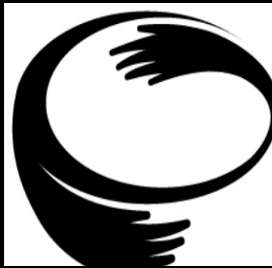




THE DAY THEY CAME:

Recounting the LRA's Invasion of Teso Sub-Region through Obalanga Sub-County in 2003



JRP
Field Note
XIV
January 2012





THE DAY THEY CAME

**Recounting the LRA's Invasion of Teso Sub-region
through Obalanga Sub-county in June 2003**

JRP Field Note XIV, January 2012

Cover

Front (Top): A survivor of the helicopter bombings in Angica B village displays a bomb shell from the helicopter gunship. Photo by JRP, 2011.

Front (Bottom): Survivors display injuries they received at the hands of the LRA. Photo by JRP, 2011.

Back: Survivors display injuries they received at the hands of the LRA. Photo by JRP, 2011.

About JRP

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) has played a key role in transitional justice (TJ) in Uganda since 2005 through seeking to understand and explain the interests, needs, concerns and views of communities affected by conflict. JRP promotes locally sensitive and sustainable peace in Africa's Great Lakes region by focusing on the active involvement of grassroots communities in local-level transitional justice.

Vision

A just and peaceful society

Mission

JRP empowers conflict-affected communities to participate in processes of justice, healing, and reconciliation.

Acknowledgements

This report was researched and written by Lino Owor Ogora and Evelyn Akullo Otwilli under JRP's Community Documentation department. The authors extend appreciation to the JRP team for the useful input extended towards the completion of this report. We thank the respondents for openly sharing their testimonies with us. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Norwegian Embassy in Kampala for funding this research. The authors can be contacted on ogoralino@gmail.com and eakullo@justiceandreconciliation.com for comments or questions. For a copy of our research reports and more information on JRP, visit www.justiceandreconciliation.com or email info@justiceandreconciliation.com.

Contact

Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)
Plot 50 Lower Churchill Drive
P.O. Box 1216
Gulu, Uganda, East Africa
Tel: +256 (0) 471 433 008
Web: www.justiceandreconciliation.com
Email: info@justiceandreconciliation.com

Copyright © 2012 by Justice and Reconciliation Project

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution.

Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Methodology	6
Background.....	6
The Attack on Obalanga and Major Occurrences.....	7
Victims’ Experiences.....	11
Formerly-abducted Persons	11
Widows and Widowers.....	15
Ex-Arrow Boys.....	17
When Protectors Turn Perpetrators: Bomb Victims in Angica and <i>Morungatuny</i>	19
Missing Persons	21
Picking up the Pieces: Burials, Memorialization and Reparations	21
Burial of Human Remains	22
Memorialization	23
Reparations.....	23
Recommendations.....	25
PICTORIAL.....	27
Appendix A: Letter Written by the LRA, dated 16 th June 2003	28
Appendix B: Partial List of the Deceased Laid to Rest in the Mass Grave at Obalanga.....	29
Appendix C: Missing Persons Abducted by the LRA from Obalanga Sub-county.....	30
Appendix D: Identity Cards of Victims Who Perished in the Helicopter Gunship Bombings in Angica and Morungatuny.....	31
Appendix E: Letter Written for Victim of the Helicopter Bombing in Morungatuny	32
Appendix F: Summary List of People Abducted and Killed by the LRA in Asamuk and Wera Sub-counties	32

Acronyms

ADDA	Amuria District Development Agency
ASTU(s)	Anti Stock Theft Unit(s)
CBO	Community-based Organization
FAP(s)	Formerly Abducted Person(s)
FIDA	Finland International Development Agency
FOBA	Force Obote Back Association
GoU	Government of Uganda
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children's Organization
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICD	International Crimes Division
IDP(s)	Internally Displaced Person(s)
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LC	Local Council
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NRA/M	National Resistance Army/Movement
OHRHCA	Obalanga Human Rights and Healthcare Association
PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Plan
TEDO	Teso Diocese Development Organization
TFV	Trust Fund for Victims
TIDO	Teso Islamic Development Organization
TPO	The Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organization
UPA	Uganda People's Army
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force

Introduction

For much of its lifespan, the conflict in northern Uganda between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was largely concentrated in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. Teso sub-region was largely peaceful, however many areas were affected by cattle-rustling from the Karamojong. All of this changed when, in June 2003, the LRA infiltrated Teso sub-region in eastern Uganda for the first time. The civilian population and the Government army were caught unaware, a factor which had disastrous humanitarian implications. In line with their trademark pattern of atrocities, the LRA rebels carried out killings, abductions, maiming, looting, rape, burning and pillaging. By the time the Government forces, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), repulsed them almost eight months later, approximately 90% of the population in Teso sub-region had been displaced into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, several thousand of children had been abducted, and thousands of people had lost their lives and property.

This report by the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) explores the impacts of the LRA incursion into Teso sub-region using case studies and victims' testimonies from the sub-county of Obalanga in Amuria district. Obalanga sub-county is located 27 kilometers north of Amuria town and is one of the sub-counties that was arguably most affected by the LRA incursion. Given its location on the border with Lango sub-region, it was used as a strategic point of entry for the LRA. The sub-county headquarters later became the largest IDP camp in Teso sub-region, sheltering over 40,000 internally displaced persons. Obalanga is also home to one of the largest mass graves in Teso, with approximately 365 remains of victims buried in it.

A central finding of this report is that the impacts of the northern conflict in Teso region have been grossly underestimated. As a result, many relief, humanitarian and recovery interventions remain concentrated in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. The experiences of victims, including their quest for accountability and reparations, are also largely ignored. This report highlights the stories of victims and survivors with the aim of drawing attention to their needs and demands for justice and accountability.

The report explores the past experiences and current challenges of victims of LRA violence in Teso sub-region. Through the individual stories of Stephen, Emmanuel and Grace, we seek to understand the experiences of three formerly-abducted persons (FAPs). Stephen and Emmanuel's destinies became interlinked while in captivity as they were trained into skilled fighters. Grace was forcefully given to an LRA soldier to be his 'wife.' When Stephen returned, his wife Deborah had long been married to another man, a fact he put aside when decided to move on his life with her. Grace was forced to seek out her bush husband as a result of poverty.

In addition to these three, we also feature the plight of men and women who were widowed such as Petra, a young woman of 21 years who was widowed shortly after her marriage after her husband joined the Arrow Boys' Brigade. He met his death in a brutal manner, with his head being chopped off. His body eventually had to be buried headless, an incident that Petra has never recovered from. To combat the LRA incursions, local leaders in Teso mobilized youth to defend the communities. This unit eventually became known as the Arrow Boys' Brigade. In this report, we explore the story of a youth who had to serve in Arrow Boys Brigade and highlight the numerous challenges that its former members currently face. Many Arrow Boys as we discovered continue to demand arrears from the GoU.

The report also examines killings perpetrated by state actors. In this regard, we explore stories of individuals killed in mysterious circumstances by UPDF soldiers in the IDP camps. We also document the stories of victims who were mistaken for rebels and bombed by UPDF helicopter gunships, both in the village of Angica in Alito and in Morungatuny sub-county. In the words of one of the survivors, by the time the helicopter gunship left, *"Some people were in ashes, while others were very badly injured."*¹ Almost eight years after this incident, the Government has neither apologized nor compensated the surviving relatives of these victims.

We also explore challenges faced by survivors in the aftermath of the LRA incursion. By the time the LRA departed Teso, several thousand people had lost their lives. In Obalanga sub-county alone, human bones littered the countryside and prevented the people from returning to their homes. Under the leadership of a community-based organization called Obalanga Human Rights and Healthcare Association (OHRHCA) and support from individuals and non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), the community was able to collect over 365 human remains and bury them in a mass grave which exists at the sub-county headquarters. The report ends with recommendations to the GoU and to other actors to assist victims of conflict in Teso sub-region.

¹ Focus group discussion, Angica B village, 20th July 2011

Methodology

Obalanga is commonly featured in the northern Uganda conflict discourse as the first known point of entry by the LRA into Teso sub-region.² It is also known for accommodating one of the largest mass graves in Teso. In line with our documentation mandate to preserve memory of conflict in Uganda, JRP selected Obalanga as a case study for documenting LRA atrocities in Teso and analyzing post-conflict interventions for victims. Researchers conducted a preliminary visit to Obalanga on 29th June 2011, and interacted with four sub-county officials and one representative from the community-based OHRHCA. The sub-county officials specifically requested the documentation of what happened in Obalanga in order to enable the plight of victims to come to light, to explicate the impact of the conflict on the people of Amuria, and to assist them in advocating for reparations for victims. They cited JRP's documentation in Mukura,³ and expressed interest in having a similar documentation conducted for them.

The first phase of data collection in Obalanga was conducted between the 18th and 22nd of July 2011. During this period, we held a documentation workshop with survivors and relatives of victims that included sub-county officials, formerly-abducted persons, widows, widowers, ex-Arrow Boys and other victims. We also visited the village of Angica, where we physically interacted with a sub-set of victims and listened to their stories. The second phase of data collection was conducted between 22nd and 26th August 2011. During this period, we also visited Labira and Awojangur villages to verify information provided in earlier interviews by respondents. The third phase of data collection, which also served as a follow-up visit to verify information attained on our previous visits, was conducted between 13th and 16th September 2011. During this period, we also visited the sub-counties of Wera, Asamuk, and Morungatuny to gather more testimonies of victims. In total, 61 respondents were interviewed during the documentation process (53 in one-on-one interviews, and 8 in focus group discussions). These included 17 local leaders, 6 representatives of civil society organizations, 1 parent of a missing person, 11 formerly-abducted persons, 7 widows, 1 widower, 9 victims of helicopter bombings, 2 victims of the NRA/M (National Resistance Army/Movement) Liberation War, 1 ex-soldier of the Arrow Boys Brigade, 2 school administrators, 2 victims of ambushes and 2 survivors of LRA attacks. Respondents were purposively selected with the assistance of local leaders who were knowledgeable about events that took place in Obalanga. JRP researchers also made field visits to homes of victims, where we interacted with their families and relatives, and physically visited burial sites and locations of helicopter gunship bombings. All interviews were conducted in English, with the help of Ateso translators, and transcribed for analysis by JRP researchers. In addition, we also reviewed various documents that had been preserved by OHRHCA and sub-county officials, such as names of children abducted by the LRA, partial names of deceased persons, and persons buried in mass graves.

Background

Northern Uganda is still recovering from two decades of civil war between the GoU and the LRA. The conflict between the two parties started in 1986, when the NRM Government under the leadership of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni gained power. Teso sub-region first experienced insurgency as defeated soldiers of the Tito Okello Lutwa regime fled northwards following their defeat in Kampala by the NRA soldiers. Some of the early rebel groups that operated in Teso include the Uganda Peoples' Army (UPA) and the Force Obote Back Group (FOBA), but these groups either surrendered or were forced to abandon rebellion. In 1988, Teso was briefly affected by the northern conflict as rebels of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) under the leadership of Alice Lakwena advanced to Kampala. The HSM was later defeated at Jinja and forced to disband.

From 1988, Teso region remained free from devastation of the northern conflict, although the civilians in the region suffered from cattle-rustling by the Karamojong, which drove civilians in some parts of Teso into IDP camps. However, most violence remained concentrated in the neighboring Acholi and Lango sub-regions. The nearest the rebels had come to Teso were villages within Lango sub-region like Adwari, Apala, Orum and Omoro which bordered Amuria district. Due to the history of relative peace, the LRA incursion of June 2003



Partial map of eastern Uganda showing the district of Amuria and the location of Obalanga. Source: UNOHCHR

² For purposes of this report, the northern conflict refers to the civil war which broke out in 1986 following the capture of state power by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led by Yoweri Museveni.

³ See Justice and Reconciliation Project. 2011. *The Mukura Massacre of 1989*. Field Note XII. Gulu: Justice and Reconciliation Project.

came as a surprise to most residents of Teso sub-region. People in Teso were ill-prepared for this attack, and the leadership in the region was not used to handling a crisis of this magnitude. In the words of one survivor, *“The attack surprised many of us. Even when rumors of the attack reached us, many people were not disturbed. When the LRA attacked, people ran in different directions.”*⁴

The LRA incursion into Teso came at the height of a military operation code-named ‘Operation Iron Fist.’ This Government-led offensive aimed at neutralizing the LRA rebellion in northern Uganda, and inflicted huge losses against the LRA rebels. It is alleged that an LRA commander named Tabuley, who was then LRA leader Joseph Kony’s third-in-command, masterminded the plan to expand into Teso region. According to FAPs we talked to, he led this attack in collaboration with other senior commanders of the LRA, including Otti Vincent, Onen Kamdulu, Opuk, Dominic Ongwen, Opio and many others.

