



Justice and Reconciliation Project

Working for justice and reconciliation with grassroots communities

2014 Annual Report



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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.

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Acronyms

CRR	Centre for Reparations and Rehabilitation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CD	Community Documentation
CM	Community Mobilisation
CORE	Community Reconciliation (Team)
CRR	Center for Reparation and Rehabilitation
EPI	Everyday Peace Indicators
FoM	Families of the missing
FAP	Formerly-Abducted Person
GJ	Gender Justice
GJU	Gender Justice Unit
GoU	Government of Uganda
GLR	Great Lakes region
GDLG	Gulu District Local Government
IJR	Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
JLOS	Justice and Law Order Sector (of the Government of Uganda)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MUMEDI	Mukura Massacre Development Initiative
NRA	National Resistance Army
NUREMSA	Namokora United Relatives of the Massacred and Survivors Association
RLP	Refugee Law Project
RNE	Royal Norwegian Embassy
RWVA	Romogi War Victims' Association
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SAFE	Supporting Access to Justice, Fostering Equity
TEYSA	Teso Youth Sport Association
TJ	Transitional Justice
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWOPA	Uganda Women Parliamentarian's Association
WAN	Women's Advocacy Network



Message from the Directors

The year 2014 has been significant for the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) in that it marked the end of the organisations' five year strategic plan that started in 2010. This strategic plan, generously funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE), enabled JRP to pursue its mission of empowering conflict-affected communities to participate in processes of justice, healing and reconciliation. It was an exhilarating period that saw JRP work with communities from all the sub-regions of Uganda and implement victim-centred transitional justice (TJ) interventions that contributed to the recovery of victims living in post-conflict northern Uganda.

In the year gone by, JRP was at the forefront of advancing gender justice in northern Uganda and in representing the views of vulnerable and marginalised survivors at the national level. In March, JRP presented a petition to the Parliament of Uganda calling for the establishment of a gender-sensitive reparations fund and for special attention to be paid to the needs of children born in captivity. A month later, a motion was unanimously passed and adopted by Parliament incorporating the calls made in the petition. JRP is now working with its partners to follow up the implementation of this motion.

JRP has continued to spearhead debate on the topic of missing persons in northern Uganda. Families of the missing continue to live in suspense about information regarding the fate of their loved ones that disappeared during the conflict. JRP has kept this debate going through its *Right to Know* campaign, which works to draw attention to the issue of missing persons in northern Uganda and the challenges their families face.

Truth-seeking is considered to be one of the pillars of TJ as it enables societies emerging from conflict to confront their past and prevent the re-occurrence of human rights violations. This year, JRP implemented a ground-breaking community truth-telling process in Atiak sub-county, located in northern Uganda. The project, dubbed *Bearing Witness, Dealing with the Past to Create a Better Future*, provided a forum for community members in Atiak to speak about their experiences during conflict. In the process, "perpetrators" sought forgiveness from community members while "victims" found avenues to release

their pent-up emotions for the first time.

As has been the case in recent years, the organisation continued conducting documentation to provide insight into conflict in northern Uganda. New research was undertaken in Namokora and Odek in Acholi and Ombaci in West Nile sub-region. As a result of its tremendous achievements in the field of documentation, JRP was selected to represent Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the steering committee of the Uganda Human Rights Commission's (UHRC) ongoing documentation project.

To consolidate its achievements in northern Uganda, JRP is nearing completion of its new office premises in Gulu which started in 2013. These office premises, when complete will establish JRP's lasting legacy in northern Uganda.

The journey to post-conflict recovery is, however, far from complete. State-led transitional programs for reparations remain unimplemented in Uganda, and the long awaited transitional justice policy being developed by the Justice and Law Order Sector (JLOS) is yet to be finalised. The Government, through the UHRC, is also yet to undertake a comprehensive documentation of human rights violations in Uganda.

With the above in mind, JRP has developed a new six-year strategic plan to carry forward its work on transitional justice in Uganda and the Great Lakes region. This six-year plan will mark a new phase in JRP's work with an emphasis on victim-centred interventions. The overall goal of this strategic plan is to support efforts of conflict-affected communities in Uganda and the Great Lakes region in realising justice and accountability in order to attain sustainable peace. This strategic plan builds upon the previous plan that was implemented from 2010-2014, and brings in new thinking and lessons learnt as elaborated in its new strategic priorities.

This report presents highlights of our major achievements and impact in the year 2014. We thank our donors, the RNE, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and USAID-SAFE for the generous support they have provided.



Otim Michael
Chair, Board of Directors



Owor Lino Ogora
Programme Coordinator

A photograph of a community meeting taking place outdoors under a large tree. A man in a dark suit stands at a long table, gesturing towards a large group of people seated on the ground. The audience is diverse, with many women wearing colorful headwraps and patterned clothing. The background shows a clear sky and some greenery.

The Justice and Reconciliation Project launched its flagship report, *Roco Wat I Acoli: Traditional Approaches to Justice and Reintegration*, in September 2005, supported the Ugandan Government and Lord's Resistance Army delegations in the negotiations and consultations on Juba Peace Agreement's Agenda Item Three on the Accountability and Reconciliation in 2007, and has worked to advocate for sustainable peace in northern Uganda and Africa's Great Lakes region for ten years.

Working for justice and reconciliation since 2005

A community truth-telling dialogue held as part of JRP's *Bearing Witness* project in Atiak sub-county, Amuru district. Read more about *Bearing Witness* on page 10.

