



Justice and Reconciliation Project

# 2013 Annual Report



## **About the Justice and Reconciliation Project**

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) was established in 2005 in Gulu, Uganda to understand and explain the interests, needs, concerns and views of communities affected by conflict and to promote sustainable peace through the active involvement of war-affected communities in research and advocacy.

Find out more about JRP at <http://www.justiceandreconciliation.com> or email [info@justiceandreconciliation.com](mailto:info@justiceandreconciliation.com)

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# Acronyms

ASF – Avocats Sans Frontières

CLD – Community-Led Documentation

CORE – Community Reconciliation

GDLG – Gulu District Local Government

ICC – International Criminal Court

JLOS – Justice, Law and Order Sector of the Government of Uganda

JRP – Justice and Reconciliation Project

LRA – Lord’s Resistance Army

MUMEDA - Mukura Memorial Development Association

NRA – National Resistance Army

OHRHCA - Obalanga Human Rights and Health Care Association

UWOPA – Uganda Women Parliamentarian’s Association

WAN – Women’s Advocacy Network

# Message from the Directors

2013 was an eventful year for JRP as the organisation pursued its vision of a just and peaceful society, and its mission of working with war affected communities to promote healing and reconciliation in northern Uganda.



Conducting research in Namokora sub-county, Kitgum district, July 2014

Under its three key departments (Documentation, Community Mobilisation and Gender Justice) JRP was able to make tremendous achievements in attaining its objectives.

JRP's Documentation department picked up from where they left off in 2012 and achieved significant landmarks in documenting massacres in Burcoro, Namokora, and Ombaci in Acholi and West Nile sub-regions. The department also documented individual experiences of victims affected by conflict with an aim of bringing to light recovery challenges they face. JRP's documentation serves the important purpose of preserving memory about the conflict, and creating a historical record and reference point about key events and occurrences in northern Uganda. Our documentation work has continued to be voice for many of the communities who have gone through trauma and untold sufferings during the conflict. It is also the beginning of the healing process for victims as it provides a channel for them to talk about their experiences with the comfort that someone is listening at last. A major challenge continues to be the overwhelming demand for documentation by communities and victims who want their stories told.

Equally important is the Community Mobilisation department, which has been crucial in empowering victim groups and communities to participate in identifying their justice needs. The department practically engages communities in advocacy and memory preservation activities aimed at facilitating healing of victims. In 2013 the department continued with its rigorous campaign to address the plight of the missing persons called the 'Right to Know' and engaged victims and stakeholders in various activities with the sole aim of bringing the matter to light. The department also sponsored a number of community led reconciliation initiatives such as beautification of memorial sites and conducting dignified burials for victims of conflict.

The Gender Justice department continued to work with vulnerable girls and women to ensure their needs are redressed in Uganda's transitional justice debate. The most significant achievement of the department was to engage in a rigorous process of advocacy targeted at getting stakeholders to recognise the plight of women and girls affected by the conflict. Through the Women's Advocacy Network, the department was able to meet and engage with political leaders from Acholi Parliamentary Group, who pledged to take up the matter in Uganda's Parliament. In 2014 the department intends to implement livelihood projects for women and girls affected by conflict, and to present a petition to the Ugandan Parliament.

JRP also attained a significant milestone by launching the construction a multi-million shilling building that will house the organisation's headquarters in the future. The foundation stone of this building was laid by His Highness Rwot David Onen Achana II, the Paramount Chief of Acholi Kingdom. We hope this will create the prerequisite towards establishing JRP's lasting legacy in northern Uganda.

This report presents key achievements attained in 2013. As usual, our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala for the generous support and to all JRP staff who made tremendous contributions over the year 2013.

On behalf of all directors and staff at JRP we look forward to a productive year ahead!

Sincerely,



Michael Otim  
**Chairman, Board of Directors**



Lino Owor Ogora  
**Programme Coordinator**



His Highness Rwot David Onen Achana II, the Paramount Chief of Acholi, lays the foundation stone of JRP's future headquarters, December 2014.

# Introduction

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) was established in 2005 amid massive waves of debate surrounding the conflict in northern Uganda. Since then, it has played a key role in transitional justice developments in Uganda.

