We Mobilized Ourselves

Community Resilience in Areas
Impacted by the Lord's Resistance Army

HARVARD
HUMANITARIAN
INITIATIVE

"We mobilized ourselves with the leadership of our chief and went to search for the LRA. The only reason that we couldn't rescue any of our abducted people from them is that they are always on the move day and night nonstop; otherwise we would have caught up with them and rescued all of our people. We saw that the government didn't have the will to protect us so we had to do it ourselves."

– Focus group discussion with formerly abducted people and family members of abductees, South Sudan

Key Acronyms

AU - African Union

AU-RTF - African Union-Regional Task Force

CAR - Central African Republic

DDRRR- Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement

DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo

FACA - Central African Armed Forces
(French: Forces Armées Centrafricaines)

FARDC - Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
(French: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo)

FGD - Focus group discussion

HSM - Holy Spirit Movement

ICC - International Criminal Court

IDP - Internally Displaced Person

KII - Key Informant Interview

LDU - Local Defense Unit

LRA - Lord's Resistance Army

MONUSCO - United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in
the Democratic Republic of the Congo
(French: Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation
en République démocratique du Congo)

NRA - National Resistance Army

OLT - Operation Lightning Thunder

RCI-LRA - Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA

SAF - Sudanese Armed Forces

SPLA/M - Sudan People's Liberation Army/ Movement

UN - United Nations

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

UPDA - Ugandan People's Democratic Army

UPDF - Uganda People's Defense Force

Contents

1. Introduction

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has operated for more than two decades in Africa, perpetrating a campaign of terror that has destabilized communities across four countries. They are known for their brutal attacks against civilians, including killing, torture, and mutilation, as well as the widespread abduction of children to increase their ranks. The group has its roots in northern Uganda, where it terrorized inhabitants for more than 15 years and was responsible for the abduction of more than 20,000 children and displacement of more than 1.9 million people (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2012). After military pressure forced the LRA to leave Uganda, the group migrated into the border region between South Sudan,[1]

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[1] South Sudan became a sovereign country in 2011. Mentions of the southern region prior to 2011 are thus referred to as southern Sudan; South Sudan is used in all other instances.

the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Estimates of the total number of people displaced by the LRA across all four countries run as high as 2.5 million (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2013; Internal Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC], 2013); the UNSC reports that LRA combatants have abducted between 60,000 and 100,000 children. The number of civilians killed by the LRA remains difficult to estimate, but ranges from the tens of thousands (Ahere & Maina, 2013; HRW, 2012) to more than 100,000 people (UNSC, 2013).

At its peak, the LRA had between 3,000 and 5,000 members (Lancaster, Lacaile, & Cakaj, 2011). Increasing regional military action against the LRA and an increasing number of combatant defections, however, has weakened the group, and current estimates put the number of remaining LRA combatants at 150 Ugandan males, not including the fluctuating number of abductees and non-combatant members (Ronan, 2015). The LRA continues to terrorize communities across a wide geographic region despite recent successful efforts to diminish the power of the group. Because of the long history of the conflict, many affected communities have evolved complex mechanisms to protect themselves.

The goal of this research is to investigate the sources of resiliency and vulnerability in LRA-affected communities. Results of this research seek to inform better programmatic responses in these contexts, and to create lessons learned that might be applicable in other areas affected by non-state armed groups. To frame the study, we used the UN definition of resilience: "The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions" (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNISDR], 2007. The project drew on focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and a conceptual mapping exercise to generate qualitative data around the impacts of the LRA and resilience mechanisms employed by affected communities across all four countries.

This report will first provide an overview of the LRA's impact on civilian communities, and the methods used for the current project. The research results will then be presented. The first section will outline the repertoire of violence used by the LRA and the evolution of these abuses over time. The second section will provide a detailed treatment of the mechanisms of self-protection and resilience that communities have developed over time to mitigate the impact of the LRA. We conclude with an overarching discussion of findings and implications. A second affiliated report will examine the internal organization of the LRA, its command and control structures, and the changes in the group over time.

1.1 Conflict Background

The Lord's Resistance Army arose from fault lines generated by a protracted ethnic conflict between the northern and southern halves of Uganda (Branch, 2010). The modern history of the conflict began in 1985–1986, when current President Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA) led a successful coup to overthrow the second term of then president Milton Obote (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). Museveni, a southerner, was aggrieved, among other things, by the predominance of northern Ugandans represented in Obote's regime. Both during and after the coup, the NRA launched a campaign of brutal violence against civilians in the north, particularly those of the Acholi ethnic group.[2] A number of Acholi armed groups arose in resistance (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Cline, 2013). The first group to engage the NRA was the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), a force predominantly composed of soldiers from Obote's former government army. The Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) emerged as a more religious faction of the UPDA (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). Led by an Acholi-born woman named Alice Auma (or Lakwena), a self-proclaimed medium, HSM was founded on the belief that Uganda

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[2] Acholi primarily live in the current districts of Kitgum, Pader (formerly a region of Kitgum until 2002), Amuru, Lamwo (formerly a region of Kitgum), Gulu, and Agago (formerly a region of Pader until 2010).

needed to be purified of corruption and violence. The group rapidly grew in size, and many UPDA soldiers joined its cause (Branch, 2010; Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). Despite this popularity, Museveni's government defeated the movement in 1987, and Lakwena fled Uganda. Within this void, Joseph Kony, also a self-proclaimed spiritual medium and former UPDA soldier,[3] began the LRA (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Vinci, 2005). Rather than directing his grievances solely at the government, Kony stated a desire to cleanse the Acholi of an "internal enemy": community members suspected of having allegiances to the government (Branch, 2010, 40).[4] The LRA was founded on a dogmatic hybrid of Christianity (with particular emphasis on the Ten Commandments) and Acholi traditional spiritualism. Islamic laws were incorporated later in the movement (Cline, 2013). The group was unpopular among the war-weary Acholi, and he soon began ordering violent abductions and lootings in an effort to expand his forces and resources (The Resolve, 2010).

Reliable data estimating the total impact of the LRA since the beginning of the conflict across all four countries are lacking; however, some figures are available. From 1987 to 2006, it is estimated that LRA combatants abducted 66,000 youths (age 14–30) in northern Uganda (Annan, Blattman, & Horton, 2006). Other studies have estimated that between 24,000 to 38,000 children and 28,000 to 37,000 adults were abducted prior to 2006 (Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2007; Cline, 2013). According to the LRA Crisis Tracker (n.d.), over 6,500 people have been abducted since 2008. Various reports cite vague figures of the total number of deaths caused by the LRA, ranging from tens of thousands (Ahere & Maina, 2013; HRW, 2012) to more than 100,000 people (UNSC, 2013).

Since 2008, the LRA combatants have killed more than 3,000 people (LRA Crisis Tracker, 2015).

Diplomatic and military attempts to defeat the LRA have been ongoing since the group's inception. Initial attempts at diplomacy took the form of peace negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan government brokered by Uganda's former State Minister Betty Bigombe. These efforts failed, in part due to a speech Museveni delivered during a ceasefire, in which he issued an ultimatum to the rebels (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). Kony increased his campaign of abductions, looting, and killings against northern Ugandans, while extending LRA violence into southern Sudan (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). In 1994, the Sudanese Government began supporting the LRA in exchange for fighting a proxy war with the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), a group fighting for southern independence (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999).[5,6] The LRA was able to remain in southern Sudan for more than 10 years, launching brutal attacks on civilians in Eastern Equatoria and northern Uganda, while continuing to receive support from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) (The Resolve, 2010; The Resolve & Invisible Children, 2014; Schomerus, 2007).

While Ugandan troops were actively engaging the LRA in combat, there was a parallel strategy developed by the Ugandan government to create internally displaced person (IDP) camps for civilians beginning in 1996. At the apex of the conflict in 2005, 251 camps held nearly two million people across 11 districts in Uganda (United Nations High Commisioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2012). The camps are widely considered to be a humanitarian catastrophe; there are many reports of high mortality rates, rapidly spreading disease, continued insecurity, and a lack of access to many basic needs (Branch, 2009; United

Civilians affected by the LRA have endured decades of conflict in which they have largely been responsible for their own protection. In many countries, government response is widely considered to have been delayed or inadequate.

Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs Integrated Regional Information Network [UNDHA IRIN], 1996; HRW, 1997; Otunnu, 2006).

The regional expansion of the LRA and the extent of the humanitarian need brought international attention to the conflict, and with it, pressure on the Sudanese government to allow the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) to perform counterinsurgency operations on Sudanese soil. In 2002, Khartoum allowed the Ugandan Army (UPDF) entry into southern Sudan to confront the LRA in "Operation Iron Fist" (Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013). The operation was widely considered unsuccessful, resulting in massive retaliation by the LRA in the form of brutal attacks against civilians in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. The second "Iron Fist" in 2004 is thought to have been more effective, resulting in the release of a number of abductees (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). By 2005, the LRA ceased activity in Uganda (Branch, 2010; The

Resolve, 2010). On August 26, 2006, the LRA and Ugandan government signed a cessation of hostilities agreement (Security Council Report, 2015).

Simultaneously, the LRA's foothold in southern Sudan was beginning to weaken. In 2005, the Sudanese government and the SPLA/M signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which laid the foundation for the 2011 referendum for southern independence. In the short term, this caused SAF forces to withdraw from southern Sudan and increased international pressure on Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to maintain regional stability (The Resolve, 2010). This change, combined with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) indictment of LRA commanders in 2005, caused Kony to relocate LRA bases to northeastern DRC, while LRA combatants continued to attack civilians in Western Equatoria State, southern Sudan (The Resolve & Invisible Children, 2014).