Introduction

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) based in Gulu, northern Uganda, has played a key role in promoting peacebuilding and recovery in Uganda through seeking to understand and explain the interests, needs, concerns and views of communities affected by conflict. We aim to promote sustainable peace by involving conflict-affected communities in documenting conflict experiences, advancing gender justice, supporting vulnerable groups and individuals, and promoting conflict memorialisation, healing and reconciliation initiatives. In addition, our work seeks to provide tools to empower other victims and survivors of conflict in Africa's Great Lakes regions which are also in situations of conflict.

Over the past ten years JRP has created enduring and well-established connections with conflict-affected communities in Uganda through research, dialogue and local level engagement. In this time, JRP has also developed key strategic partnerships with institutions such as the Government of Uganda's (GoU) Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS), the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) and scores of local and regional initiatives to build momentum and sustain commitment for victim-centred transitional justice (TJ) for communities in Uganda and the broader Great Lakes Region.

Our vision is **'a just and peaceful society'** and our mission is to **empower conflict-affected communities to participate in the processes of justice, healing, and reconciliation.**

Our objectives are to:

- Preserve memory of conflict-affected communities through documentation;
- Mobilise communities to engage in processes for redress, reconciliation and healing;
- Support vulnerable groups and individuals in their pursuit of justice; and,
- Advocate for locally sensitive approaches to transitional justice.

In the last five years, JRP's work on local-level TJ has revolved around three principle work-streams:


Community Documentation (CD) conducts documentation of conflict-related experiences and memories of individuals, communities and victims' groups, such as women, children, families of the missing and the disabled, to preserve conflict memory and promote the acknowledgement of loss, reconciliation and healing.

Community Mobilisation (CM) works with individuals, communities and victims' groups to identify what needs to be done to promote community-level justice and reconciliation. This involves engagement at a grassroots level through capacity-building and training, community-led initiatives, and the dissemination of TJ-related information.

Gender Justice (GJ) pays special attention to the TJ needs and concerns of vulnerable groups that have been uniquely affected by the conflict because of gendered experiences, such as formerly-abducted men and women, victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and children born in captivity. This unit has assisted JRP in furthering its value of gender equality as both an aim of, and precondition for, sustainable peace and development.

Our work in 2014 was made possible with generous support from Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala, the MacArthur Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other partners with whom JRP collaborated on small projects include the University of Tennessee and the University of Notre Dame.

This report presents activities implemented by the Justice and Reconciliation Project from January to December 2014 across its three workstreams.

A photograph of a man in a light blue and white striped shirt and glasses, looking down at a document held by another person. The background shows a group of people outdoors in a grassy area under bright sunlight. A semi-transparent yellow box is overlaid on the image, containing text.

Research and documentation has been a key tenet of JRP's interventions since 2004. Our documentation has been conducted to preserve conflict memory and spawn greater understanding of conflict in order to contribute to healing, reconciliation and reintegration within communities. JRP has also engaged conflict-affected communities in the documentation of their own experiences by assisting them to build skills to identify and articulate their needs through storytelling and community-led documentation. We also join hands with communities to support their memory efforts by contributing to memory books, resource centres and commemoration sites.

Working towards a just and peaceful society

Conducting a verification exercises with survivors of conflict in Odek sub-county, Gulu district as part of the process of documenting Odek's conflict experiences on 10 September 2014.

Preservation of the memory of conflict-affected communities in northern Uganda

Preservation of memory is an important tool for the views of conflict-affected communities to reach policy makers. It is also effective in clarifying, identifying and categorising the different experiences and needs of victims. Since 2005, JRP has published 21 Field Notes based on findings made during research with grassroots communities. As a result of our work, many of the survivors of the massacres and mass-atrocities we have documented have come together to form community-based survivors' groups. These groups have been responsible for mobilising support for commemorative days and other forms of memorialisation as well as furthering advocacy for their justice needs, often citing our Field Notes as an important part of their success in achieving this. In addition, the publications resulting from our documentation exercises are used to further lobby the Government of Uganda (GoU), policy makers and other stakeholders to implement holistic transitional justice processes that provide prompt and adequate redress for victims and survivors of conflict.

Documentation in 2014

Documentation of Conflict Experiences of Women in Koch and Yumbe. Drawing upon JRP's success in 2013 with the book *Adyebo: The Wild Plant*, an account of northern Ugandan women's experiences before, during and after captivity by the LRA, JRP sought to conduct a similar documentation to break the silence on conflict-related SGBV in Koch Goma sub-county, Gulu district. From April to May, we conducted documentation exercises with survivors, and in

September we returned to the area for a verification exercise. A publication chronicling women and men's experiences will be published in 2015.

Publication of the autobiography of a formerly-abducted woman. In collaboration with Fountain Publishers, JRP supported the publication of a book narrating the inspirational story of a formerly-abducted woman. The book, titled *Grace Acan: The Journey of My Life*, is the culmination of five years

“JRP, you have given us the courage to begin to openly talk about the suffering in Ombaci. In the past when we tried to talk about it, we were warned both from Kampala and here that this is a hot button that we should not press.”

A survivor of the Ombaci massacre speaking at the launch of JRP's Field Note "It Was Only the Gun Speaking, With a Pool of Blood Flowing" on 24 June 2014 in Arua.

of JRP facilitated documentation and storytelling of experiences during and after returning from the captivity of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The book will be released in 2015.

