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MURDER UNDER A MANGO TREE

Memorializing the 1996 Massacre at Parabongo Primary School

Field Report Series II, July 2017

Jenna S. Gleave and Lino Owor Ogora

Images by Lino Owor Ogora. Cover design by Jenna S. Gleave.

Front Cover: Memorial for the massacred at Parabongo Primary School.

Back Cover: Survivors group members.

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Murder under a Mango Tree: Memorializing the 1996 Massacre at Parabongo Primary School.

July 2017

Jenna S. Gleave and Lino Owor Ogora.

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Chapter One: Introduction.

The urge to honour the dead and remember violent struggles is as prevalent as the impulse to try to repress terrible memories and move on. (USIP, 2007)¹

The Great Lakes Region, encompassing Uganda, has played host to numerous conflicts throughout the 20th Century, and indeed before. Most notably, however, is the period following President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's rise to power in 1986 and the subsequent emergence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Two decades of conflict ensued with over 1.8 million civilians displaced into camps, forceful abductions of tens of thousands, countless human right violations and inexplicable attacks predominantly aimed towards the Acholi people.

Since 2006, when the LRA retreated from Uganda and into other Central African areas, Northern Uganda has been an area of relative peace. The nation has begun to recoup in terms of economic development, having been repeatedly hit with conflict, and the IDP camps disassembled. From the outside looking in, substantial progress has been achieved all round and, in many respects, this is true.

However, in the North, the effects of the war are systemic and remain visible within all aspects of life, even to this day. From psychological well-being, a sense of abandonment and injustice, interruptions to culture and social values through to financial constraints as a direct result of the conflict. Such battle scars are profound in villages directly targeted by the LRA, including Parabongo, on which this report focuses.

On July 28th 1996, the communities situated around Parabongo suffered at the hands of the LRA. A massacre killing 22 men at the local primary school - along with the burning of homes and numerous beatings and abductions - destroyed not only the lives of those who died, but those of the survivors left behind to deal with the aftermath of such devastation. In recent years, survivors have been largely unsupported in reconciling as a community and moving forward with their individual lives.

Over May and June 2017, members of the Foundation for Justice and Development Initiatives (FJDI) research team interacted with the survivors who were present during the attack, with the aim of recounting the massacre, and the years which ensued, into the first known formal narrative.

This report seeks to provide a survivor-led account of the atrocities alongside identification of the long-term impacts and challenges to recovery.

¹ ¹ "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice." USIP, 2007.

1.1. Justification

The justification for this report comes from the lack of an official narrative about the atrocities which took place at Parabongo Primary School. Communications with affected communities throughout FJDI's work – along with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – have repeatedly exposed a sense of abandonment and injustice, halting transitional justice and development.

This report presents the first known formal documentation of the atrocities which occurred in Parabongo. Twenty-one years on, it aims to provide the most detailed and accurate account of the events which unfolded on July 28th, as well as the days running up to the massacre and the years which followed, as possible.

Understanding specific atrocities from the survivor's perspective is imperative to community healing. As put by USIP (United States Institute of Peace, 2007): "The urge to honour the dead and remember violent struggles is as prevalent as the impulse to try to repress terrible memories and move on."² In other words, effective memorialisation is required for the survivors to unite and form coping mechanisms which promote reconciliation and social reconstruction.

Documentation assists effective memorialisation by providing a written memorandum for the survivors and future generations. In addition, documentation may potentially identify the long-term effects of conflict and the gaps which prevent communities from achieving reconciliation. Said stories, analyses and recommendations may also be applicable to other communities who are seeking redress.

1.2. Objectives

The primary purpose of this report is, as previously mentioned, to provide formal documentation of the 1996 Parabongo Massacre. More specifically, it aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Provide a detailed survivor-led account of the atrocities which occurred on the 28th July 1996 and of the days prior to and following the massacre.
2. From the data collected, identify the long-term impact of the LRA's attack on Parabongo.
3. Demonstrate the most and least effective methods of redress already implemented.
4. Identify the gaps still in existence preventing social reconstruction and reconciliation.

In addition, the writer and FJDI hope this document will (a) go some way to helping the community unite once more following the tragedy and (b) benefit the wider community, conflict-affected regions elsewhere and

² "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice." USIP, 2007.

'foreigners' by highlighting the importance of effective memorialisation and transitional justice.

1.3. Methodology

Having previously worked with the community in Parabongo, the FDJI team became aware of the constraints imposed by a lack of official documentation and proceeded to work towards this. A team of five from FDJI and the external analyst/report writer communicated to form a sample interview guide and discuss the process prior to conducting any interviews.

The interviews took place over the week commencing 7th May 2017, and consisted of two focus group discussions and thirty one-to-one interviews with victim's relatives and witnesses. Four team members were a part of this data gathering process. The interviews were then transcribed, translated and passed over, along with photographs taken by the team, to the analyst.

From here the data was coded using QDA miner software and qualitative analysis - loosely based on grounded theory - was conducted, providing several patterns and themes throughout. This process was also applied to form the most accurate timeline of events from the massacre from the details provided by survivors and witnesses. Finally, the report was constructed using the findings outlined in the analysis process.



FIGURE 1: FDJI RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.

Chapter Two: Background.

While it is nigh-on impossible to trace the exact roots of the LRA as an independent rebel movement, it is generally accepted to have emerged in response to Museveni's NRA (now UPDF) taking control in Kampala in 1986/87. Disillusioned and fearing further marginalisation, remnants of the Ugandan Army in the North retreated, forming rebel movements including the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). Upon their defeat, Alice

Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement paved the way for further resistance. Claiming to channel the spirit of Lakwena and have received instruction from God to seek restoration of the Ten Holy Commandments, the Holy Spirit Movement was able to ally with disgruntled soldiers from other rebel factions, forming a sizable force as it pushed towards Kampala. Suffering a number of blows and ultimately defeated, Lakwena fled and the movement began to disintegrate in 1987. The group was revitalised by Joseph Kony - who claims to be a cousin of Lakwena - under the names: Lord's Salvation Army, United Christian Democratic Army before settling in 1992 as the Lord's Resistance Army.

Kony and the LRA received initial support from the Acholi region, who were suffering attrition through NRA government control. This altered after government soldiers conducted 'Operation North' and made headway in reducing LRA numbers. The rebel group accused the Acholi of sharing secrets, labelling them traitors. The respondents from within FJDI interviews claimed the motives of the attacks around Parabongo were because the people were: "despised and needed to be taught a lesson"³, and "had shared with the UPDF the location of landmines"⁴. Reduced and isolated, the LRA set about vindictive attacks across Northern Uganda and neighbouring Sudan - marking the point in time when the LRA became a terror organisation. Lacking in political agenda and intent on wreaking as much fear and violence as possible. Tactics of the LRA included rape, murder and abductions of the civilian population, as well as looting, burning and destroying property.

The LRA had excellent geographical knowledge of the Northern Uganda region and comprehensive bush survival skills. As such, they were able to operate, conducting the aforementioned crimes against local people, mostly undetected by the UPDF before it was too late.