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3   There are conflicting beliefs about Kony's relationship to Lakwena. Some report that they are cousins (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999) or that Kony is Lakwena's nephew (Prunier, 2004). Branch (2010) questions the proximity of their lineal connection but describes accounts from Kony's home village that suggest Kony and Lakwena shared a grandfather on their mother's side.

4   The NRA had recruited a number of Acholi men as members of Local Defense Units (LDUs), which effectively served as a localized branch of Museveni's government in the north (Branch, 2010).

5   The motivating factors behind the relationship between Sudan and the LRA are conflicting. Both Mwenda (2010) and Van Acker (2004) write that Sudan's relationship with the LRA was a reaction to either U.S. or Ugandan, respectively, support of the SPLA (Mwenda, 2010; Van Acker,2004). However, Prunier writes that the Sudanese government was interested in the LRA for their successes in battle (2004, p. 366).

6   There are reports of the LRA in Sudan beginning as early as 1991 (Schomerus, 2007; 2012).

In 2006, renewed efforts at diplomacy began with the commencement of the Juba peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government, mediated by Riek Machar, the then Vice President of southern Sudan, and hosted in Juba, southern Sudan (The Resolve & Invisible Children, 2014). Kony's participation in the talks was limited, and the situation was complicated by the ICC indictment of Kony, in-fighting among LRA commanders participating in the peace talks, and ongoing threats against the LRA by Museveni. Ultimately, Kony failed to sign the final peace accords in 2008, and LRA combatants resumed attacks in the DRC (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; The Resolve, 2010). In response, the UPDF, in accordance with a security agreement between southern Sudan and the DRC, and in conjunction with the U.S. military, launched an attack on LRA bases in the DRC dubbed "Operation Lightening Thunder" (OLT) (The Resolve, 2010). None of the senior LRA leaders targeted for detention were captured. The operation did destroy some of the LRA's camps and resources, effectively scattering combatants across a wider swath of territory, including the CAR. By 2009, Kony and a group of 250 people had traveled into the CAR, while a number of commanders remained operational in the DRC (Enough, 2014; Schomerus & Tumutegyereize, 2009).

In retaliation for OLT, the LRA intensified attacks on Congolese and southern Sudanese civilians. Between December 24, 2008, and January 17, 2009, more than 865 civilians were killed in the DRC in what has become known as the Christmas Massacre (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; HRW, 2009). Less than one year later, 321 people were killed and 250 abducted by the LRA in the DRC over a period of four days, known as the Mokombo Massacre (HRW, 2010).

Civilian protection provided by the government against these and other similar massacres in South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC was much less formal than in Uganda. There are reports of IDP and refugee camps, as well as large numbers of urban IDPs, particularly in the CAR, that did receive some basic services (World Food Programme [WFP], 2011; IDMC, 2013; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA],

2015). However, many thousands of civilians in all four LRA-affected countries have been forced to engage in a variety of survival strategies in addition to governmental and international action, which will be documented in detail later in section 3.2.

In 2010, U.S. President Barack Obama signed the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, dedicating U.S. support to the governments of the affected countries in central Africa, as well as the African Union (AU) and the UN (U.S. Department of State [USDS], 2014). In 2011, the AU established the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the LRA (RCI-LRA), and its military component, the Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) (British Broadcasting Company [BBC], 2013; AU, 2013; USDS, 2013). In 2013, AU forces launched "Operation Monsoon," and reported a number of successes in destabilizing the LRA and increasing security (BBC, 2013; AU, 2013). In addition, regional organizations, UN affiliates, and international NGOs have instituted Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDRRR) programs attempting to support combatants in the process of leaving the LRA. Defection efforts include leaflet drops, radio broadcasts, aerial loudspeakers, and the establishment of safety zones in which LRA combatants can seek amnesty and support (USDS, 2014).

Some reports indicate that these efforts have been to some degree successful. The UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO, 2014) reported that 629 Ugandan combatants (LRA and others) were repatriated from 2002 to 2014. The LRA research and advocacy organization The Resolve reports that at least 12 senior commanders have defected or been killed since 2012. In late 2014, senior LRA commander Dominic Ongwen surrendered to AU-RTF forces in the CAR. The existing force of 150 Ugandan males is thought to be more fractured and less organized (Ronan, 2015). The number of formerly abducted women and children returning home from LRA captivity has steadily increased over the years, from 44 recorded in 2012 to 127 in 2014 (Ronan, 2015).

Despite these successes, civilians affected by the LRA have endured decades of conflict in which they have largely been responsible for their own protection. In many countries, government response is widely considered to have been delayed or inadequate. Moreover, the LRA continues to operate within the porous borders of the DRC, the CAR, the Kafia Kingi enclave in Sudan, and, to a lesser extent, South Sudan. While the present intensity of LRA violence fluctuates from year to year and between countries, the LRA has generally moved away from large-scale attacks; the internal motivation for the LRA has shifted towards survival (Vinci, 2007; Hammond, 2011; Branch, 2010; Van Der Auwera, 2010).

Most LRA groups rely on the looting of small communities to meet their everyday needs, while some groups are also engaging in illegal poaching and trafficking in ivory, diamonds, and gold (Ronan, 2015; Olsen, 2007; Vinci, 2007). Thirteen civilians were killed in 2014, down from 76 in 2013. The number of abductions,

however, rose in 2014 to 616, up from 467 in 2013. The number of LRA attacks[7] also increased in 2014, jumping from 183 to 202. In the first half of 2015, 320 civilians were abducted and 9 people killed (Ronan, 2015). The intermittent timing and intensity of attacks has a huge impact on affected communities; the constant fear, lasting effects of prolonged displacement, and inability to plan for the future is devastating.

7   The definition of 'attack' is not provided in the cited report, but is defined in previous Resolve reports as "violence resulting in death or injury, sexual or gender based violence, abduction, or looting" (Ronan, 2014).

LRA
Conflict Timeline

1987-1988
Joseph Kony forms the group that will become the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda.[1]

1991
UPDF mounts military offensive "Operation North." LRA retaliates against civilians.

Earliest sightings of LRA members in Eastern Equatoria and southern Sudan, are reported.[2]

1994
Betty Bigombe negotiates a tentative ceasefire. Yoweri Museveni reneges on those negotiations during a political rally; the violence continues.[3]

Sudanese government supplies LRA with food, weapons, and land in exchange for acting as a proxy in their war against the SPLA. Deadly attacks increase against civilians in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

LRA relocates bases to Eastern Equatoria State, southern Sudan.[4] Attacks continue in Uganda.

1996
Ugandan government institutes policy of relocating civilians to protected camps.

1997
SPLA overruns LRA stronghold in Imatong Mountains. Kony and second-in-command Vincent Otti flee to Juba.[5]

1999
Carter Center brokers Nairobi agreement between the governments of Uganda and Sudan to end their proxy war; neither government observes the agreement.[6]

2000
Ugandan government enacts the Amnesty Act, granting pardons to Ugandans active or associated with the LRA.[7]

2001
U.S. places LRA on list of terrorist organizations.[8]

2002
UPDF launches "Operation Iron Fist" with permission from Sudan and logistical support from the U.S. LRA retaliates against civilians in southern Sudan and northern Uganda.

2004
UPDF launches "Operation Iron Fist II," which results in defections of LRA combatants and the freeing of abductees, as well as the intensification of violence and expansion of the LRA into previously unaffected territories.[10]

2005
ICC issues arrest warrants for Kony and four other commanders.

SPLA and Sudanese government sign Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

2005-2006
LRA leaves Eastern Equatoria. LRA establishes a base in the DRC's Garamba National Park while attacking civilians in Western Equatoria State, southern Sudan.[11]

2006
Riek Machar meets with LRA commanders in April to lay foundation for Juba Peace Talks.[12]

LRA and Government of Uganda sign the cessation of hostilities agreement in August.

2007
Kony orders the execution of Vincent Otti, who had been the point person for the Juba peace negotiations.

2008
First attacks are reported in the CAR in March as LRA combatants scout new base locations.[13]

Juba Peace Talks are suspended in April after Kony fails to sign final agreement.

Uganda, southern Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR, with support from the U.S. military, launch "Operation Lightning Thunder" in December.

The LRA retaliates by killing hundreds in the DRC and southern Sudan in what is known as the Christmas Massacres.

2009
Kony and the LRA relocate to Haut-Mbomou Prefecture in the CAR.

UPDF deploys to the CAR.

2009-2010
Kony and group of LRA combatants move to the Kafia Kingi enclave, a border region governed by Sudan.[14,15]

2010
Barack Obama signs the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, dedicating U.S. support to governments of affected countries, the AU, and the UN.

Kony leaves a small group of combatants in Kafia Kingi and travels back to the CAR.[16]

2011
U.S. Special Forces arrive in the CAR and South Sudan[17] to support UPDF, FACA (in CAR), and SPLA (in South Sudan).

2012
The AU, with the support of the UN, and U.S. and European donors, launches the RCI-LRA and the AU-RTF.

The UN Security Council endorses a Regional Anti-LRA Strategy.[18]

Kony orders LRA troops to poach ivory in Garamba.

2012-2014
There are reports that Kony intermittently operates from Kafia Kingi and the neighboring CAR.[19]

2013
The AU-RTF launches "Operation Monsoon," which reportedly destroys an LRA camp in the CAR.[20]

The Government of Uganda reinstates the Amnesty Act, which lapsed in 2012. It applies to all but the top LRA commanders.[21]

U.S. advisors deploy to the DRC for the first time and begin to train the FARDC contingent of the RTF.[22]

2014
The U.S. temporarily deploys more personnel and aircraft equipment to AU-RTF forces.[23]

LRA commander Dominic Ongwen defects from the LRA in the CAR.