Documentation of Odek conflict experiences. Odek sub-county in Gulu district, as the home village of LRA leader Joseph Kony, bears a unique identity in discourse surrounding northern Uganda's conflict. In 2014, JRP documented the experiences of community members during and after attacks by both the LRA and National Resistance Army (NRA) forces.

Research on peace indicators. In 2014, JRP contributed to the Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) project. EPI identifies indicators for peace and safety in the aftermath of conflict in selected communities in four sub-Saharan countries. JRP contributed to the Ugandan component of the project.

Research on forgiveness and peacebuilding in Uganda. In collaboration with the University of Notre Dame and the Refugee Law Project (RLP) of the Makerere University School of Law, JRP jointly implemented a research project entitled "Forgiveness and Peace building in Uganda". This project

investigates the power of forgiveness to build peace in the wake of large-scale violence.

Launch of the Namokora and Ombaci massacre reports. In the third decade after their occurrence, JRP launched two Field Notes documenting the experiences of two different communities in northern Uganda each experiencing the remnants of mass atrocities. *It Was Only The Gun Speaking, With a Pool of Blood Flowing*, which documents the Ombaci massacre of 1981, was launched at the second annual memorial prayers for the massacre on 24 June 2014 at Ombaci Mission in Arua. This report details a massacre perpetrated by the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) on 24 June 1981 on civilians who had taken refuge at Ombaci College, claiming the lives of close to 100 people and leaving countless numbers wounded in the process.

Similarly, on 19 August 2014, JRP launched its 19th Field Note, *Occupation and Carnage: Recounting Atrocities Committed by the NRA's 35th Battalion in Namokora Sub-County in August 1986* at the memorial prayers for the Namokora massacre in Namokora sub-county, Kitgum district.

Impact of our documentation

Ombaci survivors association flourishes

Because of JRP's engagement with survivors of the Ombaci massacre during the research process for *It Was Only the Gun Speaking With a Pool of Blood flowing*, the Ombaci Massacre War Victims' Association was formed in 2013 and later registered as a Community-Based Organisation (CBO) in Arua. This group is responsible for mobilising survivors, collectively advocating for their justice needs to different stakeholders and overseeing memorialisation initiatives for the massacre.

Key stakeholders rallied to action in Ombaci

The launch of *It Was Only The Gun Speaking With a Pool of Blood Flowing*, JRP's documentation of the Ombaci massacre of 1981, and the second memorial prayer held in honour of the memory of it on 24 June 2014, which JRP supported, drew the attention of prominent personalities such as Bishop Sabino Odoki who on behalf of the Arua Diocese pledged special counselling and trauma healing programmes for the survivors of the massacre. The area Member of Parliament, Hon. Ben Atiku, not only pledged to help with the architectural work of the Ombaci memorial site but also committed to draw the attention of his fellow legislators and the government to address the needs of Ombaci massacre survivors.

Survivors interface with policy makers

As a result of the launch of JRP's Field Note on the Ombaci massacre of 1981 in June, four survivors of the massacre met with members of the West Nile Parliamentary Group, including Chairperson Hon. Kasiano Wadri, on 30th July 2014, at the Ugandan Parliament in Kampala. This meeting kick started debate on a topic which had been silent for over three decades and which will serve to inform the pending national TJ Policy.

Similarly in July this year, the survivors of atrocities in Burcoro village, Awach sub-county, Gulu district mobilised to meet with their Area Councillor Mr. Opiyo Ateket. Mr. Ateket had previously been tasked with following up on Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's pledge to compensate survivors during the 2011 election campaigns. The survivors also met their area Member of Parliament, Hon. Reagan Okumu, who promised to take up the matter in the Ugandan Parliament. This follows JRP's documentation of the Burcoro massacre of 1991 in *The Beasts at Burcoro: Recounting Atrocities by the NRA's 22nd Battalion in Burcoro Village in April 1991*.

Namokora massacre survivors receive increased media attention

Our documentation has not only created awareness about mass-atrocities committed during conflict, it has also provided an opportunity for survivors to speak out. On 24 August, the nationally syndicated Sunday Monitor newspaper reported the story of a survivor of

the Namokora massacre of 1986 highlighting his and other community members' experiences following a joint press-conference held in Gulu by JRP and the Namokora United Relatives of the Massacred and Survivors Association (NUREMSA) and the community launch of JRP's Namokora documentation on 19 August.

Survivors in Odek find healing and closure

Our documentation processes are designed to ensure that the participants receive some measure of healing and that they are not re-traumatised in sharing their stories. Our storytelling and documentation programmes not only breaks the silence on SGBV-related crimes, they also build the confidence of survivors to share their stories with others, especially those that can provide them with channels for redress. In this respect. Following JRP's research in Odek sub-county for a Field Note on the experiences of conflict of the community there, survivors expressed feelings of closure and catharsis.

Survivors receive health services and training

In 2013, JRP documented the experiences of Burcoro village in 1991 and Namokora in 1986 during brutal operations carried out by the NRA's 22nd and 32nd Battalions respectively. Because of JRP's documentation, the plight of survivors of the numerous atrocities committed then, who continue struggle with injuries and other health complications, have finally been brought to the attention of NGOs working in the region. This year the community benefited from the provision of health services by RLP while Amigos trained the community members in improved farming methods.

Burcoro and Odek survivors memorialise their experiences

JRP's documentation is always instrumental in creating and rejuvenating the spirits of memorialisation in northern Uganda. In Burcoro village this year, survivors of atrocities that JRP documented in its Field Note, *The Beasts At Burcoro*, mobilised themselves and are working to construct a memorial for the conflict-related experiences that were documented in the JRP report.