In response, the government set about creating a system of containment camps - 'protected villages' - which served as safety and security measures for the local populations but also to isolate guerrillas from potential support in the locality. The system was far from perfect, however, as many villages were left unprotected and vulnerable to LRA attacks - including those at Parabongo.

At the time of July 1996, residents around Parabongo were largely aware of the presence of LRA in the hills of Guruguru. Almost all respondents claim not to have known who the commander of the rebels (for the atrocities at Parabongo) was, but believe them to have been acting under the direct instruction of Otti Vincent - who they say was stationed at Guruguru.⁵

³ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

⁴ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

⁵ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

Chapter Three: The Atrocities in Parabongo

3.1. 26th and 27th July 1996: The LRA issue a warning

On 26th of July, a letter was dropped by the rebels insisting all residents were to remain at least 2 kilometres away from the main road as the LRA carried out their operations. Residents at the time “did not pay much attention, thinking the letter may have been a joke.”⁶

This was followed, on the morning of the 27th July 1996, by the rebels approaching those digging ‘too close’ to the main road. The rebels claimed residents were stubborn and had refused to listen to their requests to stay clear of the main road. They believed the community had been informing UPDF soldiers of the locations of land mines and other operations.

“It was on the morning of 27th July 1996 about 10:00am when the rebels came and found us digging. [...] The rebels then said they had been warning us and all the people to stay far away from the main road, like two miles away, but everyone seems to pay to them a deaf ear and so today they will teach the people a lesson.”⁷

“They claimed that the people at the main road were collaborators of the government. They would inform the UPDF whenever they saw rebels around and also report when the rebels planted the landmines that was meant to hit the government soldiers.”⁸

“They always said they didn’t want people by the main road side because they wanted to plant landmines to hit the army and the civilians would see and inform the soldiers so it wouldn’t hit them. That’s why they decided to attack the people because of their role in the conflict.”⁹

At this point, the rebels’ threats were not realised. With some heading to aid an ambush further along the main road, and others returning in the direction of the hills at Guruguru, the rebels dispersed without harming any residents. Nonetheless, many of those who were ‘warned’ in the encounter certainly felt the weight of the rebel’s threats, with some choosing to sleep in the bush away from the village:

“[Myself and my brother] slept in different places that night even after I insisted that we sleep together in the bush. [...] He and [the person he was staying with] were

captured and then killed at the massacre ground the next morning.”

3.2. The Night of 27th July 1996: Rebels return and commence their attack.

“I and my husband were still outside while the children were inside the house. We then saw fire burning at the nearby homes and this intensified. I then called my children to come out and see the fire and as they came out we heard the rebels talking at my neighbour’s home. They asked whether he was inside and when he replied yes, they just set the house on fire and that neighbour escaped the fire through the window. That whole night the rebels kept on killing, burning houses and destroying property.”¹⁰



From approximately 8 pm on the 27th July 1996, rebels began to return to the villages in groups of 8-12.¹¹ Pressing forward toward Parabongo trading centre, the rebels set about lighting homes on fire, beating residents, making abductions, and arresting the ‘stubborn’ male population.

The precise number of rebels is not fully

defined, though the average of estimates provided by respondents indicate somewhere between 3 and 5 groups of 8-12 rebels were present. Their composition was predominantly male, though there were also female soldiers reportedly present, and while some were armed and in uniform, others were unarmed and wearing civilian attire.

One of the first villages to be under attack was Katikati. Rebel soldiers in the group to arrive here entered the compound to find one respondent and her family sitting out by their fire. The respondent recalls her experience:

“The rebels entered our compound while we were all still out. They found me, my husband, my older son and one of my brothers seated out. Immediately, they arrested these three men and laid them on the ground in a straight line. They came along with an axe, which they used for beating their heads.”

⁶ Individual interview respondent, Agwayugi, 8th May, 2017.

⁷ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

⁸ Individual interview respondent, Agwayugi, 8th May, 2017.

⁹ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

¹⁰ Interview with respondent, Agwayugi, 10th May 2017.

¹¹ Estimated using average recollections of the witnesses, FJDI, 2017.

My son was beaten once but he quickly got up and started running to the bush. One rebel soldier started chasing him but fortunately the rebel knocked his leg with a log and he fell. That is how my son survived. [...] The next morning, we found him in the bush and rushed him to hospital because he had obtained a big cut on his head from the axe.

The other [men] were beaten until they died on the spot. One of the rebels beat me on the chest with the axe but some of them stopped him and ordered me to enter the house and not to come out. With fear and pain [...] I entered my house and stayed inside unable to sleep.”¹²

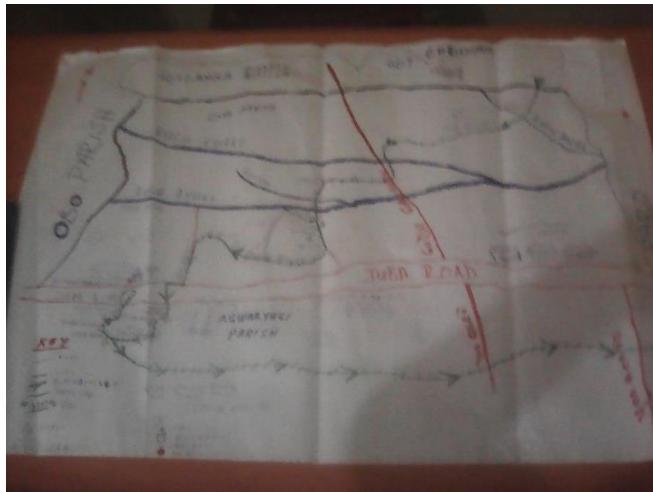


FIGURE 2: THE HAND DRAWN MAP CREATED BY RESIDENTS WITH SUPPORT FROM FJDI. THE MAP SHOWS THAT REBEL MOVEMENTS COVERED A LARGE STRETCH, OVER MANY VILLAGES, ALONG THE JUBA ROAD BEFORE REACHING PARABONGO PRIMARY SCHOOL.

From Kati Kati, the rebels proceeded Eastward using flashlights to navigate their way in the dark, and in some instances taking people from the villages to help direct them. As they headed closer to the trading centre, rebels continued attacking and abducting as they passed through surrounding villages including Agwayugi, Apyee, Ojwayo, Yilu and Odur.¹³

By the time rebels reached Agwayugi and Odur, they were in full force and residents had begun to realise there was an attack going on. Alerted, many residents around Parabongo fled into the Bush for the rest of the night. Respondents frequently attest that this proved to be the only reason they managed to survive the atrocities.

“My father warned that he had got information that there were some unknown soldiers on the side of Pabo. Immediately we decided to go and sleep in the bush. When we ran into the bush to take cover, we left him at

home and didn’t know what was going on at home. Our father was abducted while we were in the bush.”¹⁴

For the witnesses who did not make it to the bush, the early hours of the following morning were plagued with fear and brutality. They watched helplessly – if they avoided harm themselves – as loved ones were arrested or beaten, children left alone and afraid as their parents were taken, and property, belongings and livestock were burned.