This has included participation in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda peace talks in Juba between 2006 and 2007, documentation of key human rights violations and working towards supporting the involvement of communities, vulnerable groups and individuals affected by conflict in transitional justice processes.

As with previous years, 2013 saw shifts in national and international transitional justice. These included the development of a national transitional justice policy by the Justice, Law and Order Sector of the Government of Uganda (JLOS), the reinstatement of part II of the Amnesty Act and the offering of rewards for the arrest of LRA commanders by the United States' government, as well as continued advocacy for the inclusion of gender related issues in post-conflict interventions.

At the grassroots level, there was also remarkable transformation and progress.

Because of their involvement in the documentation of their con-



flict experiences, many hitherto unknown details of past atrocities in northern Uganda, such as National Resistance Army (NRA) atrocities and the experiences of women before, during and after the conflict, have only recently been brought to light.

Resource centres containing vital information about what happened during the conflict have been developed and maintained by the very communities that experienced it. Lukodi, the site of a 2004 LRA massacre, hosted the Lukodi Memorial Site which community members hope to develop into a hub for conflict-related information. At the same time, Atiak community members continued to renovate the memory site for the 1995 Atiak massacre. Members of the community in Romogi sub-county in Yumbe district also developed a memory book to document the experiences of its members.

In the same vein, survivors' groups continue to mobilise to have their voices heard. Groups such as the Women's Advocacy Network (WAN), a network of war-affected women in northern Uganda, as well as groups consisting of the family members of missing persons in northern Uganda continue to grow from strength to strength.

It is within this context that JRP has continued to engage conflict affected individuals, groups and communities in vital transitional justice processes and developments in Uganda. We have continued to work to preserve the memory of conflict affected communities, to advocate for locally sensitive transitional justice approaches, to support vulnerable groups in their pursuit of justice and to mobilise communities to engage in processes of redress, healing and reconciliation.

Read more about the work we did in 2013 and the impact it had on the individuals, groups and communities we worked with this year below.





# Preservation of the memory of conflict-affected communities

JRP works with conflict-affected communities to document human rights abuses, atrocities and experiences that have not been documented. This is done to spawn greater understanding of conflict and to contribute to healing, reconciliation and reintegration within communities.

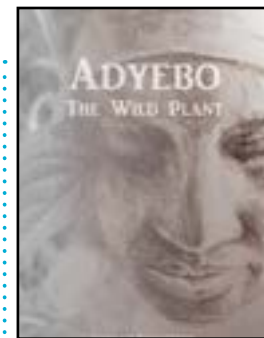
The preservation of memory is also important as a tool for advocacy and as a platform for the views of conflict-affected communities. It can also be effective in clarifying, identifying and categorising the different experiences and needs of victims.

Since 2005, JRP has published 18 Field Notes based on research findings made during field consultations with grassroots communities. JRP also engages conflict-affected communities in the documentation of their own experiences and the preservation of their own memories. We do this by providing a platform and building skills for them to identify and articulate their needs through mechanisms such as storytelling and community-led documentation. We also join hands with communities to support their memory efforts through the development and publication of memory books, resource centres and commemoration sites.

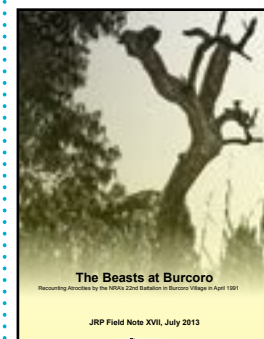
The following initiatives were undertaken in 2013:

- We researched and documented atrocities in Burcoro village in Gulu district, leading to the publication of *The Beasts At Burcoro: Recounting Atrocities by the NRA's 22nd Battalion in Burcoro Village in April 1991*.
- We researched and documented the Namokora Massacre in Namokora sub-county in Kitgum district
- We researched and documented the Ombaci Massacre of 1981 in West Nile
- We engaged formerly abducted women in story-telling of the abduction experiences leading to the publication of *Adyebo: The Wild Plant*
- We documented the experiences of Denis a young man from Koch Goma in Gulu District in *Haunted By 27 Spirits*
- We facilitated the growth of involvement of communities in Lukodi, Koch-Goma and Atiak in documenting their own conflict experiences through community-led documentation.

## Reports and Publications



*Adyebo: The Wild Plant* is a collection of the stories of formerly abducted women that were generated from the Ododo Wa (story-telling) sessions that JRP provides for war-affected women.