Similarly, community members in Odek sub-county are working to conduct the first commemorative event for their conflict experiences following JRP's documentation there.

“Since JRP began coming to talk to us, I kept quiet because I was too embarrassed to tell my story. But when women began telling their stories after some time I decided to also speak out. It was when I realised that I was not the only one who was raped by the soldiers.”

A woman in Odek who broke her own silence during a verification meeting for JRP's documentation of the conflict experiences of Odek on 9 September 2014.



Conducting a community-led documentation workshop with community members in Atiak sub-county who form the Atiak Community Reconciliation (CORE) Team on 12 August 2014.



JRP works to mobilise communities to engage in processes that will allow them to sustain social cohesion and dignity after many years of conflict. We work with community structures, such as traditional leaders, victims' groups, local government leaders and community members to identify the methods for communities to seek redress, reconciliation and healing among themselves. In doing this, we use capacity building, memorialisation, community theatre, community outreach and experience sharing between victims groups and support community-led commemorative events.

Empowering conflict-affected communities

The memorial for the Namokora massacre of 1986 held at the massacre's memorial site in Namokora sub-county, Kitgum district on 19 August 2014. In 2014, JRP supported similar community-led memorial initiatives in Barlonyo, Atiak, Lukodi, Parabongo, Mukura, Ombaci and Namokora.

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

Community mobilisation in 2014

Community truth-telling in Atiak sub-county. This year, JRP implemented a community-based truth telling project with funding from USAID's Supporting Access to justice, Fostering Equity and Peace (SAFE) programme in Atiak sub-county, Amuru district. The project, *Bearing Witness: Dealing with the Past to Create a Better Future*, created forums for community members in Atiak to share their experiences of conflict, which included an infamous LRA massacre in 1995, through story-telling sessions and truth-telling dialogues. Emerging issues from the story-telling sessions and dialogues revealed challenges requiring medical attention, trauma and spiritual attacks have been dealt with by an expert Truth-telling and Reconciliation Committee through psychosocial help as well as spiritual healing and cleansing.

Community memory and commemoration. Positive remembrance and memorialisation of conflict events is critical in helping societies to put the past behind them. JRP has been instrumental in supporting community memory projects, and supporting the commemoration of significant days in conflict-affected communities. JRP plays a vital role of providing technical and material support towards the successful organisation of these memorial events in remembrance of persons that perished in the respective massacres. JRP emphasises that such events should aim at reconciling victims and perpetrators. In light of this, JRP facilitated the following in 2014:

A community memory project in Romogi sub-county, Yumbe district which continues to experience the impact of the Uganda National Resistance Front (UNRF) I and II war in West Nile.

Community-led memorialisation initiatives in Atiak sub-county in which the Atiak Community Reconciliation (CORE) team led a community-led documentation of conflict significant events in the lives of the people of Atiak. Drawings, poems and songs were composed to remember tragic events such as property raids, massacres by the LRA, IDP camp life and abductions.

We also supported remembrance events for communities in Barlonyo, Atiak, Lukodi, Parabongo, Mukura, Ombaci and Namokora.

Support for victim-led advocacy. JRP has worked to support victims groups to participate in advocacy for justice and accountability for violations committed during conflict. In July, we supported one evaluation meeting for representatives of established victims' groups across northern Uganda, including groups from Atiak, Mukura, Romogi, Obalanga, and Mucwini. The meeting worked to evaluate the progress of these groups since their inception in 2010 by JRP and to develop concrete plans for their futures. The meeting was also used to emphasise the need for solidarity and collaboration in the groups' advocacy.

Under our **Right to Know** campaign, we conducted a consultation meeting with a collective of relatives of persons missing as a result of conflict in Pece, Gulu (known as the Families of Missing or FoM) to review progress the group made since their inception in 2013 and to plan their activities for the year 2014. With support from JRP, the group collaborated with local music artist John Oweka to record and produced an advocacy song, *Anino Ku*, that was launched during community outreaches commemorating the International Day against Enforced Disappearances on 30 August.



Survivors of the Ombaci massacre of 1981 speak at the Ombaci massacre memorial on 6 June 2014 in Arua. The survivors of the massacre formed the Ombaci War Massacre Survivors Association in 2013 to mobilise support to address the challenges they face and to memorialise the massacre with JRP's support.

Impact of our mobilisation

Atiak sub-county embraces truth-telling and dialogue

The story-telling sessions and truth-telling dialogues conducted during JRP's *Bearing Witness* project in Atiak sub-county provided a safe platform for survivors of conflict to share their experiences. During the dialogues "victims" and "perpetrators" spoke through open experience sharing sessions, one-on-one discussions and private voice recordings. Since JRP began implementing this project, this process has been adopted by traditional leaders in the area as a channel to learn about community members' challenges to assist in finding solutions for them. The process has been spearheaded by Rwot Baptist Latim of Ker Kwaro Pawel, the cultural institution of the Pawel clan in Atiak sub-county. Rwot Baptist Latim is also a member of the *Bearing Witness* Truth-telling and Reconciliation Committee and has so far conducted two *wang-oo* (fireplace) dialogues in his community.

Pawel hosts first peace festival

In 2014, JRP's *Bearing Witness* project in Atiak sub-county, led traditional community leaders in Pawel parish in Atiak to host the community's first Culture and Peace festival on 12 December 2014. The festival utilises music, dance and storytelling to promote peace and reconciliation in the community. This event borrows from a community post-participation event held as part of *Bearing Witness* which highlighted challenges the community of Atiak faces as a result of conflict through song, dance and theatre.