2015
Approximately 150 male combatants remain in the LRA, continuing to attack civilians in the CAR, the DRC, and to a lesser extent, South Sudan.[24]

1 Cline 2013; Van Acker, 2004; The Resolve, 2010; Dunn, 2004
2 Schomerus, 2007; 2012
3 Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010
4 Schomerus, 2007
5 Schomerus, 2007
6 Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013
7 Ahere & Maina, 2013
8 U.S. Department of State, 2012
9 Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010
10 Child Soldiers International, 2008
11 Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013; DRG & DDG, 2013
12 Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013
13 Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013; The Resolve, 2010
14 Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013
15 The Resolve and Invisible Children, 2014
16 The Resolve and Invisible Children, 2014
17 P.Ronan, personal communication, 2015, April 28
18 UN Department of Political Affairs, 2012.
19 The Resolve and Invisible Children, 2014
20 AU, 2013
21 IRIN, 30 May 2013
22 Agger, 2013
23 Arieff & Ploch, 2014
24 Ronan, 2015

The number of focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted in each site varied according to the size of the local population. South Sudan and Uganda had relatively large communities with a variety of actors available for both FGDs and KIIs. In contrast, the communities in the CAR and the DRC affected by the LRA were much smaller, and so fewer focus groups and interviews were conducted in these sites. The specific actors interviewed in each site depended on the composition of the community. In each site, local researchers with backgrounds that included working in NGOs and on LRA issues were recruited to serve as advisors and data collectors. The local researchers were critical in providing guidance on local context and in editing the interview guides for relevance and applicability in each context.

Details of all focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and conceptual mapping exercises are displayed in Tables 1–4. In section 3, we cite the relevant discussions, interviews, and exercises in the footnotes using the codes detailed in Tables 1–4.

2.2 Data Analysis

All KIIs and FGDs were audio-recorded to enable translation and accurate capture of the data. Audio files were transcribed, and then these transcripts were translated from local languages—Acholi in Uganda and Zande in South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC—to English. Two team members undertook close reading of the data to independently identify salient themes. Key themes and sub-themes were collaboratively defined and a codebook was generated. Once data coding began, the codebook was modified during an iterative process to ensure that it reflected information from the data. This process allowed for the identification of key unifying topics, exploration of complexities in the narratives, and generation of hypotheses where appropriate. Coding was done in NVivo 9 (QSR International, Cambridge, Mass.)

2. Methods

2.1 Data Collection

Participants in the research included government, traditional and religious leaders, service providers, local defense groups, former combatants, formerly abducted persons, and general community members. In each country, field sites were chosen based on the amount of LRA activity they had experienced and their accessibility to research teams. Data collection occurred between May 2013 and February 2014. As the country affected by the LRA for the longest amount of time, Uganda was chosen as the first site for fieldwork. Because the LRA is no longer active in this area, responses from Ugandan communities served as a historical case study that provided context and background for fieldwork in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR. Qualitative work was then undertaken in sites currently affected by the LRA.

of killing, torture and mutilation, abduction, sexual violence, looting, and destruction of property. The forms of violence discussed in the interviews and focus groups will be presented; a discussion of general vulnerabilities and possible motivations for each type of abuse will follow.

LRA Violence: Overview

LRA-perpetrated violence is well documented in outside literature and mirrored in this study's data. The forms of violence detailed here include abduction, killing, sexual violence, mutilation, looting, destruction of property, and torture. Different forms of violence can be prompted by different motivations and may serve different purposes. While the LRA purported political motivations at its inception (Schomerus, 2007; Finnstrom, 2003), the group's actions seem to lack clear motivation beyond self-preservation, particularly after the group left Uganda (Vinci, 2007; Hammond, 2011). Civilians in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR in particular, state deep confusion about why they are being attacked by the LRA and about the group's driving motivation. This seems to be increasingly true of those within the LRA itself, given increasing fragmentation, emphasis on survival, and multinational identity of the group (Branch, 2010; Van Der Auwera, 2010).

Looting and abduction have been used as tools to ensure the long-term survival of the LRA by replenishing both materials and potential combatants. Others have found that assets and resources are often what motivate conflict in contemporary war, especially in economically depleted states (Van Der Auwera, 2010; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2009). Vinci (2007) writes that abduction is the means through which the LRA continues to build upon its forces in the face of non-existent popular support from local communities. As noted in other contexts, youth, and particularly adolescent males, are targeted for their malleability and ability to be socialized within the LRA, as well as their relative effectiveness in battle and perceived agility (Schauer & Elbert, 2010; Beber & Blattman, 2011). Others have documented that young women were abducted for similar reasons, including

performing in battle, with the added motivation of sexual abuse and forced marriage (Annan et al, 2011).

The LRA uses violence as a tool to punish civilians for perceived transgressions against the group. Others have demonstrated how torture and mutilation served as a means to incite fear and exercise control over a large number of people with a relatively small force (Branch, 2010; Vinci, 2005; Olsen, 2007). Olsen (2007) even differentiates between the types of mutilation: the removal of hands is a punishment for engaging the LRA and the removal of lips and ears is punishment for those suspected of informing or warning others about LRA movements.

In all four countries, reports of major increases in violence can often be traced back to Kony's and the LRA leadership's reacting to a government operation (Olsen, 2007; Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013; The Resolve, 2010, Ronan, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; HRW, 2009; Spittaels & Hilgert, 2009; Maier, Smith & Shakya, 2013; IDMC, 2013). This "retribution" against civilians can sometimes occur much later than the government attack, contributing to the perspective that the LRA is killing without cause (Olsen, 2007).

Killing and Torture

Participants from every focus group and interview discussed how the LRA undertook the killing and torture of civilian communities, and many spoke of the particularly brutal nature of the attacks. LRA combatants shot, stabbed, burned, lynched, and beat men, women, and children. Participants in all countries also detailed forms of violence that were designed specifically to sow terror, including mutilation, such as male castration and the removal of lips, ears, and breasts.[9]

Discussants also described violence perpetrated against the dead. A small number of participants in Uganda and the CAR reported that LRA members

3. Results

3.1 LRA Repertoire of Violence: Patterns and Motivations

This section will present the research results related to the repertoire of violence employed by the LRA across all four countries and how it changed over time and across geographic boundaries.[8] Understanding the types and severity of abuses that occurred is vital for understanding how communities responded to the LRA threat. Participants reported that the LRA perpetrated killing, forced perpetration

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8   We do not examine the violence committed within the LRA, as defined by violence perpetrated by members of the LRA against other members of the LRA.

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9   As noted earlier in the report, the following codes denote the KIIs and FGDs cited. The codes are presented in Tables 1-4: U03-U10; S04, S08, S09, S11, S14; D01, D02, D06-D08; C09.

practiced cannibalism[10]; and the desecration of corpses was a common theme in South Sudan and the DRC.[11] Corpse desecration is rooted in an othering of the victim (Economic and Social Research Council, 2012). If the victims are ethnically or tribally different than the perpetrators, the perpetrators may be more likely to view them as animals, making it more acceptable to maim their bodies (Economic and Social Research Council, 2012). This explanation fits this project's data, since references to corpse desecration only occurred outside of Uganda.

Participants discussed forced perpetration of murder by family members, particularly among male and female community members and leaders in Uganda and South Sudan.[12] In a particularly heinous example, a female participant in South Sudan described LRA combatants forcing people to kill their infants with a mortar and pestle.[13] After the infant had died, she explained, the LRA would, "…take the mother and do whatever they want…" perhaps indicating that infants were killed as a means of getting rid of something considered to be burdensome. Participants in Uganda and the CAR also spoke of the killing of those deemed unfit for abduction, such as infants or the elderly.[14]

Killing was also used as a method of revenge and punishment, according to discussants in all countries.[15] Former abductees and members of local defense groups and hunters, in particular, said that LRA combatants killed as a means of removing perceived civilian threats[16] (Olsen, 2007). Participants described LRA combatants as targeting anyone who was armed or took up arms against the LRA. Discussants in Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC reported that men were murdered at higher rates relative to women and children because they were considered to be a threat to the LRA's existence.[17]

Participants specified other similar revenge motivations for LRA violence, such as failure to provide information, especially about the location of goods; presumed interaction or compliance with the government; lying; and personal vendettas held by LRA combatants against particular civilians or communities. A former combatant in Uganda said that the LRA would kill entire villages of those who had escaped, an act serving both as a punishment and as a tool to maintain loyal forces that feared retribution (Olsen, 2007).[18] While these types of revenge motivations were reported in FGDs and KIIs across all four countries, they were reported less often in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR.[19] In these three countries, participants thought that LRA combatants killed indiscriminately or for no reason; this was particularly true among groups in South Sudan and the DRC.

Torture and mutilation took the forms of the removal of appendages such as lips and ears, burnings, and beatings. Participants in Uganda and the CAR described torture as a purposeful means of obtaining information or goods; punishing; or inciting fear among the community.[20] While torture was also discussed in South Sudan and the DRC, participants did not present perceived motivations.[21] Given that the LRA left its country of origin, it is possible that they were less able to communicate their motivations or had lost some or all of their rationale for perpetrating violence.

Abduction

Abduction was discussed in all FGDs and KIIs. Participants described being abducted from their homes, farms, and schools, and while gathering firewood or water. Ugandan discussants specifically spoke of abduction from displacement camps, while participants from South Sudan described abduction from large events, such as funerals and church services.[22]

10   U03; C09
11   S04, S05, S08; D02
12   U03, U12, S13, S14
13   S14
14   U12, C05
15   U03-U09, U11-U13, S11, D02, C06, C09
16   U03-U05, U10; S01, S07, S11, S13, S14, S16; D02, C01, C06;
17   U04, U05, U07, U08, S02, S03, S05, S08, S09, S11

18   U13
19   U03- U13; S11; D02;C06, C09
20   U03, U04, U07, U10; C09
21   D01, D02, D06, D07, D08, C09
22   U01, U04, U05, U12, S13, S16

> "…the people they [the LRA] are looking for the most are the youngest, both boys and girls. They are those who are most looked for by the LRA because they can change them into future LRA leaders."