*The Beasts At Burcoro: Recounting Atrocities by the NRA's 22nd Battalion in Burcoro Village in April 1991* is JRP's 18th Field.

## Awareness created about atrocities committed during the war and the needs of victims

Our documentation has been instrumental in creating awareness about human rights violations in northern Uganda during and after conflict. Specifically, it has helped to bring to light government-led atrocities whose victims have not received adequate reparations, such as those during the attack on Burcoro by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the NRA in April 1991.

It has also helped to highlight the extraordinary individual and collective efforts that vulnerable groups such as war-affected women are making to seek redress. In 2013, the launch of a book, *Adyebo: The Wild Plant*, eventually led to the involvement of key stakeholders and other human rights fraternity members to join hands with the Women's Advocacy Network in presenting a petition advocating for the needs and interests of war-affected women and their children to be addressed (see below).

## Urgent health needs referred

JRP's documentation has also been central in giving exposure to the urgent needs that many victims of conflict face. In 2013 it allowed us to identify and make referrals for victims in need of urgent assistance in the communities in which we research.

This year we came across two individuals during the course of our research in Burcoro and Namokora who revealed that they suffered severe pain from wounds they incurred during the attacks on their communities. Since then they had not received any medical attention. Our researchers referred the individuals to the Makerere School of Law's Refugee Law Project (RLP) Beyond Juba Project which provides health care and rehabilitation for victims of conflict.

“ [After being treated] I can now do what I was not able to do in the past.


A survivor of the Burcoro massacre of 1991 and recipient of the Beyond Juba project speaking to a JRP researcher.

## Communities empowered in documentation

Through JRP's Community Led-Documentation (CLD) project, members of the Lukodi community were empowered with skills to undertake their own documentation in an innovative and flexible way. Training on research ethics was conducted with the community members and a documentation committee comprising of members from the Community Reconciliation (CORE) team was elected by the community to conduct CLD.

The result was the creation of a memory room loaned by Lukodi Primary School. The community

**Adyebo: The Wild Plant, eventually led to the involvement of key stakeholders and other human rights fraternity members to join hands with the Women's Advocacy Network in presenting a petition advocating for the needs and interests of war-affected women.**

A man wearing a blue cap and a white long-sleeved shirt is speaking into a microphone. He is standing in front of a large banner that features several illustrations and text. The banner includes the title "Our Stories and Experiences" and a subtitle "A timeline of major events in the community of Lukodi". The background shows a rural setting with trees and a brick building.

*JRP's documentation of the Lukodi massacre exposed our suffering to the world. We feel we are on the way to truly being part of Uganda. We are finally beginning the process of healing.*

also produced a written account of the history of community documenting what its members experienced as early as 1970s.

On 20 November 2013, the community-led documentation efforts of Lukodi were launched to the greater public at the community's already existing memory site. It is hoped that this site will develop into a resource for people interested in learning about the conflict in northern Uganda.

## Namokora massacre commemorated for the first time

One result of the preservation of memory is that it allows for the identification of the specific needs of survivors of conflict. In 2013, during JRP's research process in Namokora, the survivors we engaged with expressed as a recommendation for their community the need to commemorate the 1986 Namokora massacre, but felt unable to put one into effect because they did not have the capacity, skills or knowledge to do so. JRP facilitated two community representatives of Namokora to attend the memorial prayers for the 1989 Mukura train wagon massacre during July 2013. Citing their visit to Mukura as inspiration, the community worked to put into effect their own memory projects and initiatives in their community and in August 2013, the first memorial for the Namokora massacre was held.

“ *I have learned that most of our challenges are shared and I am impressed with the way survivors and families of victims and other member of the communities can unite in addressing post-conflict challenges.*

A community member from Namokora after attend-

ing the Mukura memorial prayers, July 2013

“ *This is a very important day. I thank God that it found me when I am still alive. To me the incident of Namokora made me appear like a shepherd who looked helplessly as his sheep suffered. I will never condone what happened to the people of Namokora. It degraded human dignity. Each and every human life is important. Don't ask God to only have mercy on those who died but pray hard that God grants us the grace to fight the disunity among the people of Uganda.*

Father Tarasiscio Luyaramoi, a witness to the Namokora massacre, quoted at the first annual Namokora memorial prayers in August 2013.