Romogi constructs memorial site

As a result of JRP's support, the Romogi War Victim Association (RWVA) began constructing a memorial site in 2014 that will serve as a centre for social rehabilitation and learning in Yumbe district. Memory projects and activities such as memory walls, cultural articles and remains of materials used during war will be collected and stored at the centre. Creative performances on conflict transformation will be organised for the community.

Mukura survivors mobilise to engage school children in peacebuilding

JRP's support of memory projects and memory days plays the vital role of raising awareness about the plight of victims, building social-cohesion and solidarity among survivors living in communities that suffered from massacres. In Mukura in Teso sub-region, community groups went an extra mile to mobilise and engage all stakeholders in community friendly activities during their memorial event. For the 2014 commemorative event of the 1989 Mukura massacre, the Mukura Massacre Development Initiative (MUMEDI) in partnership with Teso Youth Sport Association (TEYSA) organised a week long series of games and tournaments to memorialise the massacre and engage school going youth. MUMEDI also developed an action plan for 2014 and 2015 with a focus on educating school going children in their respective schools about their community's conflict experiences and the effects of war.

Transition challenges in Atiak attract increased media attention

Following JRP's intervention in Atiak sub-county through the *Bearing Witness* project, the Northern Uganda Media Club (NUMEC) began airing radio programmes on northern Ugandan radio stations that present recordings of truth-telling dialogues held during the project to draw attention to transition challenges faced by the community in Atiak.

Families of the missing meet Speaker of Parliament


In November 2014, the Families of the Missing group of Pece (FoM), which JRP mobilises, met with the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, and other government representatives in Gulu to present their challenges and to garner support for the challenges FoM and the missing face.

“My brother, please forgive me because I abducted you and your brother. I was the very one who tied both of you up. I did not want to do it, but it was on the instruction of the commanders. Once rebel commanders find out where you come from, they force you to do things to hurt your own community.”

A conflict survivors' plea for forgiveness during a truth-telling dialogue held as part of JRP's *Bearing Witness* project in Atiak sub-county, Amuru district. Bearing Witness provided forums for community members in Atiak to share their experiences of conflict.



Community members pose with the Truth-telling and Reconciliation Committee following a community truth-telling dialogue held as part of JRP's *Bearing Witness* project in Atiak sub-county, Amuru district. In 2014, *Bearing Witness* utilised storytelling and truth-telling dialogues to allow community members in Atiak sub-county to express their conflict experiences, many of whom did so for the first time.

A group of approximately 15 people, including men and women, are seated in a circle on plastic chairs outdoors. They are gathered under the shade of a large, leafy tree. The setting appears to be a rural area with simple buildings and vegetation in the background. The people are dressed in casual, everyday clothing. Some are looking towards the center of the group, while others are looking slightly away. The overall atmosphere is one of a community meeting or a training session.

JRP pays special attention to the unique gender-related experiences, needs and desires of victims of conflict in northern Uganda. We aim to build the capacity of the groups that we work with to enable them to advocate for themselves to contribute to holistic and victim-centred TJ processes. This includes conflict-affected women and men—such as male and female survivors of SGBV and formerly-abducted persons (FAPs)—as well as children born in captivity and out of conflict SGBV. We believe that gender justice and equity is both an aim and precondition for sustainable peace, and that paying special attention to gender dynamics better ensures that Uganda’s TJ processes and policies meet the justice needs of all parts of the community.

Promoting victim-sensitive transitional justice

A session during JRP’s training on sexual and gender-based violence responsiveness for Women’s Advocacy Network leaders in Adjumani district. JRP conducted similar SGBV responsiveness trainings in Pader and Lira districts in September and October.

Supporting vulnerable groups and individuals in their pursuit of justice

In our support for vulnerable groups we work with the Women's Advocacy Network (WAN), which was formed by JRP and more than 300 conflict-affected women in 2012 to create spaces for women's consultation and participation in TJ processes in Uganda. Since its formation, the WAN has grown from strength to strength and 2014 was no exception. Today, it brings together nearly 500 conflict-affected women from Acholi, Lango and West Nile sub-regions to advocate for justice, acknowledgment and accountability for gender-based violations inflicted upon them during northern Uganda's many conflicts. The WAN consists of thirteen women's groups who meet quarterly to share experiences and strategise advocacy interventions. This year we continued to build the capacity of the WAN members to advocate for themselves and their justice needs through technical and programmatic support.

While JRP does not provide direct legal aid services, our legal support services aim to empower war-affected women with vital knowledge and counselling on formal and informal accountability channels that they may pursue in their quest for justice and reconciliation, including court processes and alternative dispute resolution processes. JRP also works closely with other stakeholders, like FIDA Uganda, the Center for Reparation and Rehabilitation (CRR), RLP and cultural and religious leaders to engage in referrals, partnerships and collaborations where necessary.

Support for vulnerable groups in 2014

Peer support and experience-sharing for vulnerable groups. In 2014, JRP introduced storytelling sessions to new groups of conflict-affected women and men. Women who have engaged in storytelling previously were invited to share their experiences in the new groups to help build confidence in the process for the new group members. This was carried out in July, September and October in Pader, Lira and Adjumani with WAN constituent groups, and in March and July in Gulu with formerly-abducted men.