By that time, the UPDF had its hands full as it pursued Operation Iron Fist in Acholi sub-region. Humanitarian agencies were also mostly concentrated in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. Neither the Government nor humanitarian agencies were prepared to handle a catastrophe of this magnitude outside of their usual jurisdictions. The civilian population, which had lived free of conflict for a long time, was equally ill-prepared and did not know what to do in the event of LRA attacks. Many children in Teso, unlike in other areas of northern Uganda, did not know how to evade attacks by the rebels or how to respond to questions in the event that they were caught. Many civilians did not know how to answer questions posed to them by the rebels in the event that they were attacked. As a result, the LRA incursion in Teso, short as it was, left a devastating impact upon the local population. In the following sections, we reconstruct the attack on Obalanga before looking at the testimonies of victims and survivors.

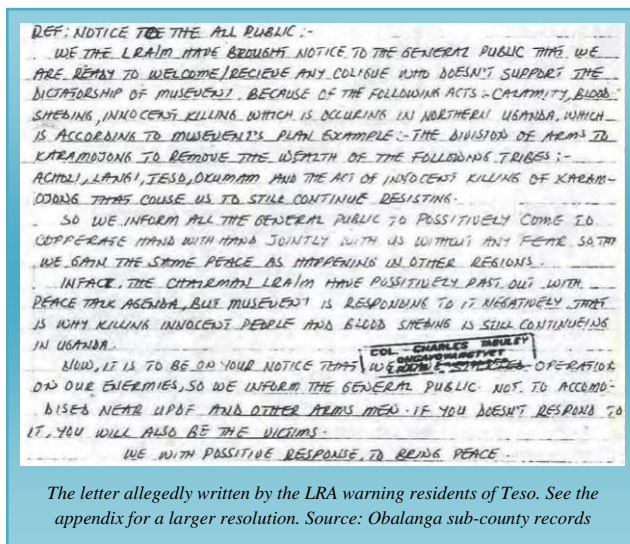
The Attack on Obalanga and Major Occurrences

Amuria is one of the districts in the Teso sub-region. It is located 40 kilometers northeast of Soroti town, and is made up of two counties, Amuria and Kapelebyong. It has 9 sub-counties, 47 parishes and 388 villages. It borders Katakwi district to the east, Soroti to the south, Kaberamaido to the west and Moroto and Lira to the north.⁵ Obalanga sub-county is based at the extreme north of the district. It was one of the first sub-counties to fall victim to the LRA incursion and acted as the gateway for the LRA into Teso.

It began with rumors of an attack being planned by the rebels combined with an increase of displaced people fleeing the fighting from the neighboring Lango sub-region. The first sightings of the LRA in the region were said to have been on 25th April 2003 by some villagers who reported that they had seen some strangers. It appears that these were scouts who had been sent to familiarize themselves with the terrain. Then in June, residents of Alito parish at the extreme north of Obalanga suddenly saw people from Lango who were fleeing from the LRA passing through their villages. The fleeing civilians kept telling the people that the LRA were coming, but most villagers did not heed the advice to flee. Many of them did not take the warnings seriously, given that the rebels had never attacked their villages before.

*“We got rumors that the LRA were coming from people who were fleeing the attacks in Lango and passing through our village. This was on Sunday morning at 8:00am. We just realized that some people were passing on the road speaking Luo. Many people on getting the rumours fled to Obalanga. Three days later news reached us that a helicopter had bombed some people who had remained behind, and that some people had lost their lives.”*⁶

These rumors were made worse by a letter allegedly written and signed by the LRA.⁷ This letter specified the date on which the LRA claimed they were coming and reasons why they were coming. Their letter talked about Government



The letter allegedly written by the LRA warning residents of Teso. See the appendix for a larger resolution. Source: Obalanga sub-county records

⁴ Focus group discussion, Angica B village, 20th July 2011

⁵ Amuria District Verification Commission, unpublished report

⁶ Focus group discussion, Angica B village, 20th July 2011

⁷ The source of this letter remains mysterious. Some of the respondents we interviewed questioned its validity.

negligence in attending to the needs of people in Teso and claimed that the Karamojong's looting of cattle from Teso was a Government ploy to impoverish the people of Teso. The letter warned civilians not to associate with Government soldiers and said that the LRA were coming to team up with civilians to overthrow the Government. Apparently, Commander Tabuley authored the letter.

This letter, and many others authored by the LRA, were all taken to the Obalanga sub-county headquarters by civilians who came across them. The sub-county authorities in turn forwarded the letters to the army barracks. According to the sub-county officials, the army did nothing substantial to prepare in response to these threats. Instead, the army detach that was based there was moved to Kapelebyong. Obalanga sub-county remained with only a small force of approximately 30 Anti-stock Theft Unit (ASTU) soldiers and a few policemen. As a result, when the LRA attacked on 15th June, Obalanga trading center was largely undefended.

The attack came as suddenly as the rumours had begun. The first village that fell victim to the LRA attacks was Angica A village in Alito Parish, 30 kilometers north of Obalanga.

*"As the LRA came from the north, the first place they attacked was our village of Angica. This was on 15th June 2003 at 1:00pm. The villagers fled at the sight of the LRA who were strangers in the village. We all fled to Obalanga trading center where most of the people had taken refuge. On the way to Obalanga, we were attacked by a helicopter gunship which mistook us for rebels. We were forced to diver, and run towards a village called Olilim. As we headed there, we were forced to retreat because the LRA was advancing towards us. We then decided to run towards a place called Omoro, but again the LRA was in our path. We eventually managed to run and retreat until we reached Obalanga."*⁸



Women and children in the village of Angica B. While they were able to return to their village in 2006, the memories of the attack are still fresh in their minds. Source: JRP

The LRA remained stationed in Alito parish for the whole of that day, probably waiting for nightfall. They moved around the villages as civilians fled from their path, but they neither killed nor abducted any people.

When night fell, they started their march to Obalanga. They marched all night and reached Obalanga at 2:00am. When they arrived in Obalanga, there were only 30 ASTU soldiers and six policemen who tried to defend the sub-county headquarters. The numerous LRA rebels easily overpowered them, resulting in the death of two policemen and one ASTU soldier. The LRA immediately headed for the small police unit, where they left a letter for the local police telling them to hand over the guns they had, otherwise they would be hunted down and killed. As the attack on the police unit was going on, other LRA fighters went about the trading center burning houses and destroying other property. Some of the rebels stormed Obalanga health center and destroyed clinical records, looted drugs, and set the building on fire. They also destroyed a solar panel that was used to light up the health center. Others rushed to the market and burnt down the stalls, thereby destroying the goods of the traders. According to Obalanga sub-county officials, the rebels burnt over 115 grass-thatched houses and destroyed 15 shops which were located in the trading center at the time.

Many of the civilians managed to escape, but those who did not were captured. The rebels looted items like rice, posho, sugar, biscuits and sodas from the houses and shops they came across. The looted goods were given to civilians who had been abducted, and they were forced to carry them to the rebels' camping site at Labira Girls' Secondary School. One of the first abducted persons, a lady from Obalanga called Margaret, took us through what happened there after. Margaret was abducted along with another woman called Arengo.

⁸ Focus group discussion, Angica B village, 20th July 2011



Margaret was one of the first people to be abducted by the LRA. Together with another woman called Arengo, they were forced to move with the rebels for several days until they were released. Source: JRP

“From Labira the rebels led us to Aojakitoi where we stayed for nine days. Along the way they kept searching the houses which had been abandoned by civilians and looting anything they came across. They took a football from one teacher’s home at Aojakitoi Primary School. With this newly-acquired ball, the rebels formed football squads and began playing football with the newly-abducted children. As the football game went on they occasionally told the children that, ‘Don’t mind. We shall release you to go back home.’”⁹

According to Margaret, the football matches were mainly played in the morning hours between rebels and the abducted children, as other adult abductees remained locked up in huts surrounding the school, while senior commanders went bathing and spies went to scout out the positions of the UPDF.

Nine days later on 24th June 2003, a group of rebels was sent to ambush a vehicle that was traveling from Soroti to Obalanga at a place called Amilimil in Kuju sub-county. The majority of people who lost their lives in this ambush were residents of Obalanga. Until this incident, the rebels had not been violent against the civilian population. In fact, the majority of the respondents we interviewed

testified that the level of violence by the LRA in their first two weeks in Teso was minimal. As one respondent noted:

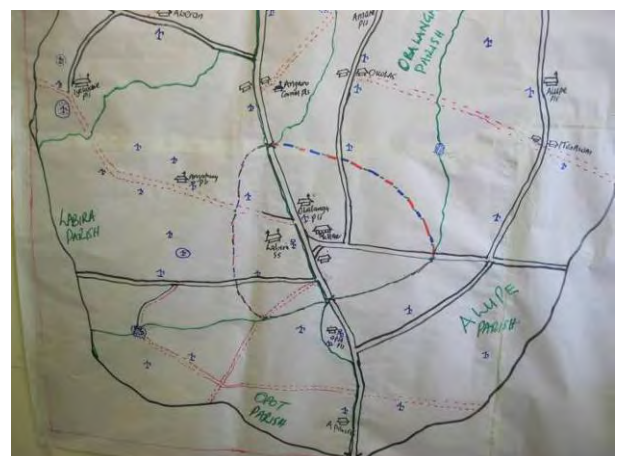
“Funnily enough, the LRA rebels were even helping people to graze the animals. They probably did that in line with their propaganda of coming to help the people of Teso. They kept telling people that they had come to help them to fight the Karamojong since the Government was not doing anything about it. They also did not hurt any aged people, but they abducted young children and youth to serve in their forces.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, the rebels’ activities became violent two weeks after their entry into Teso. After ambushing the vehicle at Amilimil, the rebels and their prisoners left Aojakitoi and headed to Asamuk, where the rebels camped in one of the abandoned homes and slaughtered a goat for a feast. They stayed in that home until evening, before heading to a place called Opot, where they played another football game at Opot Primary School. From Opot, the rebels headed to Kuju. As Margaret remembers, “When we reached Kuju, we camped in a garden of groundnuts and cow peas. The rebels turned that garden into their parade ground. We spent the night there. In the morning, they took the young children who had been abducted and began training them. The women and elderly abductees were left out of the training.”¹¹

As the training was going on, Margaret was taken for questioning by commander Tabuley. As she recalls:

“Commander Tabuley asked me how far our location was from Katakwi district. By then Katakwi was our district. He also asked me how many soldiers there were in Obalanga, and how far it was from our location to Soroti. He wanted to know if there were any soldiers at Soroti Flying School. I did not have any information to offer in response to his questions so he dismissed me. Shortly afterwards, the whistle was blown as a signal for the rebels to start moving. The rebels had begun moving towards Morungatuny. Along the way, two people were captured called Otai Osan and Taipan Edwaru, and they were tortured badly.”¹²

At Morungatuny, the rebels gave Margaret and Arengo a typed letter to take to the district. This letter repeated the liberation propaganda which the LRA used as a justification for their invasion of Teso.¹³ The pair walked until they reached Obalanga, where they handed over the letter to the local



Sketch map of Obalanga in 2003 drawn for JRP by respondents. Source: JRP

⁹ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011
¹⁰ Individual interview, Soroti town, 13th September 2011
¹¹ Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011
¹² Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011
¹³ See Appendix A.



A survivor displays the injuries inflicted on him by the LRA.
Source: JRP

council (LC) I chairman. It was the fourteenth day since the attack on Obalanga. From Morungatuny, the rebels broke up into different groups and began to spread to other areas. During this period, the UPDF had not yet deployed any forces to Obalanga or the surrounding sub-counties. Against this backdrop, Obalanga trading center had been without any protection by the UPDF, allowing the LRA to roam the area and freely carry out massacres and killings of civilians. Finally, on 26th and 27th June, some soldiers from the UPDF arrived in Obalanga. However, these soldiers were still not enough to offer sufficient protection to Obalanga. The UPDF was ill-prepared for an LRA invasion of Teso, as most of the soldiers were engaged in operations in Acholi and Lango sub-regions, which had been the previous epicenter of attacks by the LRA.

