factor in the escalation of the scale of conflict
- 3) Peace processes which seek to identify and focus on one 'enemy' are doomed to failure (e.g. peace agreement with UPDA in 1988, Carter Centre brokered peace agreement between Sudan and Uganda Governments in December 1999)
- 4) The mis-representation of a situation (e.g. as 'banditry', 'intra-ethnic conflict', 'internal war' etc.) contributes to the development of inappropriate and inadequate peace and reconciliation initiatives which are highly liable to failure
- 5) Peace processes which fail can unleash greater levels of violence and brutality than what has gone before

Lessons: People's experiences of and knowledge of their situation

- 1) Ordinary civilians are in many respects the 'experts' of their situation. You cannot pull the wool over their eyes, even if access to media is blocked and media coverage is distorted
- 2) In this conflict there is little visible differentiation between the impact on women and men: looting, burning, killing, rape have affected both. There are few statements which support gender stereotypes, and it is noticeable that women appear as well versed in the politics of the situation as men
- 3) You cannot expect people to simply forget: fourteen years is too short a time to forget the loss of relatives, the elimination of your asset base, or the experience of rape
- 4) These memories should not be ignored. They are of relevance to the future prospects of the war zone, whether in terms of individual actions, or providing the basis for broader political mobilisation
- 5) Although people are in many respects the experts of their situation, war appears to reinforce various patterns which militate against the use of that expertise:
 - One is to seek to blame immediate neighbours (e.g. the Langi and Madi blamed the Acholi for the abduction of the Aboke girls in 1996, and the ambush of bushes on the Pakwach road), resulting in an escalation of the scale of the war's impact
 - Another is to accept the internalisation of blame as identified by people from outside the war zone, resulting in a failure to deal with the broader issues (e.g. elders who are led to believe they may be able to end the war by talking their sons out of the bush)
 - A third is a tendency to unrealistic optimism on the grounds of very little evidence (e.g. 'the best Christmas of the war was in 1993 when people thought peace was around the corner'), and this is easily played upon for short-term political gain (e.g. mid 1999 WFP told people it was safe to 'go home' and the NRM claimed credit for having brought peace)

Policy Recommendations

1. Get a clear picture:

The most important policy implication is that reconciliation and peace processes require very thorough identification of the actors who have been involved and implicated over the course of the conflict. This means both inside the immediate war zone, and within the conflict situation as a whole. It is very easy and quick to get a deep and accurate picture of the dynamics of a conflict using the methods outlined. Although there may be a few cases of 'double counting', if one group mentions an incident as happening in one year while another remembers it as happening later or earlier, this is rare and easily corrected.

2. Identify the actors of the past as well as the present:

You cannot deal simply with the immediately obvious 'perpetrators' or 'rebels' at the time a peace deal is signed, you have to recognise the history which has gone before, and which continues to live in peoples' minds. Although at the time of a 'peace-building' intervention there may be one obvious group to be negotiated with (in this case the LRA), the history people have gone through means that there is a far broader range of actors who have to be integrated into our vision of reconciliation.

In this case, it is evident that, even if they are now 'history', UPDA and NRA atrocities have to be acknowledged and addressed if people are to have peace of mind as well as peace in their daily lives.

3. Acknowledge and address external as well as internal actors:

External actors have to be acknowledged and addressed to avoid dissonance between what people know from their own observations, and what they are told by media and politicians - dissonance which can only sow the seeds of future conflict. It is also essential for appropriate NGO interventions - particularly for NGOs which are tempted to engage in 'peace education' of the kind which assumes that people need to learn how to be peaceful. In doing so, such activities effectively seek to turn victims into perpetrators, which is of benefit only to the real perpetrators from whom attention is thereby diverted.