Survey of the extent of SGBV revictimisation among war-affected communities. In 2014, JRP conducted a survey in northern Uganda to establish the nature and extent to which SGBV is targeted at conflict-affected women. The findings of this survey also serve to form the basis of a larger JRP project on redress for SGBV on conflict-related wrongs. A report on this survey was launched on 20 November 2014 in Lira, attended by more than 30 representatives from WAN who participated in the survey, local leaders from the areas in question and members of civil society working on issues of conflict SGBV.

Exchange visits. This year JRP carried out three exchange visits to strengthen victims' networks, exchange strategies, and provide opportunities for

sharing war-affected women's experiences. It was also used to provide peer support for war-affected women in the region. Three communities of Tubur (Teso sub-region), Barlonyo (Lango sub-region) and Romogi (West Nile sub-region) benefited from the activity.

Child tracing. JRP assisted women who have expressed a desire to trace the identity of their children born in captivity through "child-tracing" by contacting the families and/or clans of their children's fathers, whilst ensuring that their rights and interests are upheld.

Referrals for war-affected women. In 2014 we referred WAN members for various training courses in areas outside of JRP's mandate such as livelihood support.

Land Mediation. This year, JRP played a key role in the mediation of a land conflict in Koch Ongako involving a WAN member and her family.

Support to the Women's Advocacy Network. As part of JRP's annual evaluation of the WAN, we carried out an evaluation of nine WAN member groups in Gulu town, Awach, Palaro, Alero, Koch, Pabbo and Atiak to review the needs and impact of their activities and

to design interventions to better meeting WAN needs. Throughout the year, JRP also facilitated four quarterly meetings for the WAN to provide updates and plan for the upcoming period. We also organised team-building activities at the Recreation Centre in Gulu where experts designed activities to enhance social cohesion among the WAN groups.

WAN documentary. On its second year anniversary, JRP commissioned a short documentary on the WAN highlighting its background, members and advocacy efforts. The documentary was released in August 2014 and is available on JRP's YouTube page.

Training and capacity building for the WAN.

This year, JRP supported members of the WAN in building skills to create a more sustainable network. From 28 April to 4 May 2014, we organised capacity-building trainings for ten WAN constituent groups on leadership skills, conflict resolution, group dynamics and engagement with policy-makers and stakeholders. In June, we supported clerical, English language and computer skills for WAN leaders and in September and October we organised trainings on SGBV

responsiveness in the communities and leadership and advocacy training with the new WAN groups in Adjumani, Pader and Lira.

Follow-up meeting with the survivors of the Burcoro Massacre. On 13 June 2014, JRP made a follow up field visit to Burcoro village to update the community about what JRP had done since documenting their experiences in a Field Note, *The Beasts at Burcoro: Recounting Atrocities by the NRA's 22nd Battalion in Burcoro Village in April 1991*, in 2013. The visit was also used to solicit feedback from the survivors of Burcoro on how best they want to move forward

Consultation on the needs and challenges of children born of war and their mothers. From September to October 2014, JRP and the WAN, carried out a consultation on the needs and challenges of children born of conflict sexual violence and their mothers with 400 conflict-affected women and local leaders. Preliminary findings show that stigmatisation exists and there is need for greater acknowledgment of and assistance to them.

Impact of our support to vulnerable groups

Hundreds of women trained on how to respond to SGBV and conduct advocacy

From September to October, JRP organised trainings on community SGBV responsiveness, leadership and advocacy with the new WAN groups in Adjumani, Pader and Lira. Up to 400 hundred women benefited from the trainings in total. Some of the sessions were facilitated by district and sub-county leaders, allowing greater engagement between these officials and the women in their jurisdictions.

Land dispute mediated

This year, JRP played a key role in the mediation of a land conflict involving a formerly-abducted woman and her family in Koch Ongako. In this case, the woman's family had refused her access to land because she had not declared the paternity of her children. JRP assisted her by referring her to a partner for legal aid and liaising with local leaders to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between her and her family in October. Following the successful conclusion of the mediation process, local leaders were set to monitor the situation to ensure that the resolutions agreed upon during the discussions hold.

WAN members gain livelihood skills

As a result of WAN members lobbying various stakeholders for assistance in areas outside of JRP's current mandate, fifty WAN members were enrolled for tailoring and knitting training courses at St. Monica Girls' Tailoring School in Gulu. In June 2014, six WAN members were enrolled for clerical skills and short courses in English and computer skills.

Children born in captivity trace their homes

In 2014, JRP assisted four cases of women who expressed a desire to trace the identity of their children born in captivity, an activity we call "child-tracing." Much of society in northern Uganda is patriarchal, such that children without a clear patriarchal lineage — as is the case with many born in captivity due to the nature of their birth and their parents' relationship — are often not recognised, nor are they eligible to obtain inheritance or land. As a result, this year JRP assisted women in contacting the families and clans of their children's fathers, whilst ensuring that their rights and interests as women and mothers are upheld.

In January, we successfully mediated a child tracing exercise in Lira, in which one formerly-abducted member of the WAN was introduced to her children's paternal family.

In March, members of the WAN, with support from JRP, successfully mediated a child tracing in Kidere, Gulu district, in which one WAN member was introduced to her children's paternal family.

In March, our team was unexpectedly contacted by a male former LRA combatant who sought to reunite with five of his children who were born to three different formerly-abducted women. This was the first instance of a man contacting us for child tracing, illustrating the importance of child tracing for both men and women in conflict.

In June, another male former LRA combatant contacted the WAN requesting that his child born in captivity be traced to the mother's family in Oyam district. This case is still ongoing.