“The lack of a rapid response from the UPDF made people ask what the intention of the Government was. Many people wondered why the Government had not taken trouble to respond, even when they knew that the LRA was freely roaming the area. That is why up to this day people would like the Government to acknowledge their role, even if it is just to say sorry for having abandoned us. The slow response by the Government has left us with a very big question on whether we are citizens of the country.”¹⁴

As a result of pressure from prominent Teso personalities, the Government formed a local militia composed of Teso youth who volunteered to defend their villages from LRA attacks. These local militia became known as the Arrow Boys' Brigade. Most of these youth were drawn from villages all over Teso. The Arrow Boys, as its members became called, did not receive much training because there was simply not enough time for this. In Obalanga sub-county, the first Arrow Boys were deployed on 28th June 2003. Up to this time, many of the displaced persons had just informally settled at Obalanga trading center and were always on the run because of the inadequate protection offered by the Government soldiers. However, with the arrival of the first 50 Arrow Boys, many of them gained confidence to move permanently into the Obalanga trading center, which was to become the largest IDP camp in Teso with over 40,000 occupants. More information about the Arrow Boys is discussed in a later section of this report.

The LRA spread to many other areas throughout Amuria, Katakwi, Soroti and Kaberamaido while wreaking havoc, abducting, and killing civilians. Again, the reactions of the civilians living in Teso show how unexpected the attacks were, as demonstrated from a quote by one person living in Soroti at the time:

“It happened in what seemed like a joke at first. Rumors kept flowing to Soroti town that the [LRA] was poised to attack any time. The claims majored mainly on an attack on [Soroti Flying School] in Soroti... Days went by but still no attack was carried out, although warning letters and words kept coming in.... Then on the 30th September 2003, at approximately 1:00am... Soroti town was brutally attacked. Gunshots filled the normally quiet streets, lighting them up like a fireworks display. This was a new experience to many of us, as most youth



Opot Primary School was one of the venues in which the LRA played football matches. They reportedly had time to engage in such leisurely activities because the Government forces were slow to act. Source: JRP

¹⁴ Individual interview, Obalanga, 29th June 2011

had never witnessed this kind of thing before. It was very frightening.”¹⁵

In Soroti there was an attempted attack on Soroti Flying School, which was not successful. As one of the FAPs we talked to narrated, *“In Soroti, we were divided into two groups and assigned to different missions. My group was ordered to attack Soroti Flying School. We prepared for the operation and went and attacked the flying school. However, we were forced to retreat as a result of an attack by the army, who used three armored vehicles to repulse us.”¹⁶* In Soroti, respondents frequently mentioned the massacre of close to 50 civilians in a village called Odudui, in Arapai sub-county, located north of Soroti town. In Kaberamaido, the LRA killed and carried out abductions in Bululu, Kalaki, Anyara, Otuboi and Kaberamaido Senior Secondary School. Many residents in Kaberamaido were forced into Otuboi and Anyara IDP camps.

Meanwhile, conditions in Obalanga IDP camp were poor. Many of the respondents we talked to decried the lack of facilities and health services for all the 40,000 IDPs who moved into the camp. Schools were lacking for children to attend, and sanitation was poor. The people suffered due to food shortages, and the presence of the LRA prevented residents from leaving the IDP camp to harvest food from their gardens. In approximately ten months of life in the IDP camp, food aid was delivered approximately ten times by the Government and the World Food Program, but on each occasion it was not enough to sustain the people between deliveries.

“The situation was very harsh in Obalanga camp. Food was a problem. If you tried to sneak back into the villages in order to get some food, you would be killed by either the LRA or the soldiers. Eventually, the Government began to deliver food aid to Obalanga. The first batch of food was delivered in July 2003. Food was delivered about ten times during the entire time we were in the camps.”¹⁷

Generally, the effect of the LRA incursions in Teso hit Obalanga particularly hard, which like the rest of Teso suffered frequent ambushes, destruction of property and loss of lives. A baseline survey by Concern–Uganda, an international charity organization working to improve the lives of poor people, showed that up to 95% of the district population was at one time displaced and lived in IDP camps.¹⁸ The livelihoods of the people were affected since they were not allowed to move more than one kilometer outside the IDP camps. According to officials at Obalanga sub-county, over 2,000 children are believed to have been abducted by the LRA rebels. Over 600 people were killed in Obalanga sub-county alone. Property was damaged on a wide scale, and 40,000 people were displaced into Obalanga IDP camp. A mass grave was eventually constructed in Obalanga, in which over 365 victims of the LRA have been buried. In Wera and Asamuk sub-counties, 133 people were killed, 230 children were abducted, and nine permanent buildings were destroyed.

Victims’ Experiences

JRP’s interaction with victims in Teso sub-region revealed that they generally experienced a great deal of suffering in the eight months in which the LRA wrecked havoc in their land. Many of the victims in Teso had not seen atrocities of this magnitude committed against them in the history of their villages. JRP interacted with victims ranging from formerly-abducted persons, widows and widowers, victims of helicopter gunship bombs and ex-Arrow Boys. In this section, we briefly explore the experiences of these different categories of people.

Formerly abducted Persons

The LRA is estimated to have abducted close to 2,000 children from Obalanga sub-county alone. In the neighboring Wera and Asamuk sub-counties, 230 children were abducted and are still missing. Unlike in Acholi and Lango regions – where the phenomenon of abduction was not new – many of the people in Teso region experienced it for the first time in 2003. They neither knew how to protect themselves from their abductors, nor how to respond safely to questions they were asked.

¹⁵ Doreen Akello. 2005. “Personal Memories of the LRA Rebel Attack on Teso.” *UG Pulse*, August 31. <http://www.ugpulse.com/Government/personal-memories-of-the-lra-rebel-attack-in-teso/148/ug.aspx>.

¹⁶ Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011

¹⁷ Focus group discussion, Angica B village, 20th July 2011

¹⁸ Amuria District Verification Commission, unpublished report



Stephen and his family. Stephen is of the few abductees who was able to resume life with his family after return from several years of captivity. Source: JRP

Emmanuel, Stephen and Grace are three individuals who were abducted from Obalanga by the LRA and taken into captivity. Emmanuel was abducted on 16th June 2003 from Okera village one day after the LRA attacked Obalanga. He was only 16 years old. Stephen was abducted approximately one month later in July 2003 from Angatuny village. He was 23 years old at the time, and a father of two children with his wife Deborah. Grace was abducted in July 2003 from Ojepai village in Alito parish. She was 14 years old.

The two boys were abducted separately, but in the course of their captivity, they came to serve in one battalion. Amidst a group of LRA soldiers composed mostly of Acholi, they became friends and depended on each other for survival. After his abduction, Emmanuel was taken to serve under a group led by Commander Watmon. Emmanuel was not used to walking, and as a

result his legs became swollen after only a few days of intense marching. Eventually, he could not walk any further. Some rebels in his group suggested that he should be killed, but he was saved by the intervention of Commander Watmon who had taken a liking to him. This only earned him the hatred and wrath of the other LRA soldiers, who from then on decided to torture him in various ways. They often chose to torture him whenever commander Watmon was not around. Stephen was taken to serve under a group of rebels headed by Commander Kilama, a harsh and brutal man. Emmanuel eventually became separated from his group during an attack by a helicopter gunship, and wound up in Stephen's group. The two became friends. Of the training they were offered, both boys recalled that, "They asked us if we knew Museveni. We said we knew him. They asked us if we knew Joseph Kony. We said we did not know him. They asked us if we wanted to know him. We kept quiet. They then told us that the purpose of the training was to overthrow Museveni. However, we were not given guns."¹⁹

When Grace was abducted, the rebels forced her to leave behind four of her crying siblings, the youngest of whom was only one year old. The rebels led Grace and other captives to a place called Abota. In Abota, the newly-abducted persons were locked up in a hut as the rebels cooked. When the food was ready, the rebels brought the abductees out of the hut and served them food. After they had eaten, a number of them, including two pregnant women, were released to go back home. However, Grace was not among the lucky people released. Instead, she was taken by the rebels to Katakwi where they dwelt for a while before heading towards Pader.

One day during an operation, Emmanuel was shot in the back and was brutally wounded. The bullet penetrated through his right shoulder, and came out of the front of his breast. In the thick of the action, all the LRA soldiers were trying to flee and save their lives. Emmanuel could not run because he was injured. He called out for help but nobody came to rescue him. He then called out to Stephen saying, "Stephen, my brother, have you also abandoned me?"²⁰ On hearing these words, Stephen returned and hoisted Emmanuel on his back. Stephen carried Emmanuel for several kilometers until they outran the UPDF soldiers. By this time, Emmanuel had lost a lot of blood and was still bleeding profusely. Stephen used Emmanuel's shirt to bind his wound and stop the bleeding. Because the UPDF was still nearby, they had to continue moving. Stephen again carried Emmanuel, despite the latter's plea to put him down and abandon him so that they would not both be killed. Stephen refused and carried Emmanuel until the LRA eventually came to a stop after having eluded the UPDF. Emmanuel's wound was then treated by a man called Acoyo.



Grace was one of the many girls forcefully abducted from Obalanga. After her return, life was difficult. She failed to resume her studies and meet her basic needs such as food and healthcare. Her husband from captivity sought her out and they are living together. Source: JRP

¹⁹ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011

²⁰ Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011

After this, Stephen carried Emmanuel for several weeks, until the latter was strong enough to walk on his own.

Grace's worst experience happened in Pader. One day, all of the top rebels in her group held a meeting, and after they had discussed for a while, they removed their shirts which were taken and piled in front of the young girls who had been placed in one group. One-by-one, Grace and other abducted girls were instructed to go and pick a shirt of their choice from the pile. It later turned out that each shirt represented the man they were to be given to as a wife. They were all too terrorized to reject the man whose shirt they picked, no matter how old the man was. Grace picked the shirt of a boy called Okello. He did not have any rank but served as one of the scouts. She became Okello's wife and was forced to serve him from then on. Grace's group later went to Sudan, where they were attacked by a helicopter gunship. Grace and Okello managed to escape in the confusion that followed the attack. Her tormentor became her rescuer as Okello ensured that they eluded all LRA positions until they came to an army detach, where they surrendered. They were later taken to Rachele Reception Center in Lira, where Grace spent a few months before she was transported back to her home in Obalanga.



Orphans in Wera sub-county stand in front of their father's grave. Source: JRP

In June 2006, towards the beginning of the Juba Peace Talks, the LRA high command ordered all contingents of soldiers to withdraw from Uganda and report to Sudan. It was at this point that Stephen and Emmanuel decided to escape because they feared that once in Sudan, they would never be able to see their homeland again. They planned to escape together. However, on the day that they had planned to escape, the two were separated by a helicopter gunship attack. Both went their separate ways. It was at this point that Emmanuel decided to escape on his own. It was a painful decision for him to make because he had become deeply attached to Stephen, who had also saved his life. In his own words, "I was torn between leaving Stephen behind and going back home. This is because Stephen had been my savior while I was in the bush. I would not have survived if it was not for him."²¹ Emmanuel escaped and eventually handed himself over to the UPDF at a place called Labworomor in Gulu. He was taken to World Vision Child Rehabilitation Center where he spent five months undergoing therapy before being re-integrated into his community.



Mr. Epoi Paul, a sub-county chief in Amuria district, poses with two youth who were orphaned when the LRA killed their parents. Source: JRP

Stephen deeply missed Emmanuel. "Emmanuel was my friend and we were always close during our time in the LRA. After he escaped, I missed him a lot because he was like a brother to me."²² Stephen eventually escaped with two other boys called Richard and Otim and surrendered to the UPDF at Mucwini in Kitgum district. He was taken to Rachele Child Reception Center, where he was rehabilitated for five months before being re-integrated into his community.

By the time Stephen, Emmanuel and Grace returned to Obalanga in 2006, their homes had completely changed with all the people living in Obalanga IDP camp. Their home district, Katakwi, had been split into two, and they suddenly discovered that they now belonged to the new district of Amuria.

Emmanuel was sponsored by an NGO to do a vocational course. He has, however, not been able to use the skills he attained from the course due to a persistent lack of capital. Grace found that her parents were sick and weak and her elder brother, whom she had been living with before her abduction, had been abducted but unfortunately never

²¹ Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011
²² Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011

returned. She started living with her parents who were now in Obalanga camp. In the camp, she tried to resume school and sat for Primary Leaving Examinations, but performed poorly. She tried to join Labira Girl's Secondary School but dropped out due to lack of school fees. With her parents sick and life having become hard, Grace was forced to seek out Okello, her ex-bush husband. Okello had attempted to join the army immediately after return, but had abandoned the force. They resumed life as husband and wife.