# Advocacy for locally sensitive approaches to transitional justice

JRP advocates for approaches to transitional justice that take into consideration the social, cultural and historical context of the communities that they will impact. We promote the implementation of policies and mechanisms that take into account the views of and are accessible to the people and communities to whom they are applied and respond to the needs that these communities have.

JRP also works to provide platforms for survivors and war-affected individuals and communities to advocate for themselves. Examples include our participatory methods for research and documentation, our storytelling projects, the capacity building and training we conduct for conflict-affected groups and individuals, and through our providing updates on transitional justice developments. Our policy briefs also make policy recommendations to policy makers and civil society on current transitional justice issues based on analytical research.

The following initiatives were undertaken in 2013

- We launched a report on reparations recommendations for post-conflict Uganda entitled *Unredressed Legacy: Possible Policy Options and Approaches to Fulfilling Reparations in Uganda*
- We launched a policy brief entitled *The Dog That Barks But Doesn't Bite* on the views of victims of conflict and civil society on the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s approach to transitional justice and its work in Uganda.
- We held consultative meetings with conflict-affected persons in collaboration with *Avocats Sans Frontières* (ASF)
- We convened a round-table meeting with key stakeholders to discuss strategies to ensure the issues of war affected women become prioritised in the transitional justice framework.
- We held consultations with members of WAN to discuss their views on the transitional justice policy framework

## Reports and Publications



*Unredressed Legacy: Possible Policy Options and Approaches to Fulfilling Reparations in Uganda* was launched in 2013 with the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ).



*The Dog That Barks But Doesn't Bite*, a policy brief, reflects views on the ICC's work in Uganda.

- We facilitated dialogue between WAN and stakeholders to discuss multifaceted interventions to transitional justice challenges war-affected women and children face
- We held dialogues on gender needs in transitional justice with three local structures in the districts of Mukura, Yumbe and Lira.
- We engaged communities through community outreaches and radio talk shows.

## Amnesty reinstated

JRP advocates for a multi-faceted approach to justice for victims of conflict in northern Uganda. We believe that amnesty, alongside criminal accountability, is a mechanism for successfully ending conflict in northern Uganda. In May 2013, amnesty was reinstated by the Government of Uganda due to intense lobbying from civil society. On 22 May 2013, we participated in a consultative meeting on transitional justice themes including the implementation of amnesty and JLOS' transitional Justice Policy in Kampala. The objective of the meeting was to obtain feedback from stakeholders on the reinstatement of amnesty and to gauge their perceptions regarding the reinstatement of amnesty and its implications. As a result, JRP contributed to a joint civil society press statement which appeared in the New Vision on Wednesday, 22 May 2013 welcoming the reinstatement of amnesty. JRP recognises that blanket amnesty in its current form could be an impediment to criminal accountability and that there is a need to strike a

balance between the two justice mechanisms.

## Victims participate in shaping the national transitional justice policy

On 5 June, JRP in collaboration with Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) organised a consultative meeting on the JLOS draft transitional justice policy to disseminate the draft policy to victim groups and explain the key aspects of the policy to ascertain their views, expectations and desires regarding formal justice and criminal prosecutions, traditional justice, truth telling, amnesty, and reparations.

***As a result of the consultation, the participants were aware of the national TJ policy drafting process and communicated their opinions, concerns and suggestions on key aspects of the TJ policy to JLOS for consideration in the final draft.***

VICTIMS' VIEWS ON THE DRAFT TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE POLICY FOR UGANDA: ACHOLI SUB-REGION Victim Consultation on June 5, 2013, Justice and Reconciliation Project/ Avocats Sans Frontières



Launching *Unredressed Legacy: Possible Policy Options and Approaches to Fulfilling Reparations in Uganda*, Gulu, February 2013.



*We are not sitting down and wallowing in our pain and misery. We hold dialogues in our communities aimed at reconciliation, fighting stigma and reintegration.*

Women's Advocacy Network petition the Uganda Women Parliamentarian's Association and Acholi Parliamentarians Association.

