



PETITION BY WOMEN'S ADVOCACY NETWORK

23rd August 2013

The Honourable Speaker,
Honourable District Councillors,
Head of Departments/ Sections,
Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr Speaker Sir,

RE: PETITION BY WOMEN'S ADVOCACY NETWORK ON BEHALF OF WAR AFFECTED WOMEN IN NORTHERN UGANDA.

Mr Speaker, The women's Advocacy Network(WAN) is a forum where war affected women come together to advocate for justice, acknowledgment and accountability for gender based violations/abuses inflicted upon them during the war in northern Uganda. The network is an initiative of Justice and Reconciliation Project, a nongovernmental organisation working towards justice and reconciliation of war affected communities. Women's advocacy network was formed in may 2011 with the aim of empowering women survivors to participate in post conflict policy debates and to engage grassroots communities in gendered discussions on reintegration and reconciliation. Currently WAN is comprised of nine groups in Acholi sub region and works together with war affected women from other sub regions in Northern Uganda. WAN meets quarterly at the JRP offices to discuss advocacy issues and develop strategies to ensure that issues affecting their members are addressed. Part of our mission as WAN has been to engage on issues affecting us after the conflict so that sustainable peace is achieved where affected women war will enjoy full rights and Policymakers in Uganda especially parliament will get to know and act on the challenges we are facing

We war affected women under the umbrella of the Women's Advocacy Network, our future, our children's future and that of the people in Northern Uganda remains a struggle though the guns are silent. We suffered disproportionately during conflict and yet the society does not seem prepared for the challenges we continue to face in post conflict Northern Uganda. We feel sidelined when everyone worries and looks for interventions to reintegrate back the male combatants. There is need for our plight to be highlighted and interventions put in place to help us too as victims of war.

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Most of us who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army returned with children we bore in captivity, without an opportunity to go to school or get training on skills that can help us get gainful employment, we are jobless yet we have to take care of our children. Those of us who were in internally displaced camps suffered a similar fate where we were vulnerable to rape and sexual exploitation and bore children out of rape. Our children and us suffer from both physical and mental health complications such as gun wounds, trauma, gynaecological problems as a result of giving birth early under harsh conditions while in captivity or in the internally displaced camps, HIV/AIDs, among other challenges.

As we had mentioned earlier most of us never got a chance to go to school, that means that we are not able to access gainful employment for lack of necessary skills. Access to land remains a great challenge because we live in a patriarchal society where you can only access land through your husband yet most of us are not married. Those of us who are widowed are blocked from accessing our land by our relatives. This has left us in a vulnerable social economic situation where we are relegated to be casual labourers barely getting enough to sustain us and our children. In addition to this, the community continues to stigmatise us and our children due to our past. There has not been genuine reconciliation between us and the community.

We are doing our part to help alleviate some of these challenges. We continue to hold dialogue with communities on the need for reconciliation and fighting stigmatization. We are working with local stakeholders including religious leaders, traditional leaders and the Local councils to ensure that our issues are taken into consideration at community level by engendering the reconciliation and reintegration discussions. However, we cannot be able to achieve much without policy intervention, that is why we would like to request you as you petition parliament on our behalf, to highlight these issues on our behalf:-

Our Children:-

As we have mentioned earlier, our children who were either born in captivity as a result of forced marriage or in internally displaced camps as a result of rape, live under deplorable conditions. We are not able to fully provide for them materially thus their schooling continue to be interrupted. They continue to suffer from stigmatization from the community. We feel that it is necessary for parliament to push the government to do the following:-