“We were in the nearby village away from the road side because that time rebels did not want people near the road. Just after our evening supper we slept off. That same night our grandfather came and woke us up and as we came out there was fire everywhere. On our coming out we only saw the rebels and so many other people whom they had captured [...] while the children were running up and down with nowhere to go and no one to direct them - their parents were all captured by the rebels.

The rebels continued beating women, killing people and burning houses. They burnt goats and chicken as they killed men but women and children they did not kill.

[...] All our clothes, Jerry can, plates, cups and everything in the house were burnt. We had to start from scratch. These rebels came from the western direction of Parabongo and gathered people from the extreme ends of Parabongo and that night it was raining so it was hard to hear anything happening outside. When they had gathered us together, they were talking to us while beating and killing others. They were saying that we were strong hearted to still stay around even after their warning and in all their operations.”¹⁵

During the raids, women, children and some of the elderly residents were ordered to return inside their houses “otherwise they would see”¹⁶ and often promised their loved ones would return after helping to direct the rebels. Hoping this to be true, and through sheer panic, they did as they were told and hid. It would be the following morning when news began to spread.

¹² Interview with respondent, Kati Kati, 10th May 2017.

¹³ This information was established in an FJDI workshop with residents, July 2017.

¹⁴ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

¹⁵ Individual interview respondent, Agwayugi, 8th May, 2017.

¹⁶ Interview with respondent. CHECK CODES.

3.3. The Early Hours of 28th July 1996: Arrested civilians are taken to the school.

"They came and gathered at the home of [a resident in Agwayugi] where they gathered all the people that they had abducted. From there, they brought all the prisoners to the school.

*They talked and warned that these people were being stubborn because they refused to leave the main road."*¹⁷

For the remainder of the early hours, from approximately 2-4 am, the rebels rounded up all the remaining men they could find. The detainees were made to remove their shirts - which were then used to tie their hands behind their backs - and tied together with the others using one long rope. The men were then marched to the primary school grounds. One witness shared the fate of his brother, who was arrested by the rebels:

*"After moving to all the villages, my brother was then added to those who were tied and they all headed to Parabongo primary school. That was the last time I saw my brother. As they went to Parabongo primary school, my brother tried escaping but they chased him and he was caught. He was then brought back to be an example to those who were still thinking of escaping. My brother slaughtered as all the others watched. We found his neck cut so deep."*¹⁸

At the school, the detainees were ordered to lie face down on the ground underneath a mango tree.

With their hands tied behind their backs, still linked together by the one rope, the rebels cut branches from the trees.

One by one, the victim's received multiple blows to the heads from the rebels; repeatedly hit over and over with brute force, until their skulls were smashed to the extent the victims no longer resembled their former selves.

A respondent, who was hiding out in the bush, recalls hearing sounds of "pounding and splitting fire wood" but was not sure at the time what it was.¹⁹ Another could hear what he described as "people being beaten with very big sticks, even from where we were hiding."²⁰

The rebels are said to have had a young girl direct them towards the primary school, who would have been present during (though not necessarily directly witnessing) the attack. After the massacre, the rebels requested the girl to collect water for them. They then

WOMEN & CHILDREN

Rebels typically spared women and children from death. However, reports of women being tortured, beaten, abducted and generally traumatised were widespread.

One woman recalls:

"Women were not killed. Only men were being killed and as for the women, the LRA soldiers were beating the private parts of women. [...] One woman [suffered] a miscarriage due to severe beating."

Children were far from protected either, many were left fatherless, orphaned and/or abducted. Their futures were bleak emotionally, they were traumatised.

In addition, a respondent highlighted the impact of sexual and gender based violence in conflict:

"Many of the women here were infected with HIV/AIDS. As I talk now this whole community has [...] AIDS victims as a result of this rebel activity. [...] They also raped women and abducted so many as they moved from one place to another. Also locking the private parts of women using padlocks [...]."

Due to the loss of (primarily) males, the women were forced to adapt to new pressures as conflict undermined the social fabric on which the community was built.

¹⁷ Interview with respondent, Agwayugi, 8th May, 2017.

¹⁸ Interview with respondent, Yilu, 10th May, 2017.

¹⁹ Interview with respondent, Agwayugi, 9th May, 2017.

²⁰ Interview with respondent, Yilu, 10th May, 2017.

washed their hands, released the girl and mostly began to disperse around 5 am. The witness returned home, informing her village of the massacre at the school.²¹²²

3.4. The Morning, 28th July 1996: The massacre site is discovered.

"That day the blood that flooded the place was just like rain water and the smell of fresh blood covered the whole place. [...] If you didn't see what clothes your relative had on before [the abduction], then you would take the whole day to identify which body was his."

*Some families had lost three members of the household and others two etc. and so the best thing to do at that time was not to mourn but carry the dead bodies home very fast and bury them before the rebels came back to kill us."*²³

As morning dawned, news spread quickly to the villages and those who had taken cover in the bush began to hear of the atrocities.



Residents, apprehensive of any rebels still in the vicinity, made their way to the primary school, where they were met by a pool of blood flowing away from the grounds.

Soon enough, they saw the victims of the massacre laying in the same position in which they were killed. Residents and families began the devastating task of trying to identify the victims, sending for others to do the same.

A survivor is found.

As the community frantically tried to identify the victims, find out what had happened and search for the youth still missing, one survivor amongst the twenty-three was found: Oryem Jildo.

*"Jildo was beaten unconscious; the rebels thought all of them were dead. That morning, when people were checking their relatives who were killed, they realised that he was still alive so some men carried him and took him for medical assistance."*²⁴

Jildo had been attacked in the same way as those murdered – beaten on the back of his skull repeatedly

with branches and logs - but somehow his injuries proved non-fatal. When found the following morning, residents immediately took him to hospital for medical assistance. He is, to this day, very affected by the atrocities and the violence inflicted upon him. One of the respondents was Jildo's sister, in an individual interview she informed us:

*"The one person who survived was my brother, Oryem Jildo. When he was beaten he became unconscious, and the rebels thought they were all dead and that is how he survived. Others started carrying the dead people to take them home to be buried. For me, I first took my brother to receive medical assistance, and then I came back to bury those who were killed."*²⁵

The total number of victims is surprisingly disputed in the community, primarily due to the attack affecting numerous villages and the many abductees whose fate was never known. The general consensus is twenty-three to have been arrested and taken to the school - one survivor and twenty-two deaths. However, respondents state this doesn't account for all victims; They argue many were killed after abduction or away from the massacre site - "in places like Katikati, Pabo and Corner Lamogi [...] the actual number of people they killed in these places was not established."²⁶

Reactions are witnessed by rebels

Although most of the rebels had dispersed after the massacre, and headed back into the hills, some remained in the area.

They watched the reactions of the community, prevented some burials, antagonised the bereft, recruited young boys to their cause and even went so far as to gather one village together and lecture them on how to live their lives in a way which would please God.²⁷

One respondent recalled her Mother's fierce response to the rebels:

*"In Coke, while people were mourning their lost ones, the rebels again returned and they asked why people were crying, and my mother answered them, "You are asking why we are crying as if you do not know what you did, you can kill me as well". They then left our compound quietly."*²⁸

3.5. The immediate aftermath.

Burials.