## Platforms created for survivors to advocate for themselves

In the past year, JRP helped to build the capacity of various community groups to engage in advocacy. 2013 saw the groups we work with, such as the Lukodi CORE Team, the Mukura Memorial Development Association (MUMEDA), the Obalanga Human Rights and Health Care Association (OHRHCA) and WAN, grow from strength to strength.

- Under the guidance of JRP's Documentation department, the 18 member Lukodi CORE Team launched a community-memory room and continued to develop its memorial site, November 2013
- JRP provided support for MUMEDA to host the 2013 annual Mukura massacre memorial prayer in Mukura, with key stakeholders including other victims groups invited between 10-12 July.
- Obalanga Human Rights and Health Care Association (OHRHCA) drafted a petition, with the assistance of JRP, to the office of the president advocating for government support to victims in Obalanga sub-county
- The Women's Advocacy Network, an initiative of JRP, presented a petition calling for reparations for war-affected women and their children to Gulu District Local Government and Acholi Parliamentarians Association.

## Women's Advocacy Network empowered to present petition

The Women's Advocacy Network (WAN) is a JRP initiative to

allow war-affected women to come together to advocate for acknowledgement and accountability for gender-based violations they suffered during the conflict. Currently the network has a membership of 300 women who were either abducted or lived in the camps. JRP provides capacity building for group members and facilitates their advocacy activities.

On 10 September, as a result of JRP's technical support, the Women's Advocacy Network presented a petition to the Gulu District Local Government Council to highlighting the challenges war-affected women face and calling for concrete solutions. These include socio-economic vulnerability, inadequate health rehabilitation, providing for the needs of children born in captivity, addressing poverty and the unique justice and accountability needs war-affected women have.

The petition was thereafter referred to the Social Services Committee of the Gulu District Local Government Council for investigation and the presentation of a comprehensive report. Between 14 and 18 October 2013, the JRP together with the members of the Social Services Committee visited women groups constituting WAN to give an opportunity for the councilors to interface with members of WAN. The group later on met to discuss their findings and presented them to the Council on 30 October 2013 where it was adopted to be presented to the Ugandan Parliament.



# Mobilising communities to engage in processes for redress, reconciliation and healing

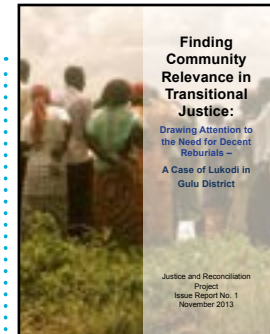
JRP works to mobilise communities to engage in processes that will allow them to support one another to attain social cohesion and dignity after many years of conflict. We work with community structures, such as opinion and traditional leaders, victims groups, local government leaders and community members themselves among others to identify the methods that the communities prefer to seek redress, reconciliation and healing.

We apply tools such as capacity building, memorialisation, community theatre, community outreach and experience sharing between victims groups.

In 2013, we did the following:

- Facilitated mediation for war-affected women through our legal programme
- Acted as the Secretariat to the Mucwini mediation process. As a result of a Local Government District Council resolution a proposal to bring the mediation to a fruitful conclusion was submitted to the office of the president.
- Engaged ten victims groups in community theatre in Lamwo, Amuru and Gulu.
- Organised victim-led advocacy initiatives to promote awareness about persons that are missing or unaccounted for as a result of conflict
- Engaged youth in transitional justice debate through the Transitional Justice Quiz for secondary schools
- Supported the Lukodi communities reburial initiative

## Reports and Publications



*Finding Community Relevance in Transitional Justice: Drawing Attention to the Need for Decent Reburials - A Case of Lukodi in Gulu District, Issue Report* discusses the impact of community-led reburials.



*Youth Advocacy: Transitional Justice Competitions Issue Report* examines the impact of the involvement of youth in transitional justice discourse.

## Stigma towards formerly abducted reduced

Through JRP's Community Theatre programme, we engage victims groups of up to 40 members to promote healing and reconciliation through theatre and other creative tools. The aim is to foster a collective understanding of the issues faced in the communities the groups come from so that they are able to advocate and share their experiences with the wider community.

In 2013, community performances by one group in Palabek in Lamwo district saw its members, who consisted of formerly abducted persons isolated from their community, finally assimilate. 150 people from the surrounding community attended and afterwards some acknowledged and apologised for the stigma the group members experienced.