– Male community leader, the CAR

The abduction of children emerged as a strong theme, and many participants expressed the horror of witnessing their young family members being forcibly taken. The head of a Victim's Association in CAR said, "…the people they [the LRA] are looking for the most are the youngest, both boys and girls. They are those who are most looked for by the LRA because they can change them into future LRA leaders."[23] Participants also reported gender motivations for abduction. Men and boys were abducted for the purposes of fighting, looting, killing, and carrying luggage, while women and girls were abducted primarily for domestic work, carrying luggage, being "wives" to LRA combatants, and child rearing.

Aside from task-based motivations for abduction, some participants in Uganda and the DRC said the general motivation behind abduction was the effort to multiply LRA forces,[24] which has been shown previously by another study (Vinci, 2007).

23   C03
24   U05, U10, D01

Sexual Violence

Primarily, rape occurred within the context of forced marriages of abductees. The rape of civilians during an LRA attack in villages, however, was also described in all four countries, with particular frequency among participants in South Sudan and the DRC.[25] In Uganda and South Sudan, male participants specifically mentioned women being raped in front of their husbands.[26] In the DRC, a discussant said that men also experienced sexual violence.[27]

In Uganda, former combatants explained why civilian rape might have occurred less often in that country versus the other three: initially, strict rules guided sexual behavior within the LRA, and combatants were forbidden from raping civilians.[28] One former combatant said: ...if you were going to the frontline operation, the training given to you was how to be safe from women. If you abduct a woman you were not supposed to have sex with her. Those who spent more time [in the LRA] understood, but those who had not lasted for long, like about six months, would ignore this because they had no experience of the big frontlines and they were ones who died in large numbers. [29]

This statement speaks to both the LRA's code of conduct—do not have sex with an abducted woman—and combatants ignoring that code. Given the increased frequency with which rape against civilians was described by participants in the DRC and South Sudan, it is possible that the code broke down completely after the LRA left Uganda. In general, however, discussion of the rape of civilians was limited relative to other similar armed conflicts, and supports findings from other studies that note that rape by LRA combatants occurred primarily after women and girls were abducted and given to LRA combatants as "wives" (Annan et al, 2011). Data collected for this

project similarly suggest that sexual violence perpetrated against those abducted into the group was widespread, which will be discussed in the companion report on life in the LRA. Other forms of sexual abuse occurred in the form of mutilation, in which male former combatants and abductees from Uganda reported that the LRA removed male sex organs and women's breasts.[30]

Looting and Property Destruction

Participants from all four countries described looting as a primary activity of the LRA.[31] Combatants would take everything of value from homes, granaries, hospitals, clinics, and businesses. In this way, the civilian population served as an essential resource to the LRA.[32] A female community member from Uganda said, "The LRA live by the existence of people who are in rural areas because they keep getting food from there, so if people have gone to camps sources of food will be closed to them."[33]

Property destruction often accompanied looting, according to participants in all four countries. The burning of huts and granaries was also discussed across sites.[34] The burning of other structures, such as markets, churches, and hospitals, was only mentioned in South Sudan and the DRC.[35] Participants in the DRC and South Sudan also described the complete devastation of entire villages. It seems that while operating in Uganda, LRA combatants maintained a certain level of restraint, possibly out of deference for their compatriots. While operating outside of Uganda, the LRA appears to have become more destructive.

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25 U03, U05; S04, S09, S13, S15; D02, D06, D07; C04
26 U03, S04
27 D06
28 U05, U06, U10, U13
29 U06

30 U05
31 U01-U13, S01-S17, D01, D02, D05-D07, D09, D10, C01-C06, C08, C09
32 The Ugandan Government's strategy of moving civilians en masse to protected camps was in part due to the way in which the LRA preyed upon civilian populations for supplies. This will be discussed in section 3.2.
33 U11
34 U02-U06, U08-U11, U13; S03-S05, S08, S09, S11-S14; D02, D05-D06; C05
35 S04, S05, S07- S09, S11- S14, S16, S17, D01, D10, C05

"If you abduct a woman you were not supposed to have sex with her. Those who spent more time [in the LRA] understood, but those who had not lasted for long, like about six months, would ignore this..."

– Ex-combatant, Uganda

Motivations for Violence and Patterns of Attacks

In addition to the specific forms of violence described above, discussants also spoke of their perceptions of motivations and overarching patterns of LRA attacks. General themes included the timing and location of incidents and LRA strategy. Themes regarding motivations included several types of motivation: revenge, political, apolitical or survival, and those internal to the LRA.

Timing and Location of Attacks

Participants detailed general vulnerabilities to LRA violence, such as location of attack, time of attack, and specific strategies employed by LRA combatants. Location of LRA attacks appeared to vary across country groups. Participants from Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC spoke of attacks occurring in the home

and on the farm.[36] In Uganda, discussants further described attacks occurring in the bush (in hiding) and camps.[37] Participants from both South Sudan and the CAR said attacks occurred while people were hunting and during large events, such as church services, funerals, and school.[38] Additionally, participants reported varying times during which attacks occurred. Participants in Uganda, the DRC, and the CAR, more frequently described attacks occurring at night or early morning,[39] while those in South Sudan said attacks happened in the afternoon or daytime attacks.[40]

Government troop movements affected LRA actions, though not consistently across all four countries. Participants in Uganda and South Sudan both reported that LRA attacks occurred near government troops,[41]

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36 U03, U05, U07, U08, U11; S01, S03, S05, S13, S14; D06
37 U05, U06-U09, U12
38 S08, S13, S14, S16; C06
39 U02, U03, U05- U08, D06, D08, C09
40 S13, S14, S17
41 U02, U05, U12; S08, S15

while discussants from Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR said that the proximity of government troops dissuaded attacks.[42] This discrepancy in reporting is not surprising given the fluctuations in size and access to supplies throughout the LRA's existence. It is possible that, at certain points while operating in Uganda and South Sudan, the LRA was larger or better equipped to engage government troops. Data from this project collected exclusively from former combatants support the fact that in the DRC and the CAR, government troops deterred LRA actions, indicating a progressive weakening in the LRA's capacity while operating in these countries.

In addition to coordinating attacks around the location of government troops, participants reported other strategies used by the LRA when attacking civilians. The data are displayed in Figure 1. Discussion of strategy was limited among participants in the DRC, where mass killing and surprise attacks consumed much of the narrative.

Motivations of the LRA

Participants discussed general motivations for the LRA's existence and continued violence, including revenge, politics, survival, and internal dynamics. Participants from all four countries reported that any attack against the LRA, from a government-led strike to theft by a civilian, would be avenged by attacks against civilians. Male discussants detailed specific circumstances in which violent engagements with government troops increased LRA violence against civilians and/or abductions to replace killed or escaped LRA members.[43] A male former abductee from the CAR said that prior to 2008, "...Kony did not think he hurt anyone. So it was after the bombing in Garamba[44] that he asked why the CAR, Congo, and Sudan were against him. He then decided to go to any village and

kill people as retribution..."[45] Similarly, in all countries, participants viewed the violence as having gradually escalated, reporting that combatants began with looting and abducting, and then moved into abduction on a larger scale and mass killing.[46] As discussed in section 1.1, additional research supports this finding. In all four countries, reports of large increases in LRA violence can often be traced to a government operation (Olsen, 2007; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Ronan & Poffenberger, 2013; Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; The Resolve, 2010, Ronan, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; HRW, 2009; Spittaels & Hilgert, 2009; Maier, Smith & Shakya, 2013; IDMC, 2013).

Despite evidence that the LRA increased attacks against civilians in response to government engagement, it is unclear as to whether or not LRA action was perceived as politically motivated by civilians. The perceived motivation for violence as a means to overthrow the government was reported exclusively in Uganda, implying that the LRA's identity and purpose, as understood by participants, was lost after the LRA left Uganda. Responses of participants in South Sudan and the DRC, who reported a lack of understanding regarding the LRA's general motivation for perpetrating violence, further supplement this point. This was reported just once among a group of Ugandan former combatants, and then increasingly among varying types of discussants in South Sudan and the DRC, and once in the CAR—perhaps indicating that it became a more widely held belief after the LRA left Uganda.[47]

Finally, participants in all countries discussed violence motivated by internal LRA dynamics. The personality of the commander determined the level of violence, according to participants.[48] With the exception of South Sudan, this was said exclusively by former abductees. Similarly, at least one participant from every FGD or KII reported a "kill or be killed" culture within the LRA—that combatants were motivated to perpetrate

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42   U01, U05, U13; S13; C09
43   U10, S04, S09, D10, C05
44   The Garamba Offensive, otherwise known as Operation Lightening Thunder (OLT), was a joint military attack on LRA bases in the Garamba National Forest by the UPDF and the U.S. government.