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1. Provide a comprehensive bursary package for our children. This should include school fees up to the highest level; provision of items needed like books, personal effects such as sanitary towels and provision of psychosocial services to help them have a wholesome education. Currently there is a boarding school for war affected children, but it cannot accommodate all the children who are war affected. In fact currently very few children born in captivity have access to the school. There is need also for teachers in this region to be trained on how to handle our children because of their past. Teachers play a big role in moulding our children. However, some of them have been accused of stigmatizing these children. There is need for them to be trained on how to handle the children and play a role to ensure their success in school.
2. There is need to provide psycho social support to our children. Our children continue to experience trauma as a result of their past. Most of these services are limited to towns. There is need to have them decentralised to the villages and schools all over Northern Uganda.
3. Our children were born in special circumstances, as much as we are trying to trace their paternal relatives for identity purposes, it is not easy. Some relatives do not want to recognise them, others we cannot access them since their fathers used pseudonyms in the Bush, those born out of rape, their fathers are not known. There are many documents in Uganda that require for one to access to give information about their patrilineal heritage. This is not possible for these children. There is need to have a special provision of the law that remove this necessity for them.

Our Social economic status.

As we have mentioned earlier, we do not have access to good paying jobs because we lost opportunities to go to school. We also lack access to land because of our status in society as women, yet we have to fend for ourselves and our children. Most of the male combatants were integrated in the army where they receive a monthly stipend. However, we only received the amnesty package which did not put into consideration that we came back with an extra burden which is our children. We as war survivors are entitled to reparations which will help us to move on with life. Our social economic status puts us in a very vulnerable position in the society whereby we are easily targeted for gender based violence. We would like to petition parliament to do for us the following:-

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1. Adopt a reparation policy for all war affected survivors of the conflict.
2. To ensure that the reparation policy takes care of special needs of women which include:-
 - Reparations that help us achieve equality in society, for example they give us an opportunity to own and access land and property. In addition to that there should be measures to restore us victims to the original situation we were in before the violations. This includes restoration of liberty, enjoyment of human rights, identity of family life and citizenship for us and our children, return to our place of residence, restoration of employment and return of property owned to us or our parents.
 - Economic empowerment through programs that will assist us to establish income generating activities. A special recovery fund should be set up for war affected women to support us economically. This will make us to be able to access vocational training to build skills that will help us establish and manage income generating activities and capital to start the income generating activities.
 - We should be compensated for the opportunities we lost during the conflict. We wasted a lot of productive time in captivity and in camps and missed out on opportunities like education and setting up livelihood opportunities that would have made us better people socially and economically.
 - Rehabilitation services are vital in our recovery process. Psychosocial services are needed at the villages so that we who still experience trauma can access quality mental health care. Comprehensive free health services that are decentralised in the villages so that we can be treated for our injuries and the reproductive health issues we continue to face such as gynaecological problems and HIV//AIDS.

Accountability and reconciliation

It is important to us to know why we became victims of the most grievous atrocities in the world. We need people to be held accountable for crimes meted on us which included sexual violence, torture, conscription into the rebel movement, murder among other international crimes. In addition to that we very importantly need acknowledgment from the parties to the conflict, apology and reconciliation between us and the community we live in. We are still discriminated and stigmatised with our children. Currently JLOS is in the process of drafting a transitional justice policy. We

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our needs in transitional justice and ensure we achieve, justice, reconciliation and reparation for crimes committed to us. There is need for a holistic approach to transitional justice mechanisms whereby all processes must be implemented together in a way they complement each other. For example we do not want a situation where judicial processes take precedent over reparations or formal truth seeking processes do not complement the informal truth seeking and reconciliation efforts at the grassroots. All these processes are important to us and for us to feel involved we need them to run simultaneously. We also need special consideration to be taken to ensure we are able to participate fully for example, witness protection, accessibility to the mechanisms established among others.

As members of WAN we pledge to work together with individuals, stakeholders' government and non government organisations to ensure that there is sustainable peace and reconciliation in Northern Uganda. We know that through this we shall also be empowered as survivors of the war because we know that justice is a process and not just the outcome. We shall support you through this whole process of the petition.


We would like to thank you for your support towards our cause and we hope that we have sustainable peace with scars of the war erased so that our children and generations to come do not suffer from results of the war but only learn from mistakes of the past. Even if we are still in denial and consumed with the effects of the war, this petition if submitted to parliament gives us hope that the journey to accountability, reconciliation, healing and sustainable peace that was began in Juba years eight years ago will be accomplished.

For God and Our Country.

Signed:

The Women's Advocacy Network.