Stephen discovered that his wife Deborah had remarried in his absence. The man in question was a cousin of his called Simon, who was then serving in the Arrow Boys' Brigade. Stephen first learned of this while he was undergoing rehabilitation in Lira district. The news was delivered to him by two of his brothers, whom had come to visit him at the reception center as soon as they learned that he had returned. They informed Stephen that Deborah had produced two children with Simon in his absence. While everybody expected the worst, Stephen told his brothers to go back home and reassure both Simon and Deborah that nothing bad would happen. Simon on his part discussed the issue with Deborah prior to Stephen's return and convinced her that she had to go back to living with her husband. On his release, Stephen's clan organized a reconciliatory meeting in which all clan members were invited. In front of all people present, Simon admitted that he had taken over Stephen's wife, only to protect and care for her in line with cultural traditions. He then addressed Deborah, asking her to go back to living with her husband. Stephen said he understood and went back to living with Deborah. They have had three more children since his return, and life seems to have returned to normal.



A focus group discussion with survivors in Morungatuny sub-county. Photo by JRP

On the surface of it, life appears to have returned to normal for many formerly-abducted children in Teso and even in Lango. Nevertheless, lessons from Obalanga indicate that FAPs continue to have numerous reintegration challenges which need to be addressed. Although many FAPs were offered counseling and psychosocial support, it appears to have had no sustainable effect on them. As one FAP said:

"I have not been able to live a normal life as a result of the experience I went through in abduction. I am not able to concentrate at school and sometimes I feel like going back to work as a soldier. I am currently in senior two at Labira Girls' Secondary School. Whenever I go to school, I feel out of place. I feel like I should live the life of a soldier. I have a feeling that education is not the best alternative for me. Sometimes at school we are called LRA children. I was offered counseling by an organization called FIDA, but it was not enough. Many returnees have psychological problems. In Alito village, a formerly-abducted child killed his father as a result of mental disturbances, and this child has now been convicted and is serving a prison sentence in Amuria Prison."²³



The mass grave at Obalanga sub-county in which remains of victims were laid to rest. Source: JRP

Few organizations have been involved in provision of counseling services in Teso region, unlike Acholi and Lango that had well established centers to deal with the influx of returnees. Most of the FAPs we interacted with had either been offered therapy at World Vision or GUSCO Child Reception Centers in Gulu, or at Rachelle Reception Center in Lira. None of them received monitoring or follow-up to determine if they needed any additional counseling or therapy. The only organization JRP found that was engaged in counseling and therapy for FAPs was the Finland International Development Agency (FIDA-International), which had only been able to offer counseling to 67 FAPs in Obalanga sub-county.

The lack of psychosocial support has resulted in disastrous impacts for some residents. One incident we recorded involved an elderly man called Mzee Elepu Palapyano, who was killed by his own son, Erwatu Julius. Julius was abducted twice by the LRA during the eight month invasion of Teso. He was first abducted in June 2003 immediately after the LRA attacked Obalanga, but reportedly did not spend many weeks in captivity. By that time, he was still in senior four. On this occasion, he escaped, returned and resumed a normal life. Towards the end of

²³ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011

June, the LRA abducted him again. However, on the second occasion, he seemed to have had a worse experience compared to the first time. According to relatives, he was seriously beaten and tortured by the rebels, such that by the time he escaped from them again after three weeks, he was wounded all over and acted like a mentally disturbed person. Immediately after escaping, he reportedly came across a battalion of soldiers, who again beat him up on allegations that he was a rebel. However, when they later realized that he was not a rebel, he was allowed to re-integrate into Obalanga camp, where he was re-united with his relatives. Mzee Elepu then took Julius to live with his mother in Soroti. Unknown to Mzee Elepu, Julius harbored intentions of killing the elderly man. He left Soroti on 12th July 2007 and went to Awojangur village where Mzee Elepu was staying. His intentions on this occasion were not clear, but his relatives suspect that he wanted to kill Mzee Elepu. However, on this particular day Mzee Elepu was not at home, having gone to Katakwi to attend to some personal business.



Josephine was injured as a result of a domestic misunderstanding between her son Geoffrey, a formerly abducted person and her husband. This later resulted in the death of her husband and the imprisonment of Geoffrey.
Source: JRP

Julius pried open a window in Mzee Elepu's house and removed some food-stuffs, which he prepared and ate. After waiting in vain for the old man to show up, he returned to Soroti town. On the 22nd of July 2007, Julius again left Soroti town, went to the village where Mzee Elepu was staying, and found him digging in the garden. He attacked the old man with a machete. The old man tried to defend himself and dodge the blows using his hands. This resulted in initial injuries to his arms and skull. Julius then dealt final blows as Mzee Elepu screamed for help. With his shirt soaked in blood, Julius fled towards Obalanga trading center but was quickly captured by civilians. He was taken to Obalanga Police Post, and then later remanded to Amuria Prison after being convicted for manslaughter. He was later released from prison after two and a half years because he was pronounced mentally unstable. He now lives in the village of Tuburu with his mother. Relatives we interviewed all testified that Julius had no prior grudge

with Mzee Elepu. To the contrary, Mzee Elepu raised Julius after the death of his biological father and paid his school fees up to senior four. Prior to Julius' abduction, he had a positive relationship with Mzee Elepu and even built his hut in Obalanga IDP camp. It seems that the psychological effects of Julius' abduction experience may have contributed to this violent outburst.

In a similar incident, Geoffrey, a FAP studying in senior two at Acumet Secondary School, killed his father after an argument. This incident occurred on 18th June 2003 in Eyalakwer village. Geoffrey had returned home for school fees on that day, when his step-father returned home drunk and began to beat up his mother, Josephine. When Geoffrey tried to intervene, his step-father drew him into an argument which resulted in a fight. In anger, Geoffrey hit his step-father with a pestle, and he collapsed and died on spot. Geoffrey is now serving a prison sentence for manslaughter in Amuria Prison. Although Geoffrey's abduction experience cannot be directly linked to the incident, many people we talked to, including Obalanga sub-county officials, claim it cannot be ruled out, either.

Psychosocial support and rehabilitation is therefore a major issue that needs to be pursued in Teso and other war-affected regions. In addition to the problem of psychological rehabilitation, FAPs face challenges of physical re-integration. Some of the FAPs we interacted with had completed courses in fields such as carpentry and joinery, but were lacking the tools with which to commence earning a livelihood. The organizations that had sponsored them for the courses had neither given them tools nor start-up capital with which to ply their trades. As a result, most of them were languishing in the villages without any form of income-generating activities.

Widows and Widowers

"I am a woman as well as a husband. I have orphans who were left when my husband was killed and I am struggling to meet their school expenses. I have no source of income apart from working in people's gardens as a hired labour. It would be my desire that since my husband died, the Government comes in to help and assist me to take care of the children."²⁴

"I am a mother and at the same time a father to my children" was a phrase frequently repeated by both males and females whose spouses had been killed by LRA rebels. Women and men alike were widowed as a result of the attacks perpetrated by the LRA rebels. As one man called Ongom told us, "My wife was killed and I was left with six children. I take care of the children and I am a father and at the same time a mother." Ongom is one of the widowers who comes from Abota village, Obalanga sub-county. When news of the LRA attacks filtered in, Ongom fled together with the

²⁴ Individual interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011

family to seek refuge in Obalanga IDP camp. Because of the severe food shortage in the camp, Ongom, like many other villagers, was frequently forced to risk a journey to his garden outside the camp to get food for his family. On 14th November 2003, Ongom left the camp to go back to his village and harvest cassava for feeding his family.

Ongom went with a group of eleven other civilians who also wanted to get food from their gardens to carry back to the camps. After harvesting enough cassava to carry back to the camp, the group decided to roast some of it and eat it before embarking on their journey back. As they settled down to roast the cassava, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by the rebels. The rebels apprehended all of them and walked with them to a place called Adunga which was on the outskirts of Abota village. At Adunga, Ongom suddenly decided that he had to run for his life. He waited for an opportune moment and then broke loose from the group and ran. The rebels shot at him, and he was hit in the leg. He decided to press on after realizing that none of his bones were broken, until he reached the swamp and crawled into a bush to rest. He was able to bind his wound with a dry piece of banana fiber in order to stop the bleeding. He then continued slowly until he reached the camp. At the camp there was no doctor and he had to rely on hot water and a local herb called 'iyebi' for curing his wounds.



Ongom's wife was killed by the LRA. He is one of the many widows and widowers who have to bring up children on their own. Source: JRP

Because of the food shortage, Ongom's wife decided to go on the 21st of November 2003 and attempt to get some food for the family. She went with her father-in-law and a group of other people who were determined to risk their lives to get food. She never made it back. On their way back, the group met with rebels led by Otti Vincent coming from the direction of Morungatuny. The rebels forced Ongom's wife and the rest of the group to dump the sorghum they had harvested and killed them in a nearby swamp. As a final humiliation, the rebels dumped the body of Ongom's wife on top of her father-in-law to make it appear as though the two of them were having sex. When the bodies were discovered a few days later, they were decomposing. Almost nine years later, this scene still traumatizes Ongom. He also has to live with the pain of a shrapnel particle still stuck in his thigh, in addition to taking care of the six children his wife left him. *"Life is very hard. If I don't do casual work then there is no means by which I can fend for my family. I am both the wife and husband. There has been no compensation by the Government for the losses we suffered. Most victims here want 'aitac' (compensation) from the Government because they lost their livelihoods."*²⁵

Amongin is one of the women who was widowed as a result of the insecurity in the IDP camp. Her husband was killed by the LRA less than 150 meters away from the camp as he fetched water. Amongin could not go herself because she was sick. Her husband decided to go, and he even made it successfully to the borehole and pumped water. On his way back, just a few meters outside the camp, he fell into an LRA ambush. He was shot through the chest, and then pierced several times with a bayonet to ensure that he was dead. Since the incident occurred close to the camp, people heard the gunshot and decided to investigate. Some boys volunteered to go and find out what had happened and to their horror, they found the old man lying dead with his bicycle and a jerry-can of water lying next to him. His body was carried back to the IDP camp but due to the insecurity, the old man could not be buried back in his homestead. He was buried close to the health center but later exhumed and transferred back to his home.

In her own words, Amongin said:

*"As a widow without anything to hold onto - no husband, livestock or tangible assets - life is very hard. I have orphans who need to be educated. My girls were forced into marriage early because I could not keep them in school. I cannot even manage to build a house. I can bend and make bricks and build the walls of the house, but the roof is a problem. I was diagnosed with kidney and pancreas problems recently."*²⁶

For other women like Petra, it is not only the loss of their husbands that they have to live with, but also the manner in which they died. Petra was only 22 years old when the LRA killed her husband Francis, who was serving in the Arrow Boys' Brigade. He met his death in the course of a fire exchange with the LRA when he was hit by a bullet. He could not be rescued by his colleagues because the LRA forced them to flee. The LRA then mutilated his body by cutting off his

²⁵ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011

²⁶ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011

head, which they took with them. Her husband had been with the Arrow Boys for less than a month. Petra's husband was buried headless, an incident that continues to traumatize Petra.

"It was only my husband whose head was chopped off by the LRA. The rest of the people who died were either shot or beaten to death but not killed in such a manner. Maybe the rebels took my husband's head because they thought he was the overall commander because my husband was wearing the commander's belt which was different from that worn by the rest of the Arrow Boys in his group. Since that time, I always recall the incident and whenever I recall it disturbs my mind so much."²⁷

Ex-Arrow Boys

James is one of the ex-Arrow Boy soldiers who volunteered to defend his people. He was born in Abota village in Obalanga sub-county. He started school but dropped out in primary seven due to lack of school fees. From then on he lived an ordinary peasant life until the LRA incursion. James recalls that several people were killed in an attack on his village, and the situation continued getting worse because civilians had no protection. The rebels were freely roaming the countryside, killing and abducting young children. James and other youth volunteered to defend their people despite the fact that they were only armed with nothing but bows and arrows. This is how they came to be called the Arrow Boys.



*Petra is one of the many survivors who live with horrible memories of how their loved ones died. The LRA killed Petra's husband, severed off his head and took it along with them. Her husband's body had to be buried headless, an incident that still haunts Petra.
Photo by JRP*

Recalling the abrupt decision he made and what his work finally turned out to be, James says:

"The LRA were causing a lot of suffering upon the people. They would come and attack the camp even during day time. The Government used to deliver relief food to the camp, but as soon as the rebels realized that food had been brought, they would come at any time whether during day time or night and raid the camp. That made life very hard. They would kill anybody they came across, be it a civilian or an Arrow Boy"²⁸

Obalanga became the center of operations for the Arrow Boys. The Arrow Boys militia based at Obalanga was the 8th battalion. In what was to later develop into a tense relationship between the regular army and the Arrow Boys, the Government did not at first trust the local militia and therefore didn't provide them with guns or equipment. Therefore, most of them started off without any guns, and were largely helpless to stem the attacks that the LRA continued to carry out in the surrounding areas. As the attacks became more frequent, the Government had no alternative but to hand over guns to the Arrow Boys. Reportedly, on the 2nd of July 2003, the Arrow Boys received 50 guns to help them defend Obalanga sub-county. As attacks by the LRA became more frequent and more Arrow Boys were recruited and sent to Obalanga, it became necessary to deploy more guns, as well. Against this backdrop, on the 23rd of August, the Arrow Boys were given another 200 guns. On 24th December, the Arrow Boys were given another 100 guns, and this was later followed up by another consignment of 150 guns on the 3rd of March 2004. In the end, there were as many as 746 armed Arrow Boys from Obalanga alone.