45   C05
46   U07; S02, S04, S05, S06, S11, S14, S15, S17; D10; C02, C05, C08
47   U10; S01, S05, S06, S09, S11- S13, S16; D01, D02, D05-D06; C08
48   U06, U10, U12, U13; S04; D03, D06; C05

LRA Strategies Described by Participants

STRATEGY	UGANDA	S.SUDAN	DRC	CAR
Hiding/living in forest/bush, using cover to their advantage	🌳	🌳	🌳	🌳
Placing LRA informants among civilian populations	🏠	-	-	🏠
Attacking at night	🌙	🌙	🌙	🌙
Moving in the opposite direction of footprints	⇄	⇄	-	-
Waiting by water point	⌒	⌒	-	-
Following footpaths to where civilians are hiding	👣	-	-	👣
Ambushing or blocking roads	✳	✳	✳	-
Attacking at large events	-	👥	-	👥
Dressing as government troops	♟	-	-	-
Sending combatants to engage government troops while others loot/abduct	👥	-	-	-
Finding out where food is being distributed in camp and looting from people	🍛	-	-	-
Attacking in surprise attacks or ambushing	🙌	🙌	🙌	-
Attacking far from base	◎	-	-	-
Planting landmines for large cars/ government vehicles	💥	-	-	-
Learning the system of message transmission and using it to their advantage	💬	-	-	💬
Taking a civilian's weapon and using it against him	-	🔫	-	-

Figure 1.
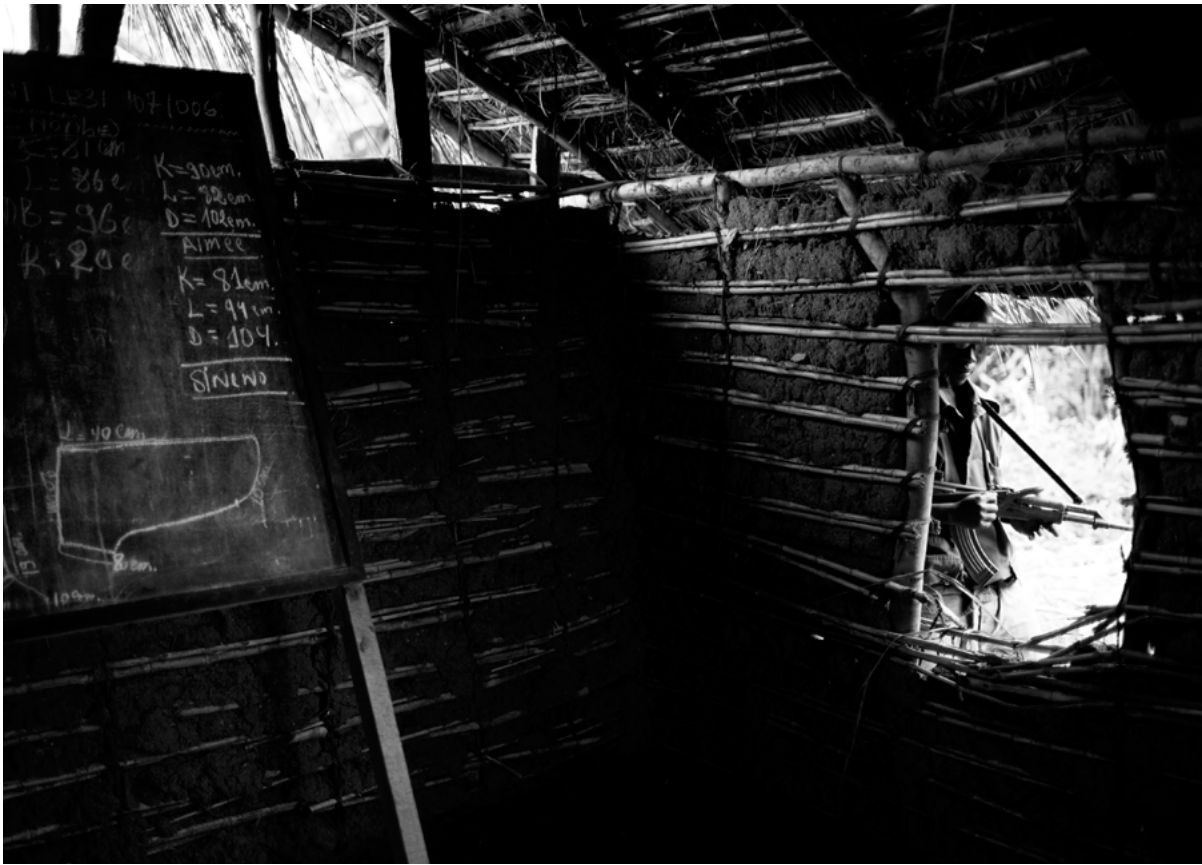
violence for fear of retribution by their LRA command-
ers. In addition to this, former combatants expressed
fear their families or former villages would be killed if
they escaped, or believed LRA leadership who told
them that UPDF or community members would kill
escapees. Particularly for those raised in the LRA,
these lies created a culture of fear within the LRA that
may have served to retain loyal troops who perpetu-
ated the violence (Olsen, 2007).

Some argue that the LRA's existence is perpetuated
by a fear among combatants that they will be pun-
ished for their crimes, and will not be able to survive
or hold similar positions of authority in wider society
(Vinci, 2007). Additionally, many LRA members do not
know another way of life, particularly for those born
into the LRA or for those who have experienced the
intensive indoctrination practices (Vinci 2007; Olsen,
2007); thus the group provides a certain type of voca-
tion and community to its members that they will die to
maintain out of fear or distrust of the alternative (Vinci,

2007,p. 346). One former combatant from Uganda
stated, "...there was no truth in why we were taken...
we believed all that we were taught. We also did not
know what a government was, and as such went on
doing things without knowing. So when we realized
that all was in vain, we decided to leave."

"The worst part is killings without reasons. They will come
to the house and simply kill. They have killed most of our
people here. I cannot even address the issues or talked
about it. I really don't know. What has happened has
destroyed our land."

– Female former abductee, the DRC

Conceptual Maps from South Sudan

This study included an innovative technique called "conceptual mapping" to detail the threats and vulnerabilities in each community through a participatory mapping process. This allowed communities to create a physical and symbolic map of the features of their communities, including sources of risk and resilience. This activity was undertaken with members of local defense units and former abductees in South Sudan and hunters in the CAR. The two featured maps were created by participants in South Sudan. The accompanying key details the meaning of the symbols created by the participants.

|					
	Main Road		Ambororo		Market
	Andari Payam	/////	Bangangai National Park		People being killed by LRA
	Boma	H	Hospital		LRA and places of attack
	Area occupied by LRA	P.O.	Payam Office		Safety (Area of safety)
	Presence of the Arrow Boys	S	School		

Map 1

Map 1 is a conceptual map of the Gangura Payam.[1] It details geographic features, including the main road, border with the DRC, and streams, as well as key institutions, including hospitals, churches, markets, the Payam administrator's office, the SPLA and police bases. They marked the location of LRA troops during the time period in which the LRA was present in Gangura, routes the LRA frequently took, and sites of civilian massacres. Safe spaces were drawn in pink marker and generally surround locations of the SPLA, police and Arrow Boys.

Map 2

Map 2 is a conceptual map of the Andari Payam. It details geographic features, including the main road, a National Park in the western part of the Payam, and two streams, as well as the following institutions: a school, Payam headquarters, two churches, and the market. Two sources of insecurity are drawn on the map, the LRA and the Ambororo.[2] Participants marked two areas between the two streams where killings happened. The safe places are drawn all across the main road to the east; they are labeled BAGBUKOBE ATONGTONGO, meaning "place of hiding from the LRA."