War-affected women receive assistance in addressing health, legal and psycho-social challenges

As a result of JRP's partnerships with specialised civil society organisations, two WAN members were referred to the Center for Reparations and Rehabilitation (CRR) to receive free legal services and psycho-social support. Three other WAN women were referred to RLP to receive medical assistance for shrapnel from the conflict that is in their bodies until today.

WAN constituent groups registered as CBOs

In 2014, all 13 WAN constituent groups in Acholi, Lango and West Nile sub-regions developed and signed constitutions and registered as CBOs with their sub-counties with technical support from JRP. This works to strengthen their visibility and their ability to receive support from donors while adding legitimacy to their advocacy work. As a result, in October five of these groups received a grant from Uganda Fund to implement livelihoods projects in 2015.

WAN gains international visibility

In October 2014, a representative of the WAN was invited to participate as a speaker at the annual conference of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs' Human Security Division on youth and human security in Berne, Switzerland. She presented her experiences during and after captivity by the LRA alongside high-profile dignitaries, such as the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In November, a video featuring WAN members speaking about the needs of children born in captivity was screened to development partners and donors at a conference in Dubai organised as part of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE).

These events contribute to greater awareness and acknowledgment of the experiences of northern Uganda's women, and generate greater interest in supporting the initiatives of the WAN and other survivor groups.

WAN signs governing constitution

This year, representatives of each of the WAN constituent groups in Acholi, Lango and West Nile signed the network's first governing constitution. This establishes the functioning roles and governance of the network, defines its membership, and provides a level of independence and structure to allow the WAN to move to a semi-autonomous state. In the future, the WAN will be able to register as a CBO, source funds and have more decision making powers over its activities and advocacy.

Our referrals have enabled vulnerable groups such as formerly abducted women to access services outside JRP's mandate such as livelihoods and healthcare. JRP continues to rely heavily on good working relationship with other organisations, institutions and well-wishers.



JRP's SGBV responsiveness training for Women's Advocacy Network leaders in P... district, 27 September 2014.



JRP 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 our updates on transitional justice developments to communities. Our policy briefs also make policy recommendations to policy makers and civil society on current transitional justice issues.

Supporting community-led initiatives

Members of the Women's Advocacy Network pose outside of the Ugandan Parliament in Kampala following the presentation of a petition signed by over 1000 war-affected women across northern Uganda to the Uganda Women Parliamentarian's Association.

Advocacy on transitional justice

Advocacy in 2014

The Right to Know campaign. In 2014, JRP continued to keep conversation on the issue of missing persons alive through the Right to Know campaign. JRP produced a song called *Anino Ku* (which means 'I do not sleep' in Acholi) with a local Acholi artist, John Oweka, to create awareness about missing persons in northern Uganda and facilitate public discussion and debate on the issue.

As part of activities to mark the International Day against Enforced Disappearances on 30 August, we conducted three community outreaches on missing persons in the sub-counties of Awach, Bobbi and Alero in Gulu and Nwoya districts in the month of September utilising policy recommendations and testimony from the Families of the Missing group in Pece, Gulu. The average number of participants in the three outreaches was 200 people.

In August, we published "The Right to Know: Policy recommendations to address the rights of the families of the missing in northern Uganda", a policy brief presenting the findings of a pilot study in Palabek sub-county, Lamwo district which sought to establish the circumstances under which enforced disappearances as a result of conflict occurred in northern Uganda, the coping strategies used by affected communities and the needs of families of the missing. This policy brief was disseminated during our community outreach activities in September.

In March, we conducted a storytelling session with members of the FoM group in Pece. In order to build confidence in the process with the new participants, veteran members of the WAN facilitated the discussion.

Engagement of the WAN in advocacy events, networking and partnerships. This year, as a follow up to a petition signed by 1250 conflict-affected women in 2013 calling for redress, JRP facilitated the presentation of the petition to the Uganda Women Parliamentarian's Association (UWOPA) on 13 March 2014. The aim of the petition was to seek immediate intervention by the Ugandan government to address the challenges women continue to face in post-conflict northern Uganda.

Interface meetings with key stakeholders. In 2014, we continued to push for the issues in the petition signed by 1250 conflict-affected women to be addressed by facilitating engagements with district leaders and Members of Parliament and by following-up on Parliamentary proceedings related to the resolution. On 12 March 2014, we held a meeting in Kampala with 16 prominent civil society actors to discuss the issues raised in the petition and determine strategies to best ensure that they are addressed.

International engagements on youth and human security. In October, a WAN representative was invited to deliver a keynote address at a conference on youth and human security organised by the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs in Berne, Switzerland. In addition to sharing her experiences with the LRA and upon return, she highlighted the work of the WAN, increasing the network's profile and drawing interest from international actors.

WAN community advocacy. On 8 March 2014, WAN members participated in the Gulu district International Women's Day celebrations held in Awach sub-county. This year's theme was titled, "In Partnership with Men and Boys for Empowerment of Women and Girls." The WAN constituent group based in Awach presented a play to advocate for increased support from men for their daughters' education.

Community dialogues in Pader, Lira and Adjumani. In November 2014, we conducted three community dialogues in Pader, Lira and Adjumani in November to raise awareness SGBV challenges being faced by conflict-affected women. The dialogues were attended by more than 450 people in total.

Dialogues with community leaders. Also in November 2014, we organised three dialogues between WAN members in Pader, Adjumani and Lira and their local leaders within the sub-county. The dialogues were well attended by officials from the sub-counties, cultural leaders and representatives of local structures, providing some of the first face-to-face interactions with them for the women. In their discussions, the women shared challenges such as stigma and lack of livelihoods and the local leaders committed to working alongside the women.