Although most of them were poorly trained, they proved to be crucial in guarding Obalanga IDP camp from LRA attacks, escorting vehicles traveling along the route to Soroti and also in guiding the UPDF soldiers around the villages as they went to pursue the rebels. They were also instrumental in collecting the remains of civilians killed by the LRA in the countryside and burying them.

In August 2003, almost two months after the first LRA attack, the Arrow Boys and UPDF finally started registering success against the rebels. According to James, this came about because the Arrow Boys united with the regular UPDF army and fought jointly. One of the first LRA commanders to be killed was Commander Opio. This encouraged the Arrow Boys to increase their efforts, which paid off with the death of commander Tabuley who was killed in Anyara in Kaberamaido district. The Arrow Boys were eventually instrumental in stemming the wave of LRA attacks in Teso, and as a result, large numbers of the LRA began to pull out of Teso beginning around February 2004.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Individual interview, Obalanga, 13 September 2011

Despite the successes registered by the Arrow Boys in stopping the LRA attacks, they worked under difficult conditions compared to the regular soldiers of the UPDF. As revealed to us by Obalanga sub-county officials, there were persistent tensions between the UPDF and the Arrow Boys. At one point, the commander of the Arrow Boys in Obalanga, Ecodu David, was arrested for attacking the LRA without authorization from the UPDF. Later, his deputy, Oculi Yuventine, was also arrested. Another problem according to James was a continuous lack of essential supplies such as food. The army used to provide the Arrow Boys with 10 kilograms of posho and 5 kilograms of beans every month. This is what they were expected to survive on for one month before receiving the next rations. However, this was far less than what their counterparts in the UPDF received. The Arrow Boys also lacked critical supplies such as food, medicine and uniforms compared to the UPDF soldiers.

Furthermore, the Arrow Boys had to go for months without payment compared to their counterparts in the regular army. According to James, when the Arrow Boys volunteered to protect their villages, they were promised monthly salaries of 60,000/= Ugandan shillings each. Despite this commitment, the Arrow Boys would sometimes go for up to five months without getting paid, and even when the army finally delivered their payment, they would not receive the entire amount owed to them. According to James, some Arrow Boys are still claiming money from the Government for unpaid months of service. The regular UPDF soldiers on the other hand were better paid and often received their salaries promptly and on time. The Arrow Boys complained about this differential treatment in vain.

"We complained frequently but got no response. What kept us going amidst such harsh conditions was because we had our people at heart. Many Arrow Boys who often got injured in the battlefield received no reasonable treatment. We never benefitted from the medicines that were delivered by the army. To meet our needs, we would go to villages, uproot peoples' cassava and come and sell it in order to buy medicine for ourselves. So as security enforcers we became security thieves because we were forced to venture into civilians' gardens."²⁹

With the LRA no longer a threat in Teso, the army leadership began demobilizing the Arrow Boys in 2005. This process, however, appears to have been mishandled. All the Arrow Boys were offered options of either joining the regular UPDF, or reintegrating back into the communities. According to James, they were not given an opportunity to decide properly. On the designated date, those who opted not to join the army were instructed to hand in their uniforms and guns after which they were given 250,000/= Ugandan shillings and



The signpost of Wera Technical School, one of the institutions intended for the rehabilitation of ex-Arrow Boys. Many ex-Arrow boys we spoke to claimed to have been ignored by the Government. Source: JRP

released. Those who opted to join UPDF were paid 860,000/= Ugandan shillings in cash and immediately made to board trucks which ferried them to unknown destinations. James opted to resign and go back home, reasoning that he could not leave his people behind.

According to James, approximately 100 Arrow Boys from Obalanga perished in action during the period of the LRA incursion. He remembers that the only assistance which the bereaved families received upon the death of an Arrow Boy was one sack of posho, one sack of beans and 100,000/= Ugandan shillings, often delivered by a Government representative. After the burial ceremony was conducted, the family would hear nothing more from the Government. According to James, the lack of sufficient Government response angered many Arrow Boys and community members, particularly in cases where the dead soldiers left behind widows and orphans. The Arrow Boys tried appealing for livelihood support and compensation for families of the bereaved, but their appeals have been unsuccessful. As a result, many families left behind by Arrow Boys face a daily struggle to survive.

²⁹ Ibid.

Although it has been several years since the end of the LRA incursion in Teso, James is bitter that no post-conflict programs have yet been developed to help Arrow Boys despite the contribution they made in stemming the LRA attacks. In his own words, *“Very many groups have been offered assistance in Obalanga, but I have never heard of anyone helping ex-Arrow Boys. Many Arrow Boys volunteered to help the community and Teso in general. If we had not fought, the LRA would still be in Teso today. Our deceased colleagues who lost their lives in service have not yet been compensated either.”*³⁰

JRP received unconfirmed testimonies of how resources or programs meant for helping ex-Arrow Boys were often embezzled by the individuals entrusted to deliver. In the course of our documentation, respondents frequently mentioned tractors that had been meant to help ex-Arrow Boys in farming being diverted to a prominent minister’s farm. In Wera sub-county, a technical school meant for training ex-Arrow Boys in vocational skills has yet to produce results. According to the school authorities, only 96 male FAPs have so far been trained but they plan to train ex-Arrow boys, too.



Mzee Ogaro stands next to the graves of his wives and relatives who were killed when a helicopter gunship mistakenly bombed them. The victims of this bombing have never been compensated by the Government. Source: JRP



Selina displays one of the motor shells recovered from the scene of bombing by the helicopter gunship in Angica B village. She lost five relatives in this incident. Source: JRP

When Protectors Turn Perpetrators: Bomb Victims in Angica and Morungatuny

In the course of interacting with victims in Obalanga, we frequently came across incidents of atrocities perpetrated by the UPDF. In Obalanga IDP camp, civilians sometimes became victims of the UPDF soldiers guarding the camp. One of these people was Esiku Geoffrey, a formerly-abducted person who was killed by a UPDF soldier called Ojur Francis in November 2003 under mysterious circumstances. Other people allegedly killed by UPDF soldiers include Ocen son of Amongot, Omudat of Amare village, and Emodu Samuel. From Agonga parish, Eletu Joseph and Aryemo Stella of Okera village were killed by soldiers of the 53rd battalion under mysterious circumstances on 29th June 2003. Most of these killings have neither been investigated nor punished by the army, and the surviving relatives of the victims have never been compensated.³¹

A particularly disturbing story recounted by respondents in Obalanga was that of victims being bombed by UPDF helicopter gunships in Angica and Morungatuny as the army hunted for LRA rebels.

On 9th July 2003, nine people lost their lives in the village of Angica in Alito parish, in Obalanga sub-county. Most of the civilians had fled the village and sought refuge in Obalanga IDP camp. This particular group of people

remained to nurse a sick person, Ejabu Michael, who was critically ill and could not flee with the others to safety. As they went about attending to the sick person and performing domestic chores, a helicopter gunship suddenly emerged from the direction of Obalanga at around 4:00pm, and on sighting them, immediately opened fire. The civilians scampered for safety as bombs exploded to their left and right. The hut in which Michael lay ill was set ablaze by one of the mortar shells, and he died instantly. By the time the gunship left, nine people were dead. The dead persons were Ocen Marcelino, Angwaro Aisitina, Ejabu Michael, Okello Silver, Ediegu Daniel, Icoru Matilda, Amuge Selina, Adiao Teresa, and Ogoba.

³⁰ Individual Interview, Obalanga, 24th August 2011

³¹ Obalanga Sub-County Records

After the helicopter departed, the survivors of the incident were left with the remains of their relatives and the smoke and ashes from the mortar shells. Several people from Obalanga who heard about the incident went to see what had happened. The UPDF soldiers based at Obalanga also rushed to the scene. The burials were conducted the following day, but under pressure from the soldiers, the people had to hurry up with the burials because many were afraid that the LRA could still be nearby. The soldiers even forbade the relatives of the dead to weep loudly, in fear that it would attract the LRA's attention.



James, the leader of a community-based organization in Obalanga looks at the center pole of a hut in Angica village that was razed by the helicopter gunship bombings. Source: JRP

Even though it is possible that the helicopter gunship could have mistaken the civilians for rebels, the surviving relatives of the victims we spoke to are still bitter about the incident. Selina is one of the victims who lost five relatives in the incident including both her mother and father-in-law, her brother (Ejabu Michael) and her two nephews (Okello Silver and Edyegu Daniel). Mzee Daudi, an elderly man of over sixty years, has bitter memories of that incident because it is the day he lost both of his wives (Ecoru Matilda and Amuge Selina), his daughter (Adiao Teresa) and his son-in-law (Ogoba). Mzee Daudi now struggles to live on with his painful memories and relies on his other children and grandchildren to care for him.

In neighboring Morungatuny sub-county, we discovered another incident of a helicopter gunship bombing civilians. This particular incident occurred in February 2004 and involved approximately 50 civilians who had left the safety of Morungatuny to look for food during the sparse dry season. This was the period when the LRA was just beginning to withdraw from Teso, although insecurity was still a threat. According to Mzee Elango, a survivor of this incident, a group of about 50 civilians left the IDP camp at 8:00am, escorted by a group of UPDF soldiers who were going out on patrol. After ensuring that the civilians were safely deposited at the Atiba swamp in Alela village, the soldiers continued on the patrol. According to Mzee Elango:



Mzee Elango was one of the civilians fishing in Atiba swamp when they were bombed by a helicopter gunship in February 2004. Source: JRP

"At around 10:00am a small helicopter came. It circled around us and then went back in the direction from which it had come. One hour later, a bigger helicopter came flying at a very low altitude. It first flew past us, then turned around and came back and just began bombing us straight away. The civilians raised their hands and spears in the air to try and signal the pilot that they were just civilians fishing."³²

But the helicopter pilot ignored this signal and went ahead to drop his bombs. Mzee Elango was one of the civilians who survived by hiding under some trees that were growing on the river bank. He and other civilians were at first afraid to go back to the IDP camp, fearing that they would be arrested by the UPDF, so they lingered around until 3:00pm when they gathered the courage to return.

When people visited the scene, it was discovered that two people had died on the spot. The dead were identified as a woman called Alajo and a man called Awojan. Seven people were injured, including Ebwony Richard and another person called Rhoda Adyango.

Several years after this incident, the UPDF has neither apologized nor issued any public statement to the families of the victims either in Morungatuny or Angica. The victims have no idea what will happen next, or whether they will receive

³² Individual interview, Morungatuny, 15th September 2011

any compensation. During the 2011 presidential elections, President Yoweri Museveni promised to compensate victims of these bombings but several months after his election, nothing has yet materialized for the victims.³³

Missing Persons

Records from Obalanga sub-county indicate that to-date, 41 people are still missing.³⁴ To allow us to gather more sufficient information, we also interacted with relatives of people who are still missing to this day. Gladys, a 42-year-old woman from Obalanga still yearns for her husband, Mr. Odeke John Paul who was abducted one night in August 2003. He was the headmaster of Agonga Primary School. The rebels came in the night and found them all at home in their village of Labira. Her husband was taken along with four other people, two men and three girls who also happened to be pupils at Agonga Primary School. The three girls later escaped and returned, but Gladys' husband has not yet returned. Since her husband was abducted, Gladys and her four children have lived a miserable life. There is no proper education or feeding for them, and Gladys herself suffers from numerous health complications. During one of the focus group discussions we held in Obalanga sub-county, Gladys was shocked when it was revealed by one of the FAPs that her husband might have been killed in Kaberamaido. This particular FAP was close to commander Tabuley while in captivity and reported that Gladys' husband may have died in that battle.

Gladys is one of the many victims calling upon the Government or any other well-wishers to help provide information on whether her husband is still alive or not.

"Having served as a head teacher of a public school, he was a Government civil servant. What shocks me however is that nothing has been done by the Government to look after the orphans and widows like me. Most of us are only requesting for education of our children. If they can go to school, then they are our future hope. As for my missing husband, I do not know what can be done to address the situation. Maybe the Government can provide a solution to trace whether he is still alive or not."³⁵

Most people with missing relatives are at loss regarding how this situation can be addressed. In the course of interacting with them, most of them resorted to using the phrase, "It defeats my understanding," as an indication of the pain they were going through from the suspense of not knowing the fate of their loved ones. Some assurance has to be given to such people so that they can know the fate of their loved ones. There is a need to institute programs aimed at tracing the whereabouts of such people in order to put their minds to rest.