The remainder of the 28th July was characterised by sounds of despair and heartache, with members of the

²¹ Interview with respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

²² Interview with respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

²³ Interview with respondent, Abyee, 9th May 2017.

²⁴ Interview with respondent, Ojwayo, 8th May, 2017.

²⁵ Interview with respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

²⁶ Interview with respondent, Abyee, 9th May 2017.

²⁷ Focus Group Discussion, Parabongo, 10th May, 2017.

²⁸ Interview respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

community attempting to support one another through the trauma of having lost loved ones.

Burials were conducted as quickly - digging only shallow graves - and as quietly as possible as to avoid drawing attention and raising the possibility of the rebels returning.

The Rwot of Parabongo, having found two of his Sons at the massacre ground, described the haste of the burial rituals that morning:

*"I took my two children and went and buried them. We could not mourn because there a rumour that the rebels could still be within. All we did was to wave the olwedo tree [traditional Acholi tree branch used for cleansing] branches to cleanse the area."*²⁹

The burials served the purpose of simply protecting the dead from being left out in the open and exposed to the environment - a desire of the rebels, according to several witnesses.

*"When we took the dead body home for burial, people gathered to mourn and as people gathered, the rebels again came because they had heard people crying. They asked why we were crying but no one gave them an answer. They then stopped us from burying saying that those dead bodies are theirs and should be left to rot just like that. We then stopped the burial process until they had gone far then we resumed but this time no one cried and the graves were made shallow [...] to save time."*³⁰

Any spiritual connections or reconciliation usually gained through burial traditions was not realised due to the haste the community were required to act and under the trauma they had experienced. The burials are estimated to have been completed by around midday³¹ at which point, UPDF soldiers started to arrive in some of the villages.

UPDF soldiers arrive.

*"At that time, the soldiers were very far from here and immediately the rebels left. The soldiers arrived and asked us to show them which route the rebels had taken. Some people were rescued by the soldiers that day but so many did not come back and so many were killed in different places."*³²

Prior to the massacre, Parabongo was not an area protected by stationed UPDF soldiers and at the time, the nearest IDP camps were in Pabo and Awer. At around midday, the UPDF soldiers arrived and confirmed - to those still waiting - that burials could be conducted. Asking for information on the route taken by the rebels, the UPDF soldiers set about following the rebels. Though,

²⁹ Interview with Rwot, Agwayugi, 9th May 2017.

³⁰ Interview with respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

³¹ Interview with respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

³² Interview with respondent, Odur, 10th May, 2017.

the time taken for the soldiers to arrive since rebels dispersed, and their sparse numbers, meant there was little which could be done at this point.

The UPDF urged residents to do what was needed with regards to their lost ones and to move on to somewhere safe; Either one of the other camps, housed together in another village, or - if they could afford to - Gulu town.

Eventually, the government agreed to set up a protected camp at Parabongo and increase the numbers of soldiers, allowing those separated from family or still hiding out in the bush to move back to the area.³³ This was many months later, however, with some of the community hiding out in the bush at Ayugi for up to three months or remaining in the villages, unprotected from continued intimidation.

Continued intimidation and violence from the rebels

*The rebels recorded the voices of those whom they killed and after one week they came back and attacked a place where everyone was gathered for safety. They then played for us the recorded voice of our relatives groaning to death and after they told us that if we don't follow their orders (staying away from the roadside), the same will happen to us.*³⁴

The testimonies presented above, and many of the discussions with witnesses, demonstrates how even the presence of the UPDF does not appear to have been the deterrent one may expect; Prior to the camp opening, in the ensuing days, weeks and months following the massacre, the rebels showed no hesitation in returning to the village, intimidating an already traumatised community. Nor were they entirely safe once the camp was established.

Witnesses spoke freely of interactions with rebels following the massacre, particularly in the focus group discussions. (See below for an excerpt.) The rebels are said to have spoken to the community about how to live in a way which would please God - such as avoiding farming practices on a Sunday. Other recollections included: checking on the activities in the village after the massacre, playing tapes of the murder, forced abductions, planting of landmines which caused further deaths and taking food supplies, which had been distributed by the government.

R3; [in the morning], we took the dead bodies home for burial and the next day, the rebels again came back

³⁴ Interview with respondent, Yilu, 10th May, 2017.

and started abducting, beating and killing people afresh. [...]

R4; after the attack, the rebels left a letter asking everyone to stay far away from the roadside and also that they do not want to see any bicycles in the village or on the roads. [...]

R5; the day after the attack, the rebels gathered people together and started teaching us on how to live in the village. They said we should not go to dig on Sundays since it was a holy day. They also allowed us to get food stuffs that were being distributed by the government simply because they also needed a share of that food being given by the government.

R6; in addition to what [R5] has said, the rebels also told people that they are welcoming young boys to join their force. After their talks, three of our boys willingly joined the rebels and up to now they have not come back.³⁵

Two further witnesses recall post-massacre interactions with the rebels:

"On the 30th July 1996, the rebels then came back again to clear everyone living near the highway to Ayugi swamp. The rebels said they didn't want to see anybody living at a distance of two miles from the main road and this was to apply from Lacor to Biabia and also from Awer to Amuru.

The people then stayed in the swamp for around three months after which the UPDF soldiers took people to the IDP camps. For us, as the community, we stayed in the camp until recently. [2008]

While we were still in the camps, these rebels could still come and attack the camps and take the young men and women even when the camp was guarded by the UPDF soldiers. This also continued even at schools."³⁶

"As we stayed in the camps, the rebels still came to the camps and abducted people and even took away the food given to us by the government."³⁷

Because of continuing attacks, particularly due to increasing abductions, a curfew of 8:00 pm was placed on the community, with no activity outside to take place before 10:00 am.

The changes and restrictions of camp life on the daily activities and social constructs in the community was profound. Simple practices such as digging were previously a means of income generation and self-sufficiency for the people of Parabongo. This was true no more, however, as families became increasingly dependent on food-aid and lost many traditions and cultural practices. In addition, structural family norms were undermined by the loss of male life.

³⁵ Focus Group Discussion, Parabongo, 11th May, 2017.

³⁶ Interview with respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

³⁷ Interview with respondent, Odur, 10th May, 2017.

Chapter Four: Sabina's Story.

Sabina, now 80 years old, told FDJI of her experience and loss through the atrocities which took place in Parabongo, and the conflict more widely. This piece is adapted from her interview.

That evening, I had gone to visit a patient at one of my daughter's home. On my way back, my granddaughter jokingly said, "You grandmom, you really like moving in the night, but one day you will be taken by the rebels!" And I answered her, "Leave me alone, nothing will happen to me."

When I reached home, at around 01:00am, before I entered my bed, I saw flames of fire burning from a distance to the North. Because it was night, I couldn't do much, so I went to bed.