1   A payam is an administrative sub-division of a county in South Sudan. Payams comprise bomas, the smallest administrative division.
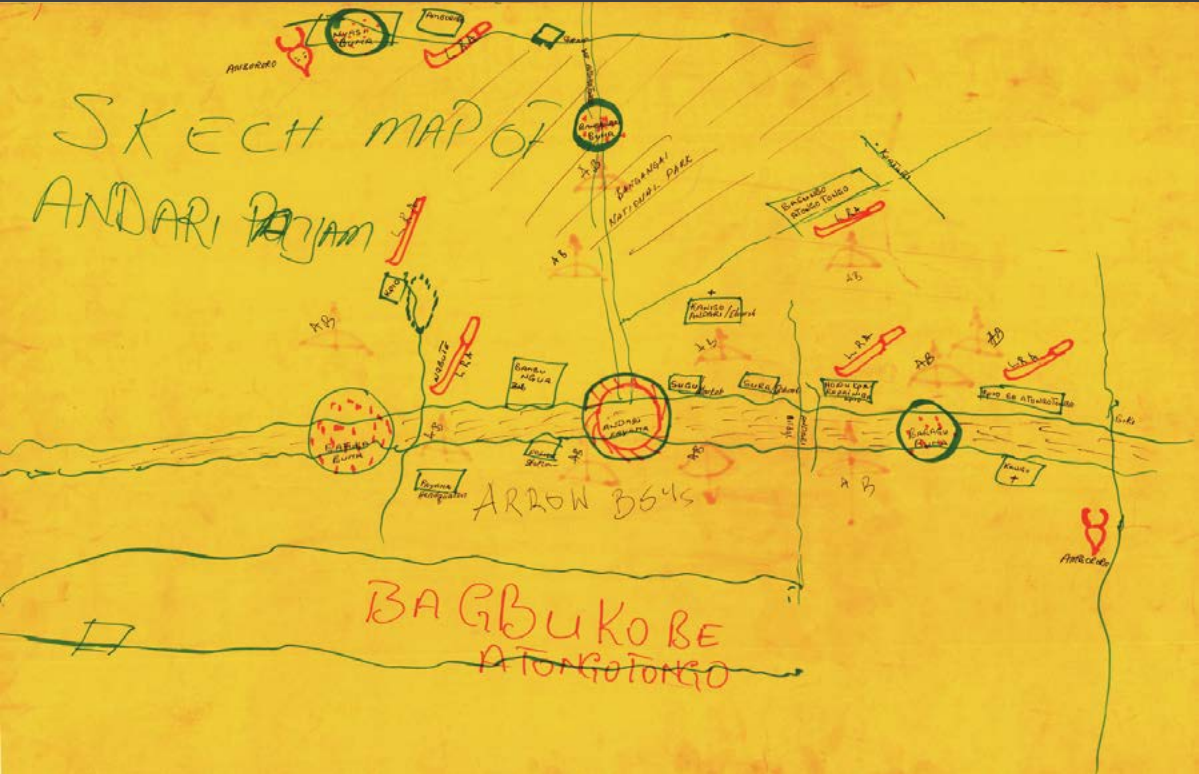
2   The Ambororo are nomadic pastoralists who have attacked and stolen livestock from communities in Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.
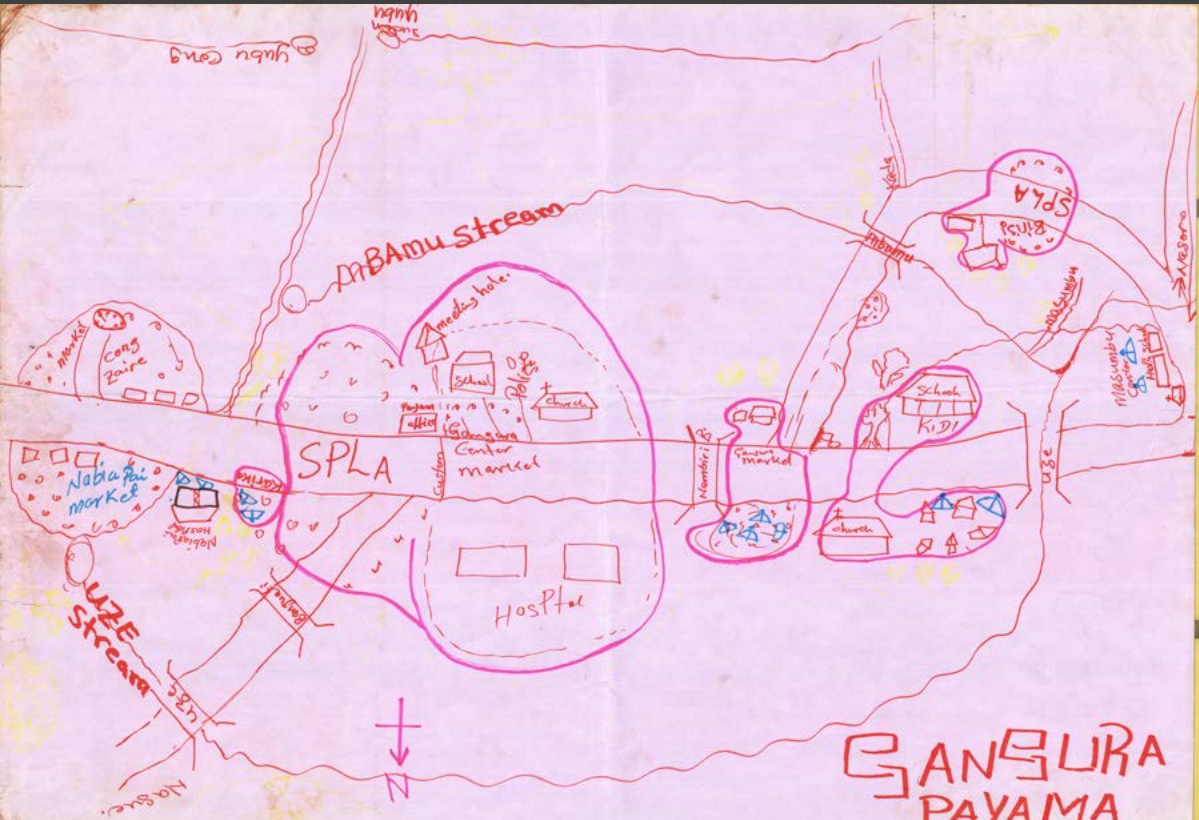
Map 1.

Map 2

3.2 Resilience and Coping Strategies in Response to LRA Violence

Confronted with the forms of horrific violence described above, communities affected by the LRA employed an array of coping strategies. This section presents resilience mechanisms used by civilians, governments, and international actors, both to defend against LRA attacks and to sustain and rebuild communities. These mechanisms are categorized within an ecological model as follows:

- Individual level: fleeing and hiding, restricting movement, submitting and cooperating, and having faith and personal perseverance;
- Community level: group unity, economic adaptation,early warning and communication systems, local defense units, church, and leadership committees; and
- Institutional level: military action against the LRA, military support for IDPs, NGO support for civilians and international coalitions.

The model is also displayed in Figure 2. Despite the categorization, there are clear intersections between each mechanism and across levels of the model; most participants described employing more than one simultaneously. What follows is a brief presentation of resilience mechanisms documented in other conflict settings as the context for the strategies used by participants in this study. We will then present findings for each level of the ecological model within which we detail the mechanisms unique to each level.

Conflict-Related Resilience: Overview

Conflict restricts most coping strategies (Azam, Collier, & Cravinho, 1994; Bundervoet, 2006; Ibáñez & Moya, 2006; Verpoorten, 2009), yet individuals, communities, and institutions continue to find ways to heal

and rebuild from war. As shown in this study as well as the broader literature on conflict-affected communities, resilience is demonstrated throughout a conflict as people react to an immediate threat, and adapt to the many ways in which violence alters the social, economic, political, and cultural landscape (Baines & Paddon, 2012; Suarez & Black, 2014).

Increasingly, attention is being paid to assessing and documenting the strategies that people engage in to protect themselves against a violent threat prior to the arrival of any state or international protective force (Baines & Paddon, 2012; Barrs, 2010; Gorur, 2013; Suarez & Black, 2014). Existing literature describes the expertise of individuals in understanding their environments and making tremendously challenging decisions in a context of chaos (Suarez & Black, 2014; Bonwick, 2006). Scholars have attempted to organize these decisions and strategies into typologies that encompass the range of responses to conflict. Strategies discussed across multiple studies are similar and include flight, avoidance and concealment, alert systems and information networks, resettlement, submission and cooperation, neutrality, group movement and cohabitation, local defense units and popular justice, denunciation and testimony, community leadership, advocacy and protests, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and prayer and faith (Gorur, 2013; Suarez & Black, 2014; Bonwick 2006; Baines & Paddon, 2012; Barrs, 2010). Additionally, several authors include discussion of fulfilling basic needs, livelihood generation, and asset retention as survival mechanisms (Barrs, 2010; Baines & Paddon, 2012; Bonwick, 2006).

Several authors have further analyzed these typologies with discussions about the more fluid nature of conflict and conflict response (Gorur, 2013; Suarez & Black, 2014; Mégret, 2009; Vigh, 2008). The use of these protection mechanisms depends on the context, and various factors can influence which methods are employed. For example, the absence of security actors could influence the creation of local defense units (LDUs) (Baines & Paddon, 2012), and access to food while in displacement could influence whether or not people remain displaced or risk returning to
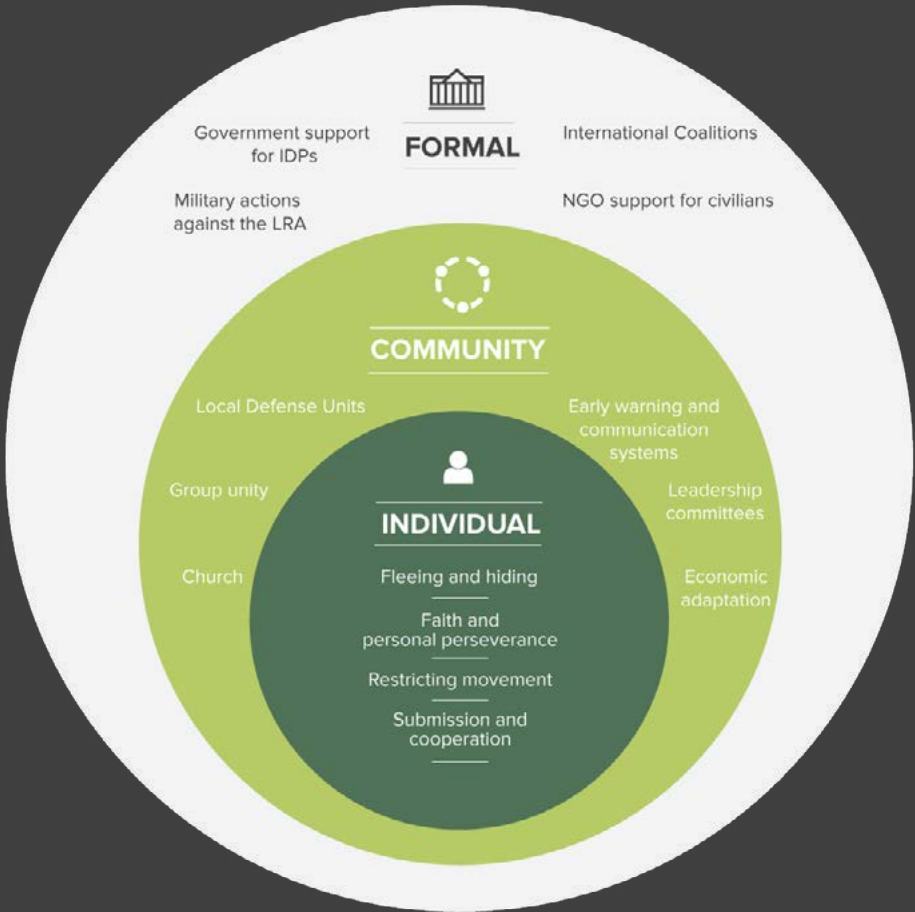

Figure 2.

their communities (Suarez & Black, 2014). People's response to war transcends delineation, and while categorization assists in analysis, it can impede our understanding of the realistic way in which people move between responses (Suarez & Black, 2014). Similarly, several authors discuss the flexibility of roles within conflict; the same person can be a perpetrator, victim, witness, etc. (Gorur, 2013; Suarez & Black, 2014; Fujii, 2009). These nuances make it difficult to determine the success of certain strategies, since something that may improve the condition of one person can inhibit another (i.e., when people cooperate with or support an oppressive force) (Gorur, 2013).