Picking up the Pieces: Burials, Memorialization and Reparations

The worst LRA attacks in Teso region lasted approximately eight months, but within that short period, thousands of people lost their lives and property. Villages were destroyed, and the community could not access social services such as healthcare or education. Hundreds of children such as Emmanuel, Grace and Stephen were abducted, while those who survived abduction could not attend school due to being caught up in the IDP camps. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS increased, which in effect claimed the lives of many more people. Food was scarce, and people could not go out to their gardens to harvest or collect food. Even though the LRA are said to have departed Teso region around January 2004, the people had to remain in the IDP camps until 2005 when the Government finally allowed them to resettle in their villages. As was the case in Acholi and Lango sub-regions, the return process in Teso was slow and difficult. Many people had to start rebuilding their houses afresh. Women whose husbands had been killed had to struggle on their own to build new homes, or rely on the goodwill of



JRP researchers hold a focus group discussion with widows. Some of these women do not know the whereabouts of their husbands and children who were abducted. Source: JRP

³³ See for example: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201101240087.html> or <http://www.ugpulse.com/uganda-news/people/Government-to-compensate-teso/23036.aspx>

³⁴ See Appendix C

³⁵ Individual interview, Obalanga, 23rd August 2011

their relatives. The vulnerable, such as the elderly and orphaned children, simply had no option but to rely on good samaritans or to remain stranded in the IDP camp.

Burial of Human Remains

What truly slowed down the return process, to the point of almost halting it, was the presence of human remains which were littered all over the villages. These remains mostly consisted of the bones of the people who had been killed during the period when the LRA roamed the countryside. This was a challenge that existed in many villages, including Obalanga. In the words of one respondent who was a local leader in Obalanga at the time, *“There were so many graves in every village. When people returned to their abandoned houses, they would open their doors only to find dead people inside. In the gardens, the same scene greeted people. Corpses were scattered all over the villages. Most of these corpses had already decomposed and people only managed to identify their loved ones by the clothes they were wearing.”*³⁶



A survivor of the LRA incursions stares at the mass grave in which victims were buried. Source: JRP

*“There were so many graves in every village. When people returned to their abandoned houses, they would open their doors only to find dead people inside. In the gardens, the same scene greeted people. Corpses were scattered all over the villages. Most of these corpses had already decomposed and people only managed to identify their loved ones by the clothes they were wearing.”*³⁶

In Obalanga, the problem was eventually solved by the community members themselves, under the leadership of a local community-based organization (CBO) called Obalanga Human Rights and Healthcare Association (OHRHCA). Under the leadership of Julius Ochen, Eyeru James, and Okello Tom, three men from Obalanga, the CBO was formed in 1997 with the initial aim of helping the community tackle health-related issues of elephantiasis and hydrocoeles which was afflicting Obalanga at the time. In the aftermath of the LRA incursions, it expanded its scope to tackle problems being faced by the community.

One of these problems, as already noted above, was how to handle the burial of the numerous human bones and remains which littered the countryside at that time. According to James, the current head of OHRHCA:

*“There were over 120 sites all over Obalanga sub-county in which people found bones littered. This caused great fear among the people. The community members therefore approached OHRHCA for help. Many people who had died had been buried in the camps; for example at the health center there were a number of individual graves. We found it necessary to gather these bones together and bury them in one large mass grave. The major challenge was that it was difficult to collect all the bones together and bring them into one spot. It was also difficult to exhume the bones.”*³⁷

The CBO mobilized support from various organizations and individuals to facilitate the burial process. Concern Worldwide donated 100 bags of cement, 50 iron sheets, 24 pieces of wire mesh, 22 rolls of angle bars, and 200 litres of fuel to facilitate the movement of vehicles to collect all the human remains from the countryside. Action Aid donated 1,000 rolls of burial linen. The Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) donated 50,000 Ugandan shillings. The Teso Islamic Development Organization (TIDO) donated 10,000 Ugandan shillings. War on Want donated 200,000 Ugandan shillings. The Teso Diocese Development Organization (TEDO) donated 130,000 Ugandan shillings, while Mr. Julius Ochen, the LC V Chairperson of Amuria at the time, donated 575,000 Ugandan shillings.

The local community contributed labour and local construction materials such as sand and stones. They worked hard to exhume the bodies and collect the human remains for burial in the mass grave. The first phase of burials was therefore able to successfully take place on 15th June 2005, with memorial prayers conducted for the dead by the Catholic Church, followed by the community sharing a meal together. This first phase of burials went on until 7th July 2005 and ended because burial materials had been depleted. After the community was able to mobilize more resources, the second phase of burials was conducted on 15th September 2005, and the final phase was conducted on 3rd December

³⁶ Individual interview, Soroti town, 13th September 2011

³⁷ Individual interview, Obalanga, 29th June 2011

2005, graced by prayers led by the Anglican Church, represented by Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi, who also donated one million shillings to facilitate the fencing of the burial site.

Memorialization

A total of 365 remains of victims were laid to rest in the mass grave at Obalanga. It is the largest mass grave in Teso sub-region, and is arguably the only physical manifestation of the impacts of the LRA attacks in Teso region. The 15th June has become the anniversary on which the victims of the LRA attacks are remembered in Teso. A memorial prayer is held every year on this date in honour of the victims. The victims of Obalanga feel the mass grave has been instrumental in promoting healing and memorialization for those who lost their lives. In the words of one resident of Obalanga:

"The people of Obalanga wanted the mass grave to act like a monument. They believed that they could canvas for support and establish a day of remembrance which would last for the years to come. It is one of the healing strategies for them because they believe that their children have been accorded a decent burial. It was meant to open the eyes of the Government to the needs of the people on the ground."³⁸

And indeed this mass grave has been of benefit to the victims of Obalanga. Because of this mass grave, Obalanga was visited by delegates to the Juba Peace Talks in 2006, as they toured the LRA-affected areas. Respondents who were present at the time of this visit claim that the LRA delegation asked the people to forgive them, and called upon the Government to compensate the victims of the attacks in Teso. Many respondents also mentioned that the mass grave had helped to counter claims by the Government that the LRA invasions had not affected Teso. Obalanga sub-county also benefitted from a water and sanitation project financed by Coca-Cola Company, which resulted in the construction of a solar-powered borehole and a water tank which supplies water to residents in the trading center.

Despite these benefits, the people of Obalanga still face big challenges with regard to memorialization for the dead. For example, the memorial prayers for 2011 were not able to be held on 15th June as usual due to lack of funds for the ceremony. The mass grave also frequently gets overrun by thick bushes due to lack of funds to maintain it. In addition, the victims of conflict who lost their relatives and friends have not been provided with any sort of reparations or compensation. Other memorialization initiatives are also yet to be put in place. For example, President Yoweri Museveni is said to have visited Obalanga in 2005 and promised the residents a memorial secondary school. Nevertheless, construction of this school is yet to kick off.

Reparations

"Uganda also does not have a proper reparations policy, and yet people need to be repaired. During elections the Government talked about compensation. However, this has not been handled properly. A person from Teso can be paid 3 million, one from Gulu 20 million, and people in Mukura are given 200 million. In Luweero, it was 800 million. This makes you wonder if human beings are different."³⁹

Like victims in many other parts of northern Uganda, the victims of the conflict in Obalanga have struggled to cope with the long-term impacts of the LRA incursions into Teso, and to come to terms with what happened to them. Many who lost loved ones have struggled to cope with the painful memories of these losses. Many of the people who died were breadwinners, and as a result, their surviving relatives continue to struggle to look after their dependants. Many of these victims also look forward to reparations or compensation by the Government, but this has not been forthcoming.

"Today we are doing everything we can to support Government programs. But the Government seems to be reluctant to assist the victims. So it is our prayer that other actors come in and help us. Many people suffered losses during the LRA



Relatives of victims who lost their lives in the helicopter gunship bombings in Angica B village. Many survivors claim that little has been done to honor the memories of their loved ones. Source: JRP

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Individual interview, Obalanga, 29th June 2011

attacks. In Obalanga for example, thirteen permanent houses were destroyed including a lot of property belonging to the people. Food crops that were in the gardens were damaged. But the Government has not been able to help the victims."⁴⁰

According to one respondent we spoke to, President Museveni is said to have made a pledge for compensation to victims of the conflict on a visit to Obalanga in 2005. This pledge has yet to be fulfilled, in addition to many other promises such as the construction of a memorial secondary school. In the meantime, the war-affected community members in Obalanga have had to rely on other sources of reparations, or compensation, as they await the Government process.



The grave of Adiao Teresa, one of the victims of the helicopter bombings in Angica B village. Source: JRP

The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002, stipulates for provision of reparations to victims of conflict through its Trust Fund for Victims (TFV). The TFV fulfils two mandates: (1) administering reparations ordered by the Court against a convicted person,⁴¹ and (2) using other resources for the benefit of victims subject to the provisions of article 79 of the Rome Statute.⁴² Both mandates provide support to victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 1 July, 2002.⁴³ As victims of the LRA conflict, the people of Obalanga and Teso therefore qualify for reparations or assistance offered by the TFV. With this in mind, OHRHCA linked victims to the

Victims' Participation and Reparations Section of the ICC, to enable them access to assistance under the TFV. Approximately

214 victims have so far been registered in Obalanga and approved by the ICC.

Moreover, an organization called the Amuria District Development Agency (ADDA) is implementing assistance programs under the TFV in Obalanga. ADDA has formed victims' groups in all the parishes of Amuria district in order to help them cope with the impacts of the conflict. Each of these groups consists of 27 victims, and they are being helped to run a village savings and credit association. ADDA is also working on creating a database of atrocities committed in Amuria district. The organization, however, faces funding challenges, which means that several victims cannot be reached by their interventions.

Reparations under the TFV may not be adequate to address the needs to the people in Obalanga. Many victims were not able to get access to the registration forms which means they cannot benefit from the TFV. In addition, with the LRA still at large, and trials having failed to kick off in The Hague, hopes for reparations ordered by the ICC in the event of a conviction are fast fading away.

Moving to the national scene, in 2010 Uganda domesticated the Rome Statute. This later saw the passing of the International Crimes Bill, which resulted into the formation of the International Crimes Division (ICD) under the High Court of Uganda. These developments activated the principle of complementarity. The trial of the first LRA commander Thomas Kwoyelo kicked off in July 2011. However, the Registrar of the International Crimes Division (ICD) has ruled out the possibility of the court granting reparations to victims of the LRA conflict. This means that as it stands now victims of the LRA conflict cannot hope for reparations from the ICD.

⁴⁰ Individual interview, Obalanga, 29th June 2011

⁴¹ *Rules of Procedure and Evidence*. Rule 98(2-4), September 2002. http://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/F1E0AC1C-A3F3-4A3C-B9A7-B3E8B115E886/140164/Rules_of_procedure_and_Evidence_English.pdf

⁴² *Ibid.* Rule 98(5). For more information on the TFV's legal basis, see <http://trustfundforvictims.org/legal-basis>.

⁴³ *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. Articles 6-8, July 2002. <http://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/ADD16852-AEE9-4757-ABE7-9CDC7CF02886/283503/RomeStatutEng1.pdf>.