At dawn I heard from some men that my son was abducted in the night. I immediately covered myself with the bed sheet and went out towards the home where he was sleeping that night. But before I reached, I met with some people who had just come out from hiding and they said they heard some people crying in the direction of the school.

We then reached there, we were welcomed with the flow of blood. We saw people lying on the ground - all men - they were all laid out in a row, but because it was still a little dark we could not recognise them. We checked for our relatives among those people who were lying dead, and I managed to recognise my son. It was hard to tell who was one's relative because their heads were swollen - the boys were beaten on their heads, with big sticks. These rebels beat our children as if they were pounding millet.

One of my sister's sons survived the death; he was beaten on the head but was left unconscious and when people reached the school, he was found alive. He was rushed to get medical attention. That was a miracle for him.

After some time, the soldiers came to the place of the killing. They asked us whether we knew the direction followed by the rebels, but we told them that we didn't know. People kept on arriving at the school to find out what had happened.

People started carrying their dead relatives to take them home for burial, and on reaching home we were still filled with fear. The men started digging graves to bury the corpses. After burying them people left and went to hide because they thought the rebels would return any time.

We have never had a program here in Parabongo, implemented by the government, to help the victims. A monument was built at the primary school with funding from the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) and every July we offer memorial prayers for the victims of the massacre. As a community, we have begun a savings scheme which helps us victims but it would be better if our children are supported with school fees. For me, my late son's children are unable to go to school because of a lack of school fees.

Nowadays, I think how helpful my son would be to me. My son was my life, he would do everything for me and he would help me with farming. But now at this age, I do farm work, fetch water and fire wood all by myself. If I don't cook, I don't eat either.

I have no one to help me.

Chapter Five: Abductions

Northern Uganda has been a vulnerable population for as long as Uganda has been independent. Post-colonial legacies created a socio-economic and cultural division between the Northern and Southern Ugandans – with the Southern populations generally achieving greater access to resources enabling development and growth, while the North have been marginalised.

While the LRA initially received support from the Northern regions, greater numbers of combatants were required. To achieve the rebel army they so desired, the LRA forcefully recruited young boys and girls from their villages. Often under extremely horrific and traumatising conditions.

Abductions by the LRA during the conflict were extensive, with estimates of 66,000 youths (aged 14-30) from the mid-1990s to 2006³⁸ and 30,000 children (under 18s) between 1988 and 2004³⁹ having been abducted for guerrilla training and combat or to become labour and sexual slaves.

After witnessing atrocities, such as those at Parabongo, children and young adults would be dragged from their families and villages and forced to carry heavy loads, march for long periods and – providing they made it this far – be terrorised into slavery as guards, concubines and soldiers. They would be beaten, raped, starved, forced to march until exhausted and (perhaps most prolifically) forced to participate in the killing of other abductees who attempted to escape, or kill and rape their own neighbours and relatives.

In the research conducted in Parabongo, the theme of abduction came up in all interviews, with many affected and feeling enough had not been done to find the truth. Post-interview research and communications with the community revealed 55 people were abducted during the attacks, twenty-nine of whom are still missing and twenty-six returned.⁴⁰

The figureheads of affected villages over the region, including the chief in Parabongo, were given advice and assistance in helping welcome returnees back into the community:

"It was not something that used to happen in Acholi land, to see people being killed in cold blood in that manner. It brought us a lot of pain. When the fight continued, we the chiefs sat down and recalled the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya which would give us lessons on how to stop this fight. We sent some of our elders to Kenya together with Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO). Elders came from across the region; Acholi, Langi and Teso who were all affected by the conflict.

Thereafter we got the reports that if the government has decided to grant the LRA amnesty, it would be good for us to also forgive them and also accept to receive them back. The message was that we should welcome back the returnees and take them through the traditional welcome ceremonies in order to encourage the rest to also come back.

*We started to welcome them back and those who would need psycho-social support we would send them to GUSCO."*⁴¹⁴²

Ultimately though, it appears little has been done to help the families of abductees, who continue to have no idea whether their loved ones are dead or alive. The impact of this, on the elderly women in particular, is profound. As Sabina's story of loss highlighted earlier, the opposing quote shows how loss through abduction also prevents redress.

LOSS THROUGH ABDUCTION

"That whole night the rebels kept on killing, burning houses and destroying property.

My cousin, Joseph, was staying with me at home and when we ran away he followed a different direction. He was abducted and up to now has never come back.

The rebels took so many young boys from here and the nearby villages. They moved from home to home, looking for young boys to add to their number. Some were killed on the way, as soon as they said they were tired. For one to survive he or she should never say he or she is tired.

The exact number of abductees to me is not well defined. I know one person who returned; He said they had sent them to attack a nearby village and that is where he escaped and came back.

My own has never come back. Maybe he is now dead."

(Excerpt from an individual interview, Agwayugi, 10th May,

³⁸ SWAY Report "The State of Youth and Youth Protection in Northern Uganda", 2007.

³⁹ UNOCHA "Child Soldiers at Centre of Mounting Humanitarian Crisis", February 2004.

⁴⁰ Research conducted by FJDI with the assistance of the community in Parabongo. Full appendix of the missing and returned is included at the end of this report.

⁴¹ Interview with Rwot/Chief, Parabongo, 9th May, 2017.

⁴² GUSCO, Gulu Support the Children Organization: "promote the well-being of war affected children in Northern Uganda through provision of psycho-social support, capacity building of communities, education, advocacy and peacebuilding"

Chapter Six: Life after conflict

Personally, when I reflect back on what happened I still feel very much disturbed. I have remained alone in our home and no one is here to help me. I am bringing up children on my own amidst so many challenges like hunger, sickness and worst of all even the little piece of land which I have been surviving on is being taken away [...] I am facing so many abusive words from within home which has made it so hard for me to forget what happened to me that time when the rebels attacked.⁴³

Since 2006, there has been relative peace and stability across Uganda. By 2008, the IDP camp at Parabongo began to disassemble, with the community returning to the villages and attempting to rebuild their lives. Despite a few initiatives, designed to alleviate the intensity of the struggles (which are outlined in the following chapter), the communities across Acholiland require further input from the Ugandan government and specialised NGOs to find the strength to reconcile. This section discusses a few of the long-term ramifications of conflict on the community: Social, Psychological and Health.

6.1. Post-conflict society

The prolonged consequences of conflict in Parabongo, and across Acholiland more generally, has resulted in



fundamental changes in the way women, men and children lead their lives compared to traditional Acholi social and cultural values. This is well documented in other research projects, and so this report only touches on the issues most relevant to the people of Parabongo.

Unable to cultivate their land and generate income from harvests, the families become food aid dependant. This was further exacerbated by disputes on land ownership,

following the conflict. Women tend to struggle to keep the land their late husbands acquired, leaving little means to feed themselves and their family, or generate an income which could be used to pay the school fees of their children or grandchildren.