“ *We have equally contributed to the plight of our children that have returned from LRA captivity by the way we treated them when they return into our hands. I have just acknowledged that we subjected them to a harsh environment that could hardly make them settle among us. I now appeal for a cordial relationship with our children that returned from captivity and are living with us.*

A quote from a community member in Palabek following a theatre performance by formerly abducted persons depicting the challenges formerly abducted persons face on returning from captivity

## Missing persons issues put on the map

In 2013, the 'Right to Know' campaign continued to draw attention to the issue of missing persons by engaging communities, local government and the media. In August, we disseminated profiles of persons still missing in northern Uganda collected by their families through a themed blog on JRP's website called #CommunityVoices. On 30 August, we commemorated the International Day Against Enforced Disappearances with families of the missing, representatives of the GDLG and other supporters with a procession through Gulu town and a public dialogue under the theme 'The Missing Persons: Forget Them Not'.

Materials drawing attention to the issue of missing persons such as posters, newsletters, banners and copies of *The Right to Truth and Justice* documentary were contributed to an exhibition organised by the Refugee Law Project (RLP)/National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) in Kitgum from 18 to 22 March. Feedback provided indicates that the 'missing persons' corner at the exhibition and at the documentation centre was among the most viewed and discussed by visitors in 2013.

“ *People finally know that [the families of the missing exist] and that we have issues that need to be dealt. Many people are now willing to help us and this was not the case in the past. [Talking about the issue of missing persons] has given us hope for the future. We hope that the right step will be taken to provide answers about our loved ones.*

A member of the families of the missing group in



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"Religious leaders pray for our children!" 30 August 2014, the International Day Against Enforced Disappearances.

Peace, Gulu which JRP supports. Since forming In 2013, the group has registered an association at sub-county level with the aim of advocating for the needs of families of person's still missing as a result of conflict.

## Youth involved in peace-building

JRP works to engage young people and build the capacity of future leaders in peace-building. In 2013, the Transitional Justice Quiz kicked off with 40 secondary schools from across northern Uganda participating. During the quiz competition, the student's general knowledge on transitional justice processes was tested. Each team was also given the opportunity to share personal, youth-specific conflict experiences and to formulate their own recommendations in post-conflict reconstruction in Uganda. In making recommendations, the students were asked to reflect on the potential for youth in making active contributions to on-going peace-building initiatives.

## Victims of Lukodi massacre laid to rest

On the 19th of May 2004, inadequately protected by government soldiers, LRA rebels attacked and massacred over sixty people in the village of Lukodi in Gulu district. Many affected families of those killed were unable to conduct decent burials

for their relatives. Since, then tension between landowners and family members has risen, as have complaints of "spiritual vengeance" (*cen*) because of the indecent burials. As a result, the Lukodi Community Reconciliation team, supported by JRP, pushed to have a community-driven reburial process to bring peace and healing to the community. The CORE team sought out participation from Ker Kwaro Acholi, the Acholi cultural institution, sub-county officials, the land owners, affected families among. On 20 August, JRP supported the community financially and technically to carry out decent reburials for 53 of their loved ones.

“ *My heart is at peace now, I am very relieved that finally my husbands' remains are going back home where he belongs. This is such an emotional but happy moment for me and my family. The working partnership formed with the cultural institution enabled the proper execution of cultural practices.*

A widow who was able to transfer the remains of her late husband, from *Finding Community Relevance in Transitional Justice: Drawing Attention to the Need for Decent Reburials – A Case of Lukodi in Gulu District, Issue Report.*

***[It] provided a “central point to discuss justice needs”, created solidarity and understanding between students from different places, widened youth knowledge about conflict and peace processes and human rights culture, contributed to truth-seeking, informed students about gender inequalities, built their leadership capacity and ability to participate in debates, and, restored hope and courage in youth.***

Student feedback on the benefits of the Transitional Justice Quiz, Youth Advocacy: Transitional Justice Competitions Justice Issue Report, 2013.

# Supporting vulnerable groups and individuals in their pursuit of justice

JRP supports vulnerable groups through capacity building, training, financial support and technical expertise to enable them to advocate for justice according to their own terms.

We provide platforms for vulnerable groups to break the silence about their experiences and to empower them to articulate their justice needs. In 2011 JRP helped establish the Women's Advocacy Network and continues to support the women's group in its advocacy. We also provide financial support to enable them conduct their activities such as community dialogues, media engagement, peer support, exchange and learning visits.