Recommendations

While the LRA attacks in Teso sub-region were quickly dealt with, survivors of the conflict continue to live in dire conditions. Many people in Teso have suffered losses of livestock and lives as a result of these attacks. Therefore, Teso region cannot be declared peaceful even though the region is in the post-LRA conflict era. It is close to three years since the Juba Peace Talks between the Government of Uganda and LRA ended prematurely in November 2008. The LRA incursions into Teso sub-region, which began in June 2003 and ended in January 2004, left thousands of people victimized and in need of assistance if they are to live normal lives again. Many victims are still struggling to come to terms with what happened to them. In fact, the situation of victims in Obalanga is symptomatic of what is being experienced by many victims of conflict across northern Uganda. In light of this, this report recommends the following:

- a) **There is a need to provide reparations, in particular compensation, to victims of the conflict.** Like in other areas of greater northern Uganda, victims in Obalanga cite compensation as the most valuable form of reparations that they would wish to access. As the findings from this study and others reveal, thousands of victims wish to receive compensation for the lives and property lost or damaged during the conflict. In addition to compensation and fulfilling of pledges and promises made to the victims, the Government needs to implement other reparatory initiatives aimed at bringing about healing for victims of conflict. The Government needs to acknowledge its role in the suffering of the people of Teso, including failure to respond quickly in the initial weeks of the LRA's invasion of the region. There is also need for proper memorialization, reconciliation and healing initiatives for victims of the conflict. This is a need that has manifested itself not only in Obalanga, but also in other areas of northern Uganda where incidences such as massacres occurred. Victims need proper memorials in honour of their loved ones who passed away. In addition, these memorials need periodic maintenance, in addition to funding from the Government to enable victims to hold commemoration services annually for their loved ones.
- b) **The Government should fulfill promises and pledges made to victims.** When President Yoweri Museveni visited Obalanga in 2005, he promised the construction of a vocational school to assist the children of victims of the conflict. The numerous promises made to the people of Obalanga is symptomatic of promises made by the President and other Government representatives during the 2011 campaigns in other places across northern Uganda. Many of these promises remain unfulfilled, with the victims having no idea of when they will be delivered. According to information provided by Sub-County officials in Obalanga, the construction of a Comprehensive Secondary School is currently underway. However, the school is not yet readily constructed and the level of victims' ownership appears to very low. Since the promises were made as early as 2006, the guaranteed items need to be delivered without further delay.
- c) **The ICC and the ICD need to review or clearly spell out what forms of reparations they have to offer victims of the conflict.** Accountability processes being pursued by the ICC and ICD are significant while helping to punish the most responsible perpetrators, and end the culture of impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In Obalanga, the ICC through the TFV has on a positive note offered assistance to some victims. However, thousands of other victims have not yet benefitted from the TFV, and it is not clear whether or when they might benefit. The ICC's TFV needs to be clear on this. As for the ICD, a pronouncement by the court registrar in July 2011 ruled out the possibility of offering reparations to victims. It is important to note that regardless of how many convictions made by ICD, victims will never achieve a sense of justice if they are not offered individual, collective, material and symbolic reparations. The ICD, therefore, needs to take note of this fact and work towards providing reparations to victims as the TFV is doing.
- d) **The Government needs to investigate killings committed by state actors during the conflict.** As revealed through our study, Government soldiers allegedly perpetrated numerous killings. This includes the killing of nine people in Angica village by a helicopter gunship in July 2003, the killing of two people and injuring of several others in Morungatuny on 6th February 2004 and the killing of people in IDP camps, among others. Most of these killings have neither been investigated nor have the perpetrators been held accountable or officially punished. In addition, the causes of these killings and the motives of the perpetrators remain unknown. While these killings may have occurred by accident in a situation of combat, the Government still needs to come out and investigate them thoroughly to establish the full facts and truth behind them. The victims of these killings also need to be compensated for the loss of their loved ones and the anguish suffered.
- e) **The Government, in partnership with international bodies, needs to establish the whereabouts of missing persons.** As noted in the documentation above, many people in northern Uganda continue to be held in suspense

because their relatives who were abducted have not returned. It is not known whether these relatives are dead or alive. The Government needs to work in partnership with international bodies such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to establish the whereabouts of such persons. Bringing closure to relatives of missing persons regarding whether their relatives are still alive or dead is critical for their recovery and healing. Such a process could also be achieved through a truth seeking commission.

- f) **Humanitarian actors and civil Society organizations need to increase interventions in Teso sub-region.** Our interactions with victims in the course of this documentation indicated a low level of post-conflict humanitarian intervention in the region as compared to Lango and Acholi sub-regions. Academics, media, NGOs/CSOs, and other humanitarian actors need to extend their focus and support beyond Acholi and Lango sub-regions to affected areas of Teso sub-region (and other conflict-affected places as well such as West Nile) to avoid a marginalization of Teso in terms of humanitarian assistance.



Evelyne Akullo (JRP Research Officer) conducts an individual interview with one of the widows.

PICTORIAL



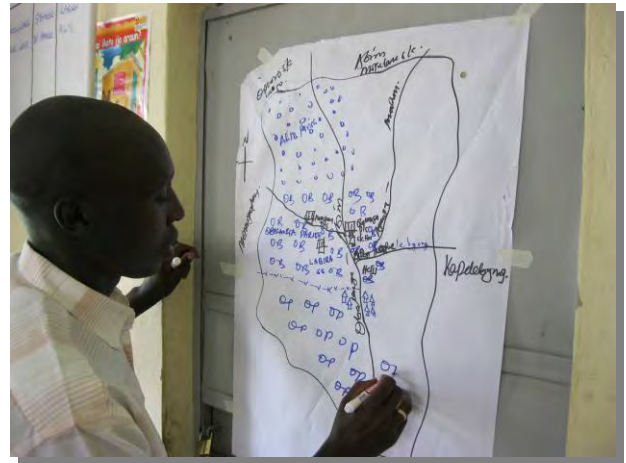
Residents in Angica B village lead JRP researchers to the burial site of victims of the helicopter gunship bombings.



Survivors walk on top of the mass grave at Obalanga Sub-county headquarters



Survivors in Angica B village clear the bush to reveal the graves of victims who were killed in the helicopter gunship bombings.



A survivor of the LRA attacks in Obalanga draws a sketch map of Obalanga Sub-county in 2003



A motor shell taken from the helicopter gunship that bombed victims in Angica B village



A Focus Group Discussion in progress in Angica B village

Appendix A: Letter Written by the LRA, dated 16th June 2003

Source: Obalanga sub-county

FM: HIGH COMMAND LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY
MOVEMENT (LRA/M)
TO: THE GENERAL PUBLIC
16/06/2003

REF: NGEC BOT LWAK DUCU ME UGANDA.

WAN LRA/M, WAKELD KWENA BOT LWAK DUCU NI WAN WATYE
AFERA ME JOLD NGAS MO KIKEN MARE CWAKO LOC OPIL (DICTATORSHIP).
PA MUSEVENI, PIEN OAN, PEKO, OYO REMO, NEK ALANY MATYE. KATIME
NORTHERN UGANDA NI TYE 1948 PA MUSEVENI LABOLE (EG) POKO
MUDUKU ICING KARAMOJONG PI KWANYO LDNYO KI ICING KAKI MASI:
ACHOLI, LANGI, TESO, OKUMAM. KI NEK ALANY MA KARAMOJONG TYE
KATIMO. EN AYE OMIYO WAN LRA/M WATYE KAMEBE KI JEMO. CI PIMAN
WANIANGO LWAK DUCU ME BINO KARIBU CING KWEDWA LABOJGO LUOR
WEEK KUC KUBWOG INORTH KIT MA MUKENE TYE KATIMENI.

DONG ONDODD CHAIRMAN ME LRA/M OKASI KI LOK PI PORD
LOK (PEACE TALK) ENTO MUSEVENI PEYEE. MAN AYE OMIYO TOO
KI OYO REMO TYE KAMEBE AMEDA I UGANDA NI.

DONG WAN WACAKO OPERATION WA IKOM LUMDNEWA, CI WANJADOD
LWAK BUCU PE ME BEBO KAMA MONY TYE IYE. NGAS MA OBEBO INGET MONY
NORIGO LAMOSEWA.

WAN KI GEN, MA **COL. CHARLES MURLEY**
CHIEF COMMANDANT
LRA/M COMMANDER KUC"

REF: NOTICE TO THE ALL PUBLIC :-

WE THE LRA/M HAVE BROUGHT NOTICE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT WE
ARE READY TO WELCOME/RECEIVE ANY COLIQUE WHO DOESN'T SUPPORT THE
DICTATORSHIP OF MUSEVENI. BECAUSE OF THE FOLLOWING ACTS :- CALAMITY, BLOOD
SHEDING, INNOCENT KILLING WHICH IS OCCURING IN NORTHERN UGANDA, WHICH
IS ACCORDING TO MUSEVENI'S PLAN EXAMPLE :- THE DIVISION OF ARMS TO
KARAMOJONG TO REMOVE THE WEALTH OF THE FOLLOWING TRIBES :-
ACHOLI, LANGI, TESO, OKUMAM AND THE ACT OF INNOCENT KILLING OF KARAM-
OJONG THAT COUSE US TO STILL CONTINUE RESISTING.

SO WE INFORM ALL THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO POSSITIVELY COME TO
COPPERATE HAND WITH HAND JOINTLY WITH US WITHOUT ANY FEAR SO THAT
WE GAIN THE SAME PEACE AS HAPPENING IN OTHER REGIONS.

INFACE, THE CHAIRMAN LRA/M HAVE POSSITIVELY PAS OUT WITH
PEACE TALK AGENDA, BUT MUSEVENI IS RESPONDING TO IT NEGATIVELY THAT
IS WHY KILLING INNOCENT PEOPLE AND BLOOD SHEDING IS STILL CONTINUING
IN UGANDA.

NOW, IT IS TO BE ON YOUR NOTICE THAT WE **COL. CHARLES MURLEY**
CHIEF COMMANDANT
LRA/M ~~ARE STILL~~ OPERATION
ON OUR ENEMIES, SO WE INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC NOT TO ACCOM-
DISES NEAR UPDF AND OTHER ARMS MEN. IF YOU DOESN'T RESPOND TO
IT, YOU WILL ALSO BE THE VICTIMS.

WE WITH POSSITIVE RESPONSE TO BRING PEACE.

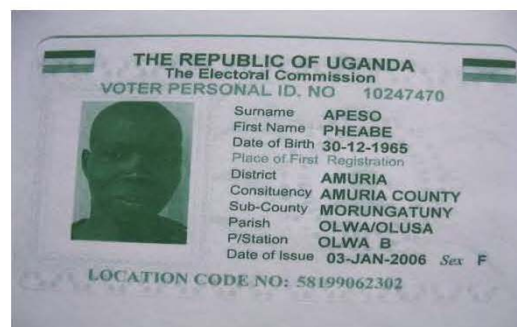
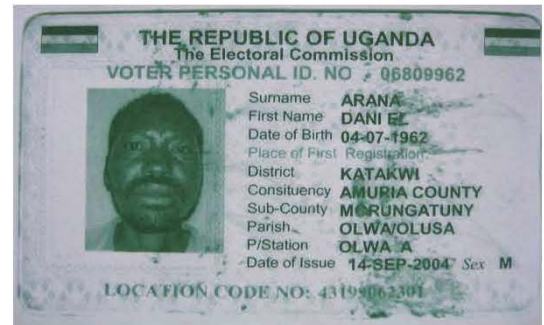
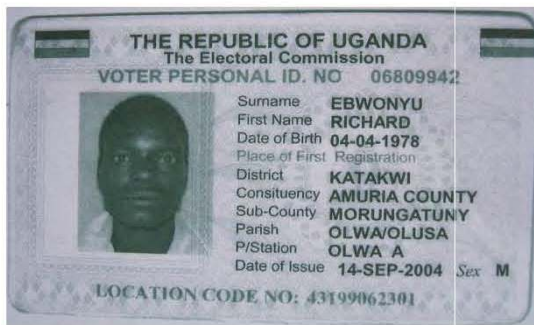
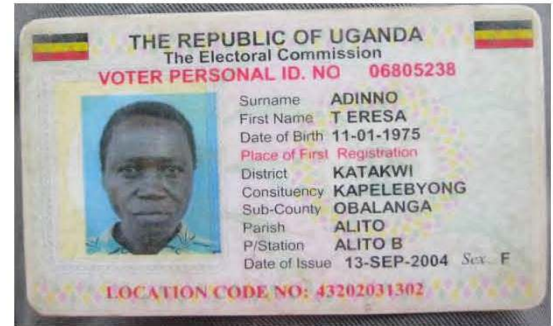
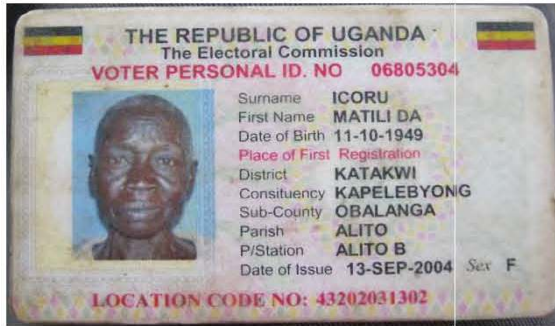
Appendix B: Partial List of the Deceased Laid to Rest in the Mass Grave at Obalanga