"There is still insecurity as land wrangles among people in the community are very rampant. Most of the people who were killed were Fathers, they left a big responsibility for the Women who are now struggling to take care of the children or pay school fees for them. Some grand mothers whose son were killed in the war are struggling with their grandchildren and yet they are too old."⁴⁴

In the camps, the traditional distance between homes and daily activities have been undermined. Traditional practices – such as fire time teachings, burial and cleansing rituals, and courting/marriage traditions – have not taken place, at least not easily, undermining the cultural and socialisation processes previously engrained in the Acholi people. Life in the IDP camps also lacked dynamism and kept displaced families in a state of perpetual poverty.

Perhaps most significantly, an exorbitant number of families were left without a father and older generations left without children capable of caring for their parents in their old age. The traditional gender roles in Uganda have been devastated, with women having to take on the role of both mother and father, breadwinner and house-keeper.

6.2. Post-conflict psychological and psychosocial well-being.

"When I reflect [on that time], I still feel disturbed [...] I feel so much pain as a result of that experience, the lives lost and above all the fact that all these are irreversible and can never be recovered. I have struggled through all these difficulties and, when I die, these difficulties will continue to the children. This has remained a big blow to me and the entire household and I feel disturbed up to now."⁴⁵

Good mental health and well-being are more than just the absence of mental disorder, it encompasses a 'state of complete mental well-being including social, spiritual, cognitive and emotional aspects.'⁴⁶ Each of the residents in Parabongo suffered some level of psychological trauma following the attack, the massacre, the abductions and the displacement into IDP camps. The effects of which are, unsurprisingly, adverse effects on personal and communal mental health and psychosocial well-being.

⁴³ Interview respondent, 10th May, 2017.

⁴⁴ Interview with respondent, 8th May, 2017.

⁴⁵ Interview with respondent, Agwayugi, 8th May, 2017.

⁴⁶ "Social Development Notes", The World Bank, October 2003.

Mental health disorders and psychological trauma arising from conflict is far from uncommon, and the needs of those suffering must be addressed to achieve successful post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

Due to the violence, a breakdown of trust and an inability to actively engage in community membership – all of which may be caused, or exacerbated, by psychological traumas – social capital in post-conflict regions is diminished. Social capital is recognised as a core element of challenging poverty, increasing development and in fruitful social cohesion. Therefore, without addressing the psychological and psychosocial challenges within the community, social reconstruction is unlikely to be fully achieved.

6.3. Post-conflict health

While the report has just discussed post-conflict mental health needs, the gaps in accessing other forms of healthcare within the community needs mentioning.

Due to rural life, the medical services in place elsewhere are not accessible to the community and the current available assistance is not enough to support the community and particularly the now ageing population.

In addition, rape - widely accepted to have been used as a weapon of war - and undetected HIV contraction has resulted in many people being infected with the virus and going on to develop AIDS. This places a greater burden on the community as more lives are affected by loss or ill-health and on the later generations.

This issue was not widely discussed in the interviews, and as such it requires further investigation to ascertain the extent of the problem in Parabongo specifically. One respondent however, did highlight the impact of HIV on the community:

Many of the women here were infected with HIV/AIDS and as I talk now this whole community has so many AIDS victims as a result of this rebel activity. [...] There is also a rampant spread of HIV/AIDS among the children. Many were raped during the insurgency and never knew they were infected, so infected many others.⁴⁷

Chapter Seven: Post-conflict strategies

7.1. Support and initiatives implemented by NGOs and the Ugandan Government

Several initiatives were implemented by NGOs and the Government of Uganda, both at the time of the insurgency and in the short-term after the camps were disassembled.

This section briefly describes the support provided in Parabongo from outside agencies.

Government of Uganda (GoU)

The IDP camp in Parabongo was funded and opened by the GoU, with UPDF military providing protection. At the time, as civilians had little left from their properties being destroyed and having to flee the villages, utensils and foodstuffs were distributed amongst the displaced population.

On returning to the villages once the camps were disassembled, the soldiers provided assistance in making homes safe once again – specifically removing any landmines which the LRA had put on civilian private property.

ALPI, Red Cross, World Vision

At the time of the insurgency, the named organisations came in to distribute uniforms, books, blankets, food stuffs, plates, clothes, cups and saucers and other essential items. Support for the women and children affected by loss and sexual violation was also offered.

GUSCO – Gulu Save the Children Organisation

FIGURE 3: MONUMENT ERECTED WITH THE HELP OF JRP.

Those who were abducted during the insurgency were provided with assistance in reconciling with both the community and themselves as individuals.

GUSCO also provided training and guidance to the village chiefs on how to help returnees successfully reintegrate with the community, taking discrimination and inclusion factors into account. Specialists in this field also came from overseas to develop the leadership skills of the chiefs.

NUTI – Northern Uganda Transitional Initiative

Appropriate burials were organised for the deceased by NUTI. This provided a more effective and traditional goodbye for the relatives. They also helped to organise traditional cleansing of the massacre sites and some compensation for those who had been left behind.

Northern Uganda Social Action Fund

The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund came into the community and distributed cattle. Whilst appreciated, this did prove to be ineffective as the area cannot sustain cattle farming at this point in time.

Justice and Reconciliation Project.

JRP have been cited by almost every respondent and praised for the support offered to the community in the

⁴⁷ Interview with respondent, Abyee, 9th May, 2017.

years following the conflict. In addition to workshops which provided guidance on achieving redress, JRP distributed books containing documentation of massacres in other war affected areas which the residents have found immensely helpful.

Most notably however, is the construction of the memorial currently in place at the massacre site and the facilitation of Memorial Day prayers through monetary donation.

Unfortunately, all support has now dissipated and not every initiative was accessible to each member of the



community.

7.2. Initiatives and coping mechanisms adopted by the community

As time has passed, outside support from agencies has ceased. To deal with the ongoing effects of conflict, the community have implemented initiatives and coping mechanisms of their own. This section touches on some of the ways the community have actively tried to seek redress themselves.

The Survivors' Group.

Beginning around 2015, on advice from the Bishop, the community came together to form a support group for the survivors of the atrocities in Parabongo. The group is designed to help its members to work through the psychological impact of conflict with those able to relate; assist in navigating the complexities of post-conflict life. In addition, the group applies for funding through pledge forms – though usually returned empty or ignored – and organises activities which may help the most vulnerable.

Communal digging scheme

As the community attempt to revitalise the former agricultural practices, a communal digging scheme – comprised mainly of the survivors group – has been started. The scheme aims to help the vulnerable members of the community who now struggle to partake in digging

to the same extent as they once did and have little, or no, family to support them.

Village savings scheme, "Bolicup"

The survivors have also implemented a savings scheme, which acts like a credit union. Each week, members of the group make a credit to the 'Bolicup'. From which money can be borrowed from to help pay for school fees or in the event an emergency arises at low interest rates.

Memorial Day prayers

Each year, July 28th is marked by a day of reflection and contemplation as the community come together to say prayers and remember those lost in the massacre. All members of the community feel this practice is beneficial, with spiritual reconciliation being greatly helped through prayer.