We guide groups through storytelling and participatory research methods, such as life maps, and provide them with a platform to air out their views. These processes help with personal healing, enhance reconciliation and eventually provide them with the opportunities, skills and channels to advocate for justice.

In 2013, we did the following:

- Facilitated mediation on issues faced by war-affected women
- Supported the growth of the Women's Advocacy Network
- Facilitated the Greater North Women's Conference
- Created safe platforms for women to share stories on their experiences through storytelling
- Engaged survivor groups on discussions on HIV/AIDS and the conflict
- Engaged former child soldiers who were not in senior positions of command in the LRA
- Conducted legal sensitisation to empower vulnerable groups to articulate their justice needs through introducing topics such as reparations, the right to justice, the rights of children born in captivity and the rights of women in mediation processes among others
- Conducted capacity building for war-affected women on leadership skills and group management and psychosocial assistance



## Justice and Reconciliation Project

Working for Justice and Reconciliation with Grassroots Communities

*It is a great thing for women survivors to come together to speak about the issues that affect us.*

The Greater North Women's Conference brought women from across northern Uganda to share experiences and discuss advocacy strategies on 27 July 2013.

## War-affected women mediate disputes

JRP supports mediation efforts in communities as an alternative to more costly formal processes. In our work we have identified that many communities, women and other vulnerable groups prefer mediation as a means of dispute resolution due to its reconciliatory nature. In 2013, our Legal Programme facilitated mediation processes with war-affected women on issues including child identity, child maintenance, child custody and disputes over land. The programme assisted three war-affected women with initiating mediation processes for land in Gulu district, child custody in Amuru and identity tracing in Agago.

“ *Before the mediation I thought of taking away my life. People at my home were not treating me well, but after we sat together to discuss our issues their attitudes have changed a lot.* ”

A member of WAN from Koch Goma who participated in JRP's mediation programme, commenting after the process.

## War-affected women come together to develop strategies to advocate for themselves

Our exchange programmes allow war-affected women from greater northern Uganda to visit and learn from and forge partnerships with each other to fight for justice and accountability

for gender-based crimes committed during various conflicts in Uganda. This year on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, over sixty women from Pader, Amuru, Nwoya, Gulu, Soroti, Yumbe and Lira districts came together to participate in this year's exchange meeting under the banner "together we can".

Through drama, music and poetry they shared their experiences of the war and held a storytelling session on challenges they continue to face in post-conflict Uganda such as living with HIV/AIDS, bringing up children born in captivity amidst stigmatisation and living with injuries in their bodies among others. It was also an opportunity for women across the region to recognise that they were all subjected to the same experiences during the war and the importance of joining hands together to advocate for justice.

“ *It is a great thing for women survivors to come together to speak about the issues that affect us. These issues never discriminated where you came from instead they affected us the same way. This helps us to build a stronger bond, a bond of women survivors.* ”

An attendee of the Greater North Women's Conference, 27 July 2014

# Conclusion

2013, as with other years, has seen Uganda's transitional justice landscape evolve as the national transitional justice policy takes shape and victims of conflict are becoming more involved in the advocacy for and addressing of their own interests.

The Justice and Reconciliation Project's work has grown and changed accordingly with this changing landscape as we work to contribute to the building of a peaceful and just society through documentation, advocacy, mobilisation and the support of the communities we work with.

Keep up-to-date with what we do through our quarterly magazine *Voices*. *Voices* is platform for victims and key stakeholders to dialogue on local and national transitional justice developments. It is also meant to accommodate views on transitional justice, peace-making and post-conflict that do not necessarily find themselves in the mainstream media. This year, JRP published four issues of the magazine on four distinct transitional justice themes: truth-telling/the right to know, accountability and prosecution, victim participation in transitional justice and

transitional justice since 2005.

Read more about our upcoming work on our website, [www.justiceandreconciliation.com](http://www.justiceandreconciliation.com), which is an excellent resource for information on post-conflict and transitional justice processes in northern Uganda and around the world. All of JRP's reports are accessible and new ones are immediately uploaded once they are published.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that all this would not have been possible without the generous support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala.







Published by the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)  
With support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kampala

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