Beyond immediate protection mechanisms, past studies identify two main sources of long-term resilience: social networks and cultural institutions. Several authors describe how social networks enable

individuals to sustain themselves and build from the sources of those around them (Ager, Strang & Abebe, 2005; Sousa et al., 2013; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005; Bar-Tal, Jacobson & Freund, 1995). This has been documented particularly with regard to economic development. Given the destruction wrought on local economies in war, people find new means of supporting themselves; past studies have found that civilians access markets through the creation of new business partnerships as well as maintain more traditional livelihoods through work collectives (Korf, 2004; Young & Jacobsen, 2013). Social networks also play a large part in supporting the mental wellbeing of those who experience trauma. Some authors detail how youth exposed to violence have better mental health outcomes when they have strong family support (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005; Annan, Blattman, & Horton, 2006; Kliewer et al., 2001). Similarly, other

studies describe how some find strength and resolve through relationships with others facing similar violence and trauma (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005).

Redevelopment is also made possible by building on, and sometimes adjusting, cultural practices and norms (Sousa et al., 2013). Past studies show that religious and local leadership structures serve both as a way to resolve internal conflicts as well as identify needs and solutions for challenges faced by conflict-affected communities (Sawyer, 2005; Ager, Strang & Abebe, 2005; Korf, 2004). Furthermore, some authors describe how cultural leaders play the important role of cleansing those who experienced or perpetrated violence; these rituals often focus on removing bad spirits from a person or place, which enables reintegration and returning home (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Neuner et al., 2012). Cultural norms have also been shown to be adapted to the new realities of conflict. Specifically, multiple studies found that women often become the main income earner for families since they are better able to work within the disrupted economy than men (Adam & Peilouw, 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005; Korf, 2004; Young & Jacobsen, 2013).

3.2a Individual

Fleeing and Hiding

Discussants in all four countries described fleeing as a primary mechanism used to protect against the LRA.[49] Participants detailed the different decisions made after fleeing, such as running to the bush or mountains,[50] to a more populated area or a safer village,[51] or to a camp.[52] While participants in all four countries spoke of using each of these options, some choices were more heavily emphasized in particular countries. For example; participants in Uganda were more likely to recount running to the bush or mountains relative to

participants in the CAR, who more frequently fled to safer villages or town centers.[53]

Despite being the most commonly cited individual-level protection mechanism, fleeing was not a realistic option for all individuals. Groups in Uganda and South Sudan discussed sometimes having to leave elderly family members and children behind while running for safety.[54] Moreover, some people chose not to flee. Participants in two focus groups from the same sub-county in Uganda felt there was nowhere to run or hide, and that all one could do was hope combatants would be merciful.[55] Similarly, female discussants from South Sudan and Uganda said that running would get oneself killed, and that it was better just to be abducted.[56] Lastly, groups from South Sudan and the DRC reported people's staying behind.[57]

In South Sudan, this decision appeared to be guided by strong feelings of needing to protect one's home or fight for one's land. In the DRC, participants said people lived near soldiers for protection, as opposed to fleeing their homes.

After fleeing, participants in all four countries, particularly Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC, hid themselves, family members, and their assets—such as farming and cooking equipment—in nearby bushes or mountains.[58] Participants from Uganda and the DRC in particular spoke of prolonged periods of hiding.[59] One Ugandan male community leader said, "...children who grew up at that time knew people lived in the bush and had no home setting as it is today and it is no wonder that some of those grown up children cannot build houses."[60]
Living in a state of hiding, regardless of duration, came at a large cost to the population. Focus groups in

"When you see them just run and if possible shout a lot as you run and when your neighbor hears you shouting he must also shout and beat drums if you can."

— Male community member, the DRC

Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC said they experienced starvation[61] and the inability to cook for fear of being seen by the LRA.[62] Participants in Uganda and South Sudan also detailed death and injury due to exposure to rain and cold, malaria, and snakebites.[63] Some participants in South Sudan described a high frequency of maternal mortality as women were forced to give birth in the bush while hiding.[64] To survive these harsh conditions, participants in Uganda and South Sudan reported sleeping in the bush at night and coming back to their homes during the day, risking

their lives to gather or cook food to bring back to family members in hiding, and building makeshift shelters to protect from the elements.[65] Many others have documented the phenomenon of "night commuters" in Uganda, in which 30,000 to 40,000 children, as well as numerous adults, left their homes in outlying villages before dark and traveled several kilometers to spend the night in urban areas and IDP camp centers (Amnesty International, 2005; Li, 2005; Sohn, 2005; Cline, 2013). Often, children were instructed by their families to leave, while parents stayed behind to protect properties. Children walked together to established shelters such as schools, hospitals, churches,

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49   U01- U11, S01- S09, S11-S14, S16, S17, D01, D02, D05-D08, D10,
        C01-C06, C09
50   U01-U12, S04, S05, S08, S11, S13, S16, D02, D10, C09
51   U01, U03- U05, U07, U09, S01, S05-S09, S11, S12, S14, D01, D07, D08,
        C01-C04, C09,
52   U01, U03, U04, U07, S05, D02, D05, D06, C05, C06

53   U01-U12, C01-C04, C09
54   U03, U06, S05, S08, S14
55   U06, U08
56   S10, U07
57   S10, S13, S15, D05
58   U01-U12, S01, S02, S04, S05, S08, S09, S11, S13, S14, S17, D02, D05,
        D10, C04, C09
59   U02-U05, U10-U13, D02
60   U03

61   U04, U05, U08, U11, U12, S05
62   U03, D05
63   U02, U03, U08, U11, S13
64   S02, S08, S16

65   U01, U02, U04, U05, U07, U08, U10, U11, U11, S04, S09

> "...tell them a clear truth in case you failed to run away from them. If you told them something truthful and they went to the next home and the person they got there told them lies, you would hear that person was killed, so talking the truth helped other people save their lives."
>
> – Female community member, Uganda

safe houses, or public spaces like bus stops and verandas, and made the walk back to their villages at dawn.

Some participants spoke of fleeing as something that occurred in stages, in which groups would migrate to multiple locations until they arrived in a place where they felt safe to remain.[66] Many who fled and hid from the LRA ultimately migrated to other towns, cities, or camps, creating a period of mass displacement. In Uganda, the government opted to move people into a series of IDP camps, while in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR, participants reported resettling in safer villages or cities, or living in makeshift IDP camps that were ungoverned by international organizations. Government and international responses to those in displacement are detailed further in section 3.2c. Currently, there are an estimated 180, 465 IDPs and 27,327 refugees in the LRA-affected areas of South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR (OCHA, 2015); in total,

it is estimated that 2.5 million people have been displaced throughout the conflict (IDMC, 2013).

Submission and Cooperation

While most participants described fleeing or hiding from the LRA when possible, a small number of participants in Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR discussed submitting to or cooperating with LRA combatants.[67] Submission and cooperation took place in two forms: complying with commands, and/or joining the LRA. Of these two approaches, participants said compliance with LRA commands was more common. Participants from Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR said they did what LRA combatants told them to do in order to survive,[68] including killing others, as previously presented in section 3.1. Some participants in Uganda said they told the truth to LRA combatants

when asked questions about things like the locations of food, other community members, or government troops.[69] Participants in Uganda recounted how others betrayed community members by coordinating LRA activities in the village.[70] A community leader recalled one young man who was so distraught by displacement that he joined the LRA: "...After spending two days sleeping in the bush, he said he could not manage it... Then he joined the LRA. He became an LRA soldier. That was what he thought could make him safe from LRA violence."[71] "Accommodation" of the LRA in Uganda could be incentivized through three things: financial gain, family ties, and/or, most commonly, fear of torture or death (Baines & Paddon, 2012).

Restricting Movement

Movement restriction among both those displaced and those who remained or returned home emerged as a theme in all four countries.[72] Discussants avoided their farms or wells unless they were in a big group or accompanied by security forces.[73] In South Sudan, some said that ongoing perceptions of insecurity meant teachers would not travel to and stay in villages near the border.[74] One male community leader in the CAR who was designated IDP president expressed feeling trapped in their places of displacement, saying, "We cannot go hunting, and nobody can grow crops to make money. So we are just stuck like prisoners."[75] In the CAR, four participants reported specific distance restrictions on travel from the city, ranging from 2 to 5 kilometers.[76] In a sign of progress, some in South Sudan spoke about traveling up to three miles from home to farm, though this was still framed as more limited than pre-LRA times.[77]

Participants in South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC all worked to support their own basic needs through

farming small plots of land near their homes.[78] Some participants in Uganda and South Sudan described sneaking back to their villages and farms to collect and cook food for their families,[79] while those from Uganda, the CAR, and the DRC engaged in alternative economic endeavors, such as exchanging services, operating small businesses, and farming despite the continued risk.[80] Participants from South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC also discussed living closely together to facilitate protection provided by LDUs as well as to make communication about threats easier among people.[81]

Faith and Personal Perseverance

Prayer and faith played a large role in self-support. Participants in all four countries most commonly reported praying for protection or peace, and that their belief in God was the reason they survived.[82] Some interviewees even said that God was the sole reason someone might live or die, and that if God decided to protect someone, they would be protected, regardless of other mechanisms engaged.[83] Ritual was also discussed as a protective mechanism. In Uganda and the CAR, participants spoke of rituals used to confuse rebels, or prevent abduction or bullet wounds,[84] while some participants from the same focus groups described the failure of ritual to prevent LRA attacks.[85]

A limited number of participants in all countries also described a personal resolve to support themselves. In Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR, people said they traveled and worked despite perceived danger.[86] A community leader in South Sudan said, "They are afraid but there is no way for them to stop going [to their farms] because cultivation is our only way of

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66   U01, U09, S14, D07, C04

67   U03, U04, U07, U08, S10, S17, C01, C09
68   U03, U04, U07, U08, S17, C09

69   U03, U04, U13
70   U03
71   U03
72   U11, S03, S08, S09, S13, S15, D02, D06, D10, C01-C04, C06
73   U05, U12, D02, C08
74   S08, S12
75   C04
76   C01- C04
77   S05