Despite all the efforts in place, the community feel more work must be done to fully heal and rebuild society. New problems arise with time – such as the full impact on the children and elders, psychological disorders and disputes over land. Such matters have, so far, gone unaddressed, and many wounds remain intact despite previous strategies to address these.

Chapter Eight: Gaps preventing redress and reconciliation

We have here children who are supposed to proceed with their education to the next level but because they lack school fees, they have remained at home helpless. We also have elderly people who have no one to take care of them as a result of their children or their grandchildren being abducted by the rebels. These elders have leaking roofs and we are asking that the government builds a permanent house for these people.

We also do not have enough farm equipment like seeds, ox-ploughs, hoes, oxen. Also, the government should come up with a strategy that will help us the elderly people who cannot look after cattle or dig so that we do not feel abandoned. We still have a very poor health facility with no drugs and in addition the government hospitals are very far from here. We totally have nothing except the monument to point at as one made for us the victims.⁴⁸

A sense of abandonment by the government and NGOs, now that the conflict is over, is rampant within the community at Parabongo. Many of the initiatives which were previously implemented were not accessible to all members of the community. As such, some respondents claim the only assistance and support in rebuilding their lives and the community on a whole is from the support

⁴⁸ Interview with respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

JRP (Justice and Reconciliation Program) provided through post-conflict education and the memorial services.

In addition, the community remains in disunity – and without guidance, they are finding it increasingly difficult to overcome the psychosocial issues experienced without assistance. One respondent claims the community have experienced a breakdown in trust, hatred and ongoing disputes over land. Education, health and social care, economic and agricultural development and justice are all said to be factors behind the stagnation of progress the community is currently experiencing. Drawing once more on the individual interviews and focus group discussions, this section provides a synopsis of the most substantial gaps preventing a full and effective redress within the community.

Reparations from the Government of Uganda

With no comprehensive investigation, documentation or reparation for the lost lives and property, the community struggle to feel any sense of understanding from, or unity with, the Government of Uganda. As heads of the state, the government have a duty of care to the residents in Parabongo, yet overall the community feel the atrocities have not even been properly acknowledged or compensated for.

I have never heard any leader saying he is sorry for the atrocities that the rebels did in this area. Just imagine, the rebels murder all these people on the great north road and the government seems to just ignore.⁴⁹

Criminal justice

Similarly, there have been no reparations from the justice system. No commander or head of the LRA was ever held accountable for the events which took place in Parabongo on July 28th, 1996. Whilst undoubtedly difficult to ascertain, as not even the respondents could definitively state who was commanding the attack, it nevertheless remains a source of contention for the survivors, who now seek closure.

We the victims went through a lot, to me if only these commanders could be got, they should be prosecuted and sentenced. Because for us our people have gone for good.⁵⁰

Unequal distribution of resources in the community

Part of the disunity and lack of social cohesion within the villages, post-conflict, appears to stem from an unequal distribution of the resources available. As previously mentioned, land disputes are a common occurrence but they are not the only example; The division of resources

⁴⁹ Focus group discussion conducted by DO, Parabongo, 11th May, 2017.

⁵⁰ Focus group discussion conducted by ASO, Parabongo, 11th May, 2017.

supplied by government and NGOs are too not always done fairly.

NGOs came here and asked us to register every household that lost relatives so that they are given cattle and when we had finished registering, the cows were brought but unfortunately the victims who registered did not get anything. Those who never lost anyone were the one who got this benefit while we the victims remained in our solitude.⁵¹

Non-existent health and social care support for the vulnerable members of society, beyond the community's own initiatives

During the conflict, many children were left orphaned and as such the grandparents were burdened with the responsibility to raise the children alone as they themselves aged struggling to recover. For those who did not have to raise children, there are few who would not have been psychologically affected by the troubles, or who did not lose a part of the support network which would otherwise have been in the place.

Today, these elderly residents face daily obstacles. Medical services are lacking, there is little support in place, homes are not fit for purpose and the elderly residents are no longer able to manage the repairs and maintenance themselves.

"The biggest gap that I see here is the elderly people who have no one to take care of them. The government should look out for the elderly and let them benefit from reparation [like] what World Vision did for the women victims."⁵²

"Some of the survivors are disabled and they don't have people around them to support them. It would be nice if they could get people who would give them iron sheets so that they can construct for themselves houses."⁵³

Lacking the means to develop agriculture

Agricultural inputs remain scarce and an inability to access newer resources which increase productivity has resulted in the community being unable to make a reasonable living. Many promises have been made over the years by government and NGOs, including a seedling program and the donation of farming equipment such as ox-ploughs, which have not materialised.

"[...] Victims have remained in a very low standard of living unlike before the massacre. The NGOs could help raise the standards of the people by providing farm equipment and other agricultural inputs [...]. Some NGOs told us that they would provide tractors and ox-ploughs but we have received nothing up to now."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 9th May, 2017.

⁵² Focus group discussion with DO, Parabongo, 11th May, 2017.

⁵³ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

⁵⁴ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

Lack of ongoing recovery programs for the survivors.

As discussed in the section: "Psychological impacts of conflict", psychosocial disorders cannot be remedied only in the short-term. The World Bank reports that whilst mental health support in times of conflict has increased, there remains a tendency to assume psychological problems are 'transitionary and non-disabling'. As such, post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic depression and long-term mental health problems remain uncatered for across post-conflict societies. This is true of Parabongo and has exacerbated the social failings of the communities, as well as causing debilitation on a personal level, through unaddressed psychosocial disorders.

*"We need more support from NGOs. We need more partners, who can come and provide us psycho-social support to allow us come to terms with these experiences as well as provide us some livelihood support."*⁵⁵

Lacking formal investigation of the abductions.

Returnees to the village have been reintegrated through support from GUSCO and the chiefs who, as previously mentioned, were trained on how to help ensure a culture of inclusion and non-discrimination.

For the families who have never found out the truth about what has happened to their abducted children, the pain is still especially raw and no support for this bereavement was recalled by any of the respondents.

*"On our side as women, we have children still in captivity and we want them to come back home but nothing seems to be done. [...] If you people could take our voices to the next higher level, we would be so grateful."*⁵⁶

Inability to properly educate children left behind

As a result of the conflict, many children were left fatherless or orphaned. The responsibility of school fees has been left to mothers and grandparents who had no means to finance the education of these children. As such, the children have not been able to receive a decent education which would help them and their families out of poverty. In addition, education greatly enhances social capital, and with a generation of educated youths the community and country on a whole would benefit.

*"If only some organisation would come in to support us by [...] providing fees for the children whose parents were killed in the massacre or even build houses for those elderly victims. There is one woman who lost three sons in the attack and she is struggling with their children by herself."*⁵⁷

Memorial Centre

Memorialisation, like all mechanisms involved in reconciliation, can take many different forms and the desired purpose may alter with time. The first stages in memorialisation tend to be focused on the victims themselves - their identity and the retention of community membership, despite having passed on. This is often manifested by means of a structure - such as that in Parabongo - and list of victim's names, serving as a place for prayer, reflection and contemplation. As time passes however, memorials may seek to explain the conflict and its background more explicitly, as a way of reconciliation through acceptance and education.