SN	NAME	SN	NAME
1	Acabo Eunice	54	Eyiru Richard
2	Acilo Sekudina	55	Ijimo Immaculate
3	Acimo Grace	56	Iluwor Everline
4	Adeke Mary	57	Imide Christine
5	Adie	58	Isalo Janet
6	Adongo Janet	59	Iyamu Harriet
7	Adumo Dulisira	60	Mukasa John
8	Adupo Sarah	61	Nyobo John
9	Ajeso Sarah	62	Obal Puro
10	Akareut Esther	63	Obonyo
11	Akec Eunice	64	Obua Alex
12	Akello Susan	65	Ocung Peter
13	Akello Dina	66	Okello David
14	Akello Mary	67	Okello David
15	Akello Sarah	68	Okello Moses
16	Akwar Milton	69	Okello Patrick
17	Alaro Jennifer	70	Okoo Emmanuel
18	Alebo	71	Okoo Samuelo
19	Aliao Losira	72	Okwi Keneth
20	Amolo Janet	73	Olum Mary
21	Amolo Janet	74	Olungeilo Akire
22	Amongin Cidonia	75	Omaido Wilberido
23	Amuko Janet	76	Onyang Tom
24	Amulen Sarah	77	Onyanga
25	Anuso Sarah	78	Opiding Pampas
26	Apiding Judith	79	Opio Isaac
27	Areo Esther	80	Opio s/o Akire
28	Areo Scovia	81	Opudo Sailas
29	Arykot Edith	82	Osilo Martine
30	Arykot Mary	83	Otage Julius
31	Arykot Desta	84	Otim John Michael
32	Asimo Christine	85	Otim Julius
33	Asuat Akouke	86	Otori
34	Atapara Hellen	87	Unknown
35	Atapara Josephine	88	Unknown (Single)
36	Atero Anna Grace	89	Unknown (Single)
37	Atim Agness	90	Unknown UPDF
38	Atipo Esther		Mass Grave A (227 remains)
39	Audo Dina		Mass Grave B (16 remains)
40	Auma Rose		Mass Grave C (19 remains)
41	Awili Vicky		
42	Ebiacu Lino		
43	Eciru Wasiigi		
44	Ecumu Wilbert		
45	Ejiku Peter		
46	Ekwaru Samson		
47	Elem Peter		
48	Enasu		
49	Engongu Oriokot Alfred		
50	Epila		
51	Epucu Daniel		
52	Erapu s/o Erapu		
53	Eselu Emmanuel		

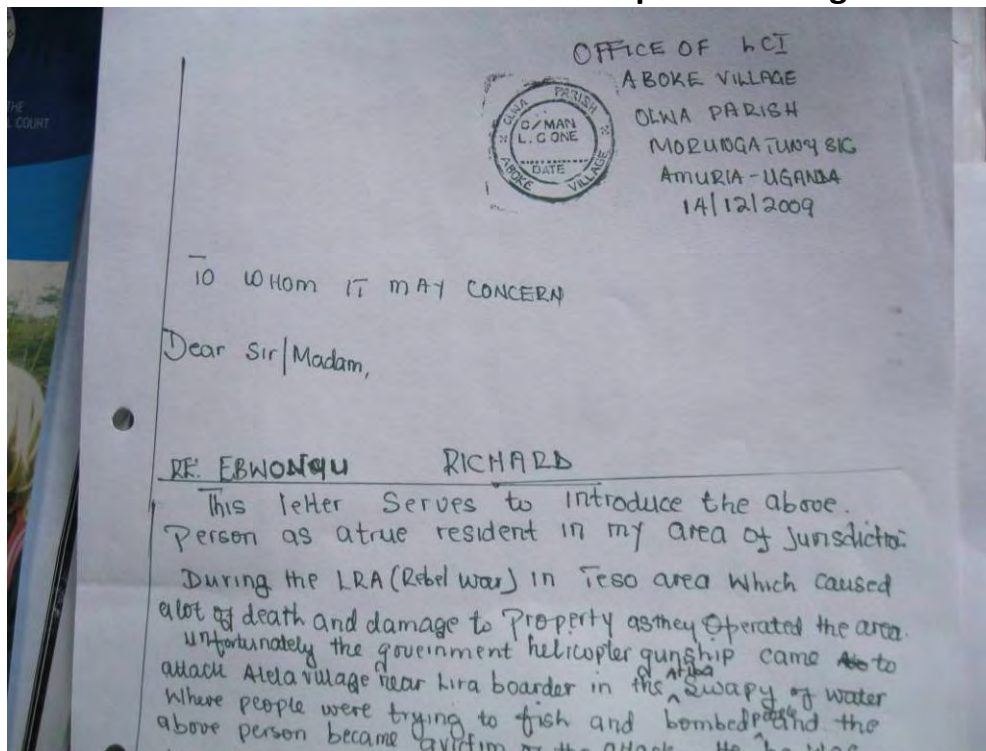
Appendix C: Missing Persons Abducted by the LRA from Obalanga Sub-county

SN	NAME	DATE OF ABDUCTION	KIN	VILLAGE
1	Acoga David	2003	Etumu Albert	Aberan-Alito
2	Olingo Samuel	20/6/2003	Erwau Yohana	Ojepai-Obalanga
3	Akoko Bosco	July 2003	Asio Agnes	Ojepai-Obalanga
4	Opama Sam	15/6/2003	Ejulu John	Akora Alupe
5	Acen Naume	2003	-	-
6	Acibu Simon	2003	-	Matilong Alito
7	Iremu Joyce Mary	15/6/2003	-	Ogwotai-Alito
8	Aryokot Rose	20/7/2003	Opio John Peter	Okenyai-Obalanga
9	Acabi Stephen	20/6/2003	Apio Ana	Aponong-Amootom
10	Aliau Stephen	20/6/2003	Eugendo Okello	Olilia -Amootom
11	Okello Paulo (ticked)	9/8/2003	Elwanu John	Amootom Original
12	Olupot Charles	22/6/2003	-	-
13	Odongo Joseph	18/6/2003	-	-
14	Emenyu Robert	12/9/2003	-	-
15	Ameso Stella	2003	-	-
17	Odonget Julius	2004	Iliabu Anna	Akileng-Alito
18	Ayoo Rose	23/4/2004	Ongom John	Abarituk-Alito
19	Ongom Denis	23/4/2004	Ongom John	Abarituk Alito
20	Obirai Bosco	15/6/2003	Opit John	Ocongoda-Agonga
21	Odeke s/o Opit John	15/6/2003	Amado Mary	Ongopai- Agonga
22	Apedu Joseph	16/7/2003	Ogwang John	Arubela -Opot
23	Eyatu Stephen	16/6/2003	Ebulu Robert	Aguyaguy-Agonga
24	Eceru Simon	6/7/2003	Alebo Antalia	Amootom-Orig
25	Okurut Emmanuel	15/6/2003	Ecodu John Robert	Aridai-Agonga
26	Emodu s/o Emodu. M	16/6/2003	Eloba Michael	Ongopa-Agonga
27	Emodu Joseph	17/11/2003	Edoru Emmanuel	Ongopa-Agonga
28	Ajera Robert	15/6/2003	-	Iyalakwe
30	Olupot Samuel	20/6/2003	-	Olilia-Amootom
31	Eselu Julius	19/6/2003	Apio Mary	Amoni-Agonga
35	Aul Lawrence	20/6/2003	-	Abaritule
38	Ecodu William	-	Asimo Beredeta	Alwena
37	Okello Wakii	-	Epulu Peter	
38	Eniru .J. Paul	-	Adiro Gilades	Obalasio
39	Odeke John Paul	August 2003	-	-
40	Okol Richard	July 2003	Akello Grace	Ojepai
41	Osilo A	-	-	-

Appendix D: Identity Cards of Some of the Victims and Survivors of the Helicopter Gunship Bombings in Angica B and Morungatuny.¹

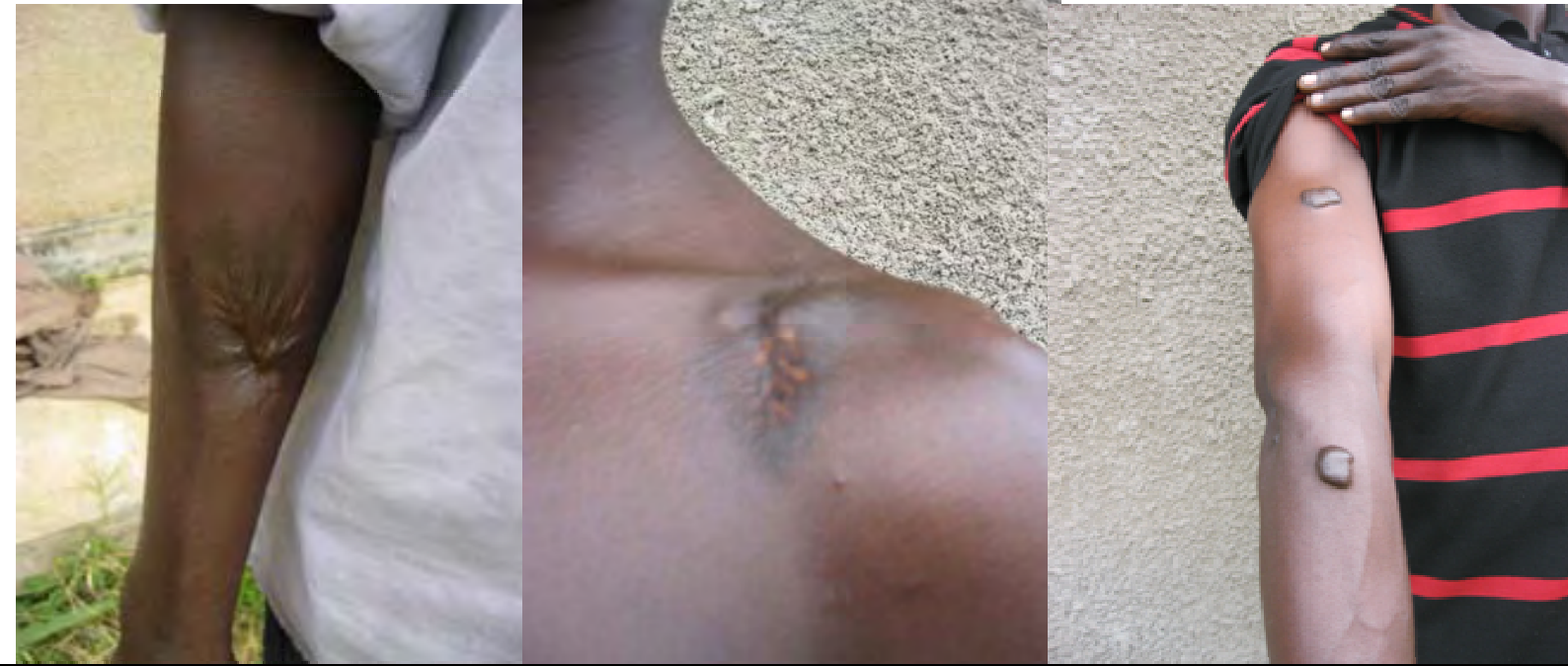


Appendix E: Letter Written for Victim of the Helicopter Bombing in Morungatuny



Appendix F: Summary List of People Abducted and Killed by the LRA in Asamuk and Wera Sub-counties

SN	CATEGORY	SUB-COUNTY	PARISH	TOTAL NUMBER
1.	Children abducted by the LRA in Asamuk Sub-county	Asamuk	Atirir	37
		Asamuk	Asamuk	25
		Asamuk	Amucu	34
		Asamuk	Odoon	21
		Asamuk	Ajaki	38
		Asamuk	Oburi	9
	Total			164
2.	Adults abducted by the LRA in Asamuk Sub-county	Asamuk	Atirir	6
		Asamuk	Asamuk	2
		Asamuk	Amucu	1
		Asamuk	Odoon	9
		Asamuk	Ajaki	4
	Total			22
	Total			186
3.	People killed by the LRA in Asamuk Sub-county	Asamuk	Oburi	17
		Asamuk	Asamuk	13
		Asamuk	Amucu	8
		Asamuk	Agip Cell	29
		Asamuk	Atirir	66
	Total			133
4.	Government buildings vandalized by the LRA in Asamuk Sub-county			9
5.	Children abducted by the LRA in Wera Sub-county			45



Working for Justice and Reconciliation With Grassroots Communities

In June 2003, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) infiltrated Teso Sub-Region in eastern Uganda for the first time. The civilian population and the government army were caught unaware, a factor which had disastrous humanitarian implications. In line with their trademark pattern of atrocities, the rebel soldiers carried out killings, abductions, maiming, looting, rape, burning and pillaging. By the time the UPDF repulsed them almost eight months later, approximately 90% of the population in Teso Sub-Region had been displaced into IDP camps, several thousand children had been abducted, and thousands of people had lost their lives and property. This report explores the impacts of the LRA incursion into Teso Sub-Region using case studies and victims' testimonies from the Sub-County of Obalanga in Amuria District, in addition to making recommendations to relevant stakeholders



Published by the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)
With Support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kampala
www.justiceandreconciliation.com