Professional recording of an advocacy song on the experiences and needs of formerly-abducted women. In August, the WAN's Rwot Lakica group in Gulu teamed up with arts-based peace-building initiative Music for Peace to professionally record the song "Rubanga Ber (God is Good)" with Acholi artist Jeff Korondo. The song highlights the women's faith and hope that they will survive whatever challenge comes their way, and shall be used next year to advance the advocacy agendas of the WAN. The group will develop a music video for the song in early

2015 to aid its dissemination.

Research into community perspectives on amnesty. In partnership with Uganda Law Society, JRP conducted research in Acholi, Lango, Teso and West Nile sub-regions in October to solicit victim and community perspectives on amnesty. The purpose of the research was to inform the drafting of a model Amnesty Law that will address the needs of the victim communities, prosecute the most responsible for crimes and provide immunity on a conditional basis.

Impact of our advocacy

Government commits to conduct study on missing persons

Following the publication of JRP's policy brief "The Right to Know: Policy recommendations for addressing the rights of the missing and their families in northern Uganda", in August, the Ugandan government committed itself in 2014 to conducting a nation-wide study on the prevalence of persons missing as a result of conflict. The need for such a study was called for in both the policy brief and other advocacy engagements JRP has conducted as part of JRP's Right to Know campaign.

"Government is now ready to conduct the documentation which will tell the figure of missing persons."

Parliament adopts resolution compelling Ugandan government to address needs of war affected women

Following the WAN's presentation to the Uganda Women Parliamentarian's Association (UWOPA) in March this year, on 9 April 2014, the Ugandan Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a gender-sensitive reparations fund and reparations for war-affected women and men. The resolution calls for the government to provide free and accessible health services for war-affected women and children as well as to ensure the integration and resettlement of children born in captivity and formerly-abducted women in their communities.

Following the resolution being passed in Parliament, a lobby group called the Consortium for War Victims was formed, of which JRP was tasked with addressing the aspects of the resolution dealing with gender and children born in captivity.

Mr. Richard Todwong, Minister Without Portfolio in charge of Political Mobilisation, Daily Monitor, 6 October 2014.



A meeting to discuss advocacy strategy with key stakeholders, legislators and survivors of the Ombaci massacre of 1981 in Arua on 25 June 2014.

Conclusion

The TJ agenda in Uganda has reached a critical turning point. JLOS recently finalised the national TJ policy and is now in the process of seeking Cabinet approval.

Following the passing of this policy, extensive work will need to be done to prepare victims and communities to participate in the implementation process. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) is also planning to undertake a comprehensive documentation of human rights abuses and violations in Uganda, for which JRP represents civil society on an advisory board.

In light of this changing landscape, JRP has developed a new six-year strategic plan for 2015 to 2020 to carry forward its work on transitional justice in Uganda and the Great Lakes region. This six-year plan will mark a new phase in JRP's work which will emphasise victim-centred interventions. The overall goal of this strategic plan is to support efforts of conflict-affected communities in Uganda and the Great Lakes region in realising justice and accountability in order to attain sustainable peace. This strategic plan builds upon JRP's work between 2010 and 2014 under its previous strategic plan while bringing in new thinking and lessons learnt, as elaborated in the new strategic priorities.

Read more about JRP's upcoming work on our website, 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 publications are accessible online and new ones are immediately uploaded once they are published.

We would like to specially thank the Royal Norwegian Embassy who have supported our work since 2010, the MacArthur Foundation and USAID-SAFE for their generous support in 2014.

Find out more about the Justice and Reconciliation Project

Further information about JRP can be found on www.justiceandreconciliation.com. The following publications are available in print at JRP's office and on our website:

Field Notes - JRP regularly publishes Field Notes presenting the results of extensive research into the conflict experiences of communities affected by conflict.

Reports - JRP's reports present research and analysis on current transitional justice issues in northern Uganda and Africa's Great Lakes region.

Policy Briefs - JRP's policy briefs provide recommendations to civil society, government and policy makers to advocate for locally sensitive transitional justice.

Magazines and Newsletters - JRP publishes a quarterly magazine 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.

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JRP publications in 2014

- Occupation and Carnage: Recounting Atrocities Committed by the NRA's 35th Battalion in Namokora Sub-County in August 1986, March 2014 (ISBN: 978-9970-36-002-4)
- It Was Only the Gun Speaking, With a Pool of Blood Flowing The Ombaci Massacre: June 24, 1981, June 2014 (ISBN: 978-9970-36-003-1)
- The Right to Know: Policy recommendations for addressing the rights of the missing and their families in northern Uganda, August 2014
- Establishing the Extent of SGBV Revictimisation among Female Survivors of Conflict SGBV in Northern Uganda Report Summary on a Baseline Study and Pre-Project Assessment on Redress for SGBV on Conflict-Related Wrongs, November 2014
- Forgotten Victims: Recounting Atrocities Committed in Odek Sub-County by the LRA and NRA, December 2014
- Voices magazine, Issues 6-8

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It Was Only the Gun Speaking, With a Pool of Blood Flowing The Ombaci Massacre: June 24, 1981, June 2014



The Right to Know: Policy recommendations for addressing the rights of the missing and their families in northern Uganda



Voices magazine, Issue 7

All of JRP's publications are available for download at www.justiceandreconciliation.com

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