78   S05, S07- S09, S11, S13, C03, C04, D02, D06
79   U01, S06, S08, S09, S11
80   U05, U08, D02, C06
81   S04- S06, S08, S11, C02, D05
82   U07-U09, U13, S03-S05, S07-S09, S11, S13, S16, D05, D10, C01, C02, C06
83   U09, S08, D10, C06
84   U09, U10, C08
85   U10, U13
86   U09, S05, S14, S15, C06

living."[87] In the CAR and the DRC, some individuals spoke about their own self-motivation to keep working and finding alternative livelihoods in the face of displacement.[88] Additionally, a focus group comprising hunters in the CAR said they continued to hunt in order to provide food for the community despite the security risk.[89]

3.2b Community

Group Unity

Participants emphasized group unity and resource sharing in all four countries.90 Prior to leaving villages, participants in Uganda and South Sudan provided comfort, food, and/or goods to families who had been attacked.91 While in displacement, participants in all four countries said host communities shared food, land, clothes, farming equipment, and other goods with displaced populations.92 Participants in Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR also reported people living and traveling in groups, as discussed in section 3.2a.93

Additionally, child protection emerged as a theme in South Sudan and Uganda. Some female community members in Uganda said they lied to the LRA to protect their children and those of others.[94] While fleeing, participants in Uganda said people physically carried other people's children.[95] In South Sudan, participants described sharing childcare responsibilities.[96] One participant in South Sudan described a woman with six children of her own who took in five orphans.[97]

Economic Adaptation

Participants in three countries detailed how collectives of varying types facilitated economic activities.[98] In Uganda and South Sudan, people cultivated in groups, with some serving as lookouts while others worked to make sure they were not surprised by an attack.[99] This approach of collective work with security lookouts has been documented in other conflict settings (Korf, 2004). Some focus groups in South Sudan also noted traveling to farms and markets in groups for safety.[100] Communities also organized financial collectives to promote their economic rebirth. Some hunters in the CAR said they pooled their resources to buy new tools since they could not afford them individually.[101] Similarly, some farmers in South Sudan shared their tools, allowing more people to farm; they also pooled their crops and shared the proceeds from selling them.[102] One community leader said, "[People with farming tools] are helping others by letting them use the equipment after they finish their own cultivation. And the way they do it is the owner starts cultivation in the early morning and then he given it to another farmer who will pass it to another and so on."[103] In other conflict settings, studies found that people set up business networks, sometimes between groups on opposing sides of the conflict, as a way to enable trade between those with access to goods and those with access to markets (Korf, 2004; Young & Jacobsen, 2013).

Communities across all four countries sought alternative sources of resources since the conflict had destroyed previously available ones. Participants in Uganda said they were replacing what they lost by buying goods from less-affected communities.[104] A female community leader in the CAR, based in Obo, said they now get goods from markets in South Sudan

since the ones in Bangui, the capital city of the CAR, are no longer accessible.[105] Similarly, male community members in the DRC cited having to buy goods from South Sudan instead of supporting themselves,[106] while elders in South Sudan said they now relied on their brothers in the DRC.[107]

Given the different states of insecurity in all four countries, differences in economic activities also emerged between the country no longer directly impacted by the LRA, i.e., Uganda,and the two that still are, i.e., the CAR and the DRC; South Sudan straddled both groups since the LRA is less active there, though attacks over the border still happen sporadically. In Uganda and South Sudan, the return of relative security has resulted in an improved economy.[108] Participants in

both countries noted the renewed ability to support themselves with their farming, although with greater frequency in Uganda.[109]

Early Warning and Communication Systems

Participants detailed systems of communication in all countries, in which community members considered it to be everyone's responsibility to alert others to an incoming threat.[110] The types of mechanisms used varied slightly from country to country and were perceived to have different levels of effectiveness. In general, populations relied on multiple systems, often simultaneously, to warn others or alert authorities. To identify that the LRA was coming, participants in Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC described noticing

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87   S05
88   C04, D05, D06, D10
89   C06
90   U01-U04, U07- U11, S01-S03, S05-S09, S11-S16, D01, D02, D10, C02, C03, C06, C08, C09
91   U09, U03, U11, S08
92   U02, U04, U07, S02, S05, S07, S08, S14, S13, D01, C03, C09
93   U07, U08, S03, S09, C02
94   U04, U07
95   U01, U03, U07, U08, U01, U10
96   S05, S11
97   S05

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98   U02, U03, U05, U07, U08, U11, S04, S05, S07, C06
99   U02, U03, U05, U07, U08, U11, S04, S05, S07
100 S04, S05, S07
101 C06
102 S05, S14
103 S05
104 U05, U07

---

105 C01
106 D10
107 S09
108 U09, U11, U12, S13

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109 U09, U11-S13
110 U01- U03, U05, U07-U11, S01-S09, S11-S16, D01, D02, D05, D10, C01-C06, C08

specific signs and signals, such as a bad odor, the sound of jericans, a large group of people moving in unison, or domestic animals making strange noises.[111] In some cases, participants used a system of morning check-ins, where neighbors would go to one another's houses to make sure they were still safe.[112]

Once the LRA was spotted, various mechanisms would be triggered. Participants said word of mouth was the most successful warning mechanism.[113] These warnings could mean a single informant running to communicate information to an authority figure, an LDU, or the community, or in the form of many people spreading the word as quickly as possible. Two discussants in the DRC described people shouting to others as they ran from the LRA so that others would run as well.[114] In South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC, participants used drums to signal a warning,[115] and in Uganda, hand blowing and ululations were reported.[116] Additionally, in South Sudan, and to a lesser extent, the DRC and the CAR, participants organized communication networks between community members and LDUs or local authorities, who would then mount a response to the threat.[117]

Such strategies were never without risk. As discussed in section 3.1, one of the worst forms of violence used by the LRA in Uganda was retribution against people who had warned others of potential attacks. Ugandan participants explained how hand blowing evolved into civilians' running to alert community members via word of mouth.[118] Additionally, the LRA could use warning mechanisms against the community.[119] For example, discussants in the CAR recounted a story from the DRC, in which LRA combatants used the drumming system to communicate to everyone in hiding that it

was safe to return so that they could attack them.[120]

Participants also discussed the challenges involved with relaying critical information; they often found themselves unable to communicate properly with and warn community members quickly due to lack of communication devices. Community members in Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR expressed frustration with the inability to communicate immediately with at-risk populations and the desire for a cell network.[121]

Local Defense Units

LDUs formed in every country in response to the LRA,[122] and participants from all four countries said that LDUs were born from a desire to defend and protect the community.[123] The activities, relationship with communities, internal structure, and effectiveness of these groups varied across sites.

In Uganda, the majority of participants who spoke of the formation of LDUs said that they arose at the behest of the government, which is discussed in Sidebar 1. However, two focus groups of female community members from the same village detailed more community-driven efforts to fight the LRA.[124]

One of the primary roles of the LDUs was to maintain the connection with community members through communication, according to participants. Discussants in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR explained that LDUs communicated threats to the rest of the community when they became aware of them,[125] while some in South Sudan and the CAR said that, in addition, community members also reported threats to LDUs, which would then investigate the reports.[126] Unique to South Sudan, participants said that their LDU, called

> "When we came back, we built our houses in such a way that the Arrow Boys' houses were on the outside and the civilians' houses were on the inside. So when the LRA came to attack us, they will face the Arrow Boys first instead of facing the civilians."

— Male local defense unit member, South Sudan

the Arrow Boys, would collect dead bodies of community members and bring them back to their families.[127]

Other reported activities of LDUs in each country remained fairly consistent, but with some distinctions. In Uganda, participants said that LDUs engaged in defending the community from LRA attacks and ambushed and attacked LRA combatants.[128] Discussants in South Sudan and the CAR

also recalled LDUs spying on or attacking LRA combatants.[129] Participants in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR detailed guarding, patrolling, and escorting as means to protect civilians.[130] These services, and the fact that the LDUs came from the communities they served, undoubtedly contributed to the support received by community members. Participants in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR reported that communities supplied LDUs with small amounts of food,

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111 U02, U03, U05, S08, S09, S11, C01, C04, C06, C08
112 S09
113 U01-U03, U08, U11, S01- S03, S06, S08, S09, S11, S12, S14, S15, D02, D05, D10, C02, C03, C08
114 D05, D10
115 S01-S04, S09, C02, D10
116 U07, U08
117 S06-S09, S12, S14, S15, D02, C03
118 U05, U08
119 U08, C02

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120 C02
121 U06, U09, U10, S07, S09, S13, S15, C06, C08
122 U03, U04, U06, U11, S01-S09, S11- S16, D01, D02, D06, D10, C01- C03, C08
123 U07, U11, S04, S06, S11- S13, S15, S16, D01, C01, C08
124 U07, U11
125 S09, S12, S14, S16, D02, C08
126 S06-S09, S11, S12, S15, C08

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127 S07- S09, S11, S12
128 U07, U11

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129 S01, S04, S06-S08, S12-S16, C03
130 S01, S06, S07, S09, S12, S15, S16, D02, C08

SIDEBAR 1:

Understanding the Relationship between the Military and LDUs

In Uganda, South Sudan, and the CAR, governments have been largely accepting, if not supportive, of LDUs; in the DRC, the relationship between the government and LDUs has been more contentious (Cline, 2013).

Uganda

Government initiation and support of LDUs began in 1991 with 'Operation North,' during which the government recruited Acholi men and mandated these early groups to serve as a means of enlarging government forces that were otherwise inadequate to face the LRA (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; Ahere & Maina, 2013). Participants described situations in which civilians were asked to provide information that supported the government's efforts against the LRA, spy on LRA