The community in Parabongo, whilst gaining comfort from the monument and memorial prayers, feel that a memorial centre would be beneficial. They anticipate the centre would be used to remember, educate and share experiences on the atrocities and could potentially bring in revenue through tourism.

*"The biggest gap to me is building for us a memorial centre where we will have pictures and names of our dear relatives who lost their lives during the massacre. Also in that centre, we would have writings of peace and encouragement and killing tools used by the rebels that would at one-time act as a tourist attraction centre."*⁵⁸

Chapter Nine: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

To the Government of Uganda:

- Facilitate a comprehensive investigation into the details of the massacre, attack and abductions – officially acknowledging the atrocities.
- Provide reparation to families of victims through assistance towards funding a memorial centre for the community.
- Wherever possible, provide support in reuniting families still separated after abduction.
- Ensure a decent education is accessible to all orphaned children.

To NGOs:

- Ensure donations are suited to the condition of the people and land.
- Provide sustainable poverty alleviation initiatives.
- Train community leaders in providing ongoing psychological support to the rest of the affected.
- Wherever possible, provide support in reuniting families still separated after abduction. In conjunction with the government if possible.

⁵⁵ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

⁵⁶ Focus group discussion with DO, Parabongo, 11th May, 2017.

⁵⁷ Individual interview respondent, Ojwayo, 8th May, 2017.

⁵⁸ Individual interview respondent, Odur, 8th May, 2017.

- Help mediate in disputes arising in the community – particularly land and equality issues.

To Community Leaders:

- Monitor community spirit and social cohesion, raise any issues in meetings with one another and with the wider group.
- Ensure inclusion and anti-discrimination remains a top priority as individuals and communities reunite.
- Encourage group discussions and activities which promote the reuptake of cultural practices and community membership.
- Provide psychological support to those most in need.
- Minimise inequality through fair distribution of resources.

To Communities:

- Take part in communal and group activities which encourage cultural practices and community spirit.
- Report disputes to the appropriate figureheads – and outside agencies if applicable – in an attempt to find a transparent solution.
- Continue with the Survivor's Support Group and Savings Scheme.

To Individuals:

- Actively participate in the community and in the recommendations outlined above.

Conclusion.

July 28th, 1996 saw Parabongo torn apart at the hands of the LRA when a massacre at the primary school resulted in the loss of at least twenty-two lives. The rebels also used the opportunity to abduct, beat, threaten, sexually violate and antagonise the population. Fifty-five people were abducted – the majority of whom have not returned to date, homes were destroyed as the rebels set them alight, entire communities were displaced into camps far from home. Even once reunited and protected as Parabongo IDP camp was erected, the residents were still subjected to attacks from the LRA.

After two decades of conflict, the LRA seemed to have been eliminated in Uganda, having retreated to other areas of Central Africa. The psychosocial trauma, however, has proven challenging to overcome. Particularly with limited input from outside agencies to offer specialised advice and strategies.

Continued marginalisation from the government of Uganda (through failing to prioritise the needs of those most affected by conflict) has prevented the Northern Acholi region from achieving similar development visible across other areas of Uganda.

All in all, Parabongo has undergone economic, psychological and cultural devastation which has undoubtedly altered the social fabric on which the community was built. The health of the region has also been impacted, with elderly people receiving little access to healthcare and a conflict-exacerbated spread of mental health disorders and HIV.

As such, rebuilding the culture, social capital and economic security in Parabongo, under new parameters, is paramount to successful redress. Equally, psychological support and explicit memorialisation processes need to be implemented to enable healthy progression for survivors and to address the perpetual effects of conflict which are now taking hold of the younger generations.

This report has hopefully provided an accurate recollection of the events which took place on July 28th, 1996 and has attempted to condense the priority needs of the community.

Appendix I: Victims of the Massacre.



- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Komakech Jacob | 9. Lapoya Juma | 17. Opio Nelson |
| 2. Latigo Alipayo | 10. Sebi Juma | 18. Ayub Defali |
| 3. Okwanga Walter | 11. Luyira Denish | 19. Bwot Albert |
| 4. Ouma Edward | 12. Orach | 20. Obura Patrick |
| 5. Okwena Collins | 13. Majaa | 21. Oryem John |
| 6. Omona Charles | 14. Okwonga | 22. Oryem Joseph |
| 7. Oketa Norbert | 15. Ocaya | |
| 8. Kilama James | 16. Okumu Hesket | |

Appendix II: Abductees.

Names of Abductees who have returned.

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Onen Dimon | 11. Angom Jenifer | 21. Ataro Florence |
| 2. Akello Procy | 12. Labona Mary | 22. David Tongo |
| 3. Oyet Patrick | 13. Otim Nelson | 23. Kinyera Patrick |
| 4. Okello Peter | 14. Okiya Santo | 24. Ojok David |
| 5. Oketa Charles | 15. Labong Santa | 25. Apoko Concy |
| 6. Alanyo Concy | 16. Angee Concy | 26. Aceng Joscka |
| 7. Maryano Ociti | 17. Opwona Chles Yoko | 27. Ochola Calvine |
| 8. Mwaka Christopher | 18. Ouma Anjello | 28. Opera Charles |
| 9. Okello Terija | 19. Okello Cosantino | 29. Okello Francis |
| 10. Ayoo Stella | 20. Aciro Evaline | |

Names of those abducted who have not yet returned.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Julio Nyerere | 20. Okello Robert |
| 2. Lemony Godfrey | 21. Ojok Patrick |
| 3. Opwonya James | 22. Onen Sibirino |
| 4. Okoya Joseph | 23. Okello Micheal |
| 5. Salama Bambela | 24. Ojok Yunus |
| 6. Opiro Denis | 25. Odoki Okot |
| 7. Odong Sunday | 26. Ocii John |
| 8. Anywar Patrick | |
| 9. Okello Joseph | |
| 10. Olal James | |
| 11. Ouma Odogi | |
| 12. Onama David | |
| 13. Akena Sam | |
| 14. Owor David | |
| 15. Aryemo Joyce | |
| 16. Acan Christine | |
| 17. Acaye Patrick | |
| 18. Okumu Nixon | |
| 19. Openy Christopher | |

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About FJDI.

VISION:

A just, developed, and economically prosperous society

MISSION:

The Foundation for Justice and Development works with children, youth, women and communities to promote justice, development and economic recovery in northern Uganda. FJDI seeks solutions to the long-term impacts of the conflict which ravaged northern Uganda by advocating for redress of human rights violations and atrocities committed during the conflict, implementation of sustainable development initiatives, and promotion of economic empowerment through livelihood programs. We believe in the concept of Holistic Justice grounded in the notion that judicial mechanisms of redress go hand in hand with development and economic empowerment of victims.

OBJECTIVES

- a) To advocate for appropriate policies on democracy, governance, justice and development.
- b) To promote social economic empowerment for vulnerable individuals, groups and communities in Uganda.
- c) To conduct research on relevant justice and development issues crucial to national development and policy formulation.

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