1. AMONY EVELYN chairperson
2. AJOT FLORENCE V/ chairperson
3. ANENIA KILTY GRACE secretary
4. AJOK PAULINE

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AJOT


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| 5. ARTGMD FLORENCE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | |
| 6. LAKER LUCY | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ARTGMD |
| 7. ABER JACKLINE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | |
| 8. AKOYO POLLINE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | Aber Polline |
| 9. AYOJO STELLA | COMMITTEE MEMBER | Ayojo |
| 10. LAWAM STELLA | COMMITTEE MEMBER | S.L |
| 11. AKELLO SUSAN | COMMITTEE MEMBER | AKELLO |
| 12. ALAL CONY | COMMITTEE MEMBER | |
| 13. ACHAN BEATRICE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ACHAN |
| 14. AKOKO LUCY | COMMITTEE MEMBER | |
| 15. AFOO MARGARET | COMMITTEE MEMBER | AFOO |
| 16. ALOYE EUGENE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ALOYE |
| 17. ABALO AGNES | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ABALO |
| 18. ARENA LILIAN | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ARENA |
| 19. ACOO SARAH | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ACOO |
| 20. ACIRO GRACE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ACIRO |
| 21. NYONGWA VICTORIA | COMMITTEE MEMBER | NYONGWA |
| 22. LABONG CHRISTINE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | LABONG |
| 23. ACAYO DOROTHY | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ACAYO |
| 24. AKARO MARGARET | COMMITTEE MEMBER | AKARO |
| 25. AJEL PATRICKA | COMMITTEE MEMBER | AJEL |
| 26. ACAN LINDA | COMMITTEE MEMBER | ACAN |
| 27. AKELLO CHRISTINE | COMMITTEE MEMBER | AKELLO |



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28.	Arach	Nighty	Member	ARACH
29.	AJOA	RAKELE	Member	RAKELE
30.	ALUJO	Betty	member	ALUJO
31.	Adony	Lily	member	Adony
32.	ACAN	Pica	member	ACAN
33.	AUMA	Grace	member	AUMA
34.	ADUA	Beatrice	member	ADUA
35.	PILUJO	margret	member	PILUJO APILLO
36.	Abala	margret	member	APILLO
37.	ACIRO	ROSE	member	ACIRO
38.	Lalara	Nighty	member	Lalara
39.	Layet	NANCY	member	Layet
40.	PILUJO	AGNESS	member	PILUJO
41.	AKONGU	Nighty	member	AKONGU
42.	AOL	SCOVIA	member	AOL
43.	ARACH	STELLA	member	ARACH
44.	Adony	Lilly	member	Adony
45.	AKONGU	Jennifer	member	akongu
46.	ACIRO	pasika	member	ACIRO
47.	AKELLO	Stella	member	AKELLO
48.	ALUJO	Nancy	member	ALUJO
49.	AUMA	Grace	member	AUMA
50.	AJOA	FILDE	member	AJOA



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|------------|----------|--------------|
| 51. Adong | Nighty | Adong |
| 52. Adong | Florence | adong |
| 53. akoe | Vicky | vicky |
| 54. Atek | Lilly | atek |
| 55. ATITO | Maureen | Atito |
| 56. ABER | Rose | A.R |
| 57. LANECC | Vicky | L.VICKY |
| 58. Akulu | Betty | akulu |
| 59. Ayot | Florence | Atoi |
| 60. Oroma | Nighty | OROMA NIGHTY |
| 61. Abwola | Betty | abwola |
| 62. acora | Sarah | ACORA |
| 63. Among | Jennifer | Among |
| 64. Amite | Florence | Amite |
| 65. Adong | Jane | Jane |
| 66. Adong | Alice | Adong |
| 67. Auma | GRACE | Auma |
| 68. Ayot | Toje | ayot |
| 69. Abalo | Margret | margret |
| 70. Acira | GRACE | Acira |
| 71. ACAN | Lverlynn | ACAN |
| 72. AKONG | Lucy | lucy |
| 73. ACAN | Rose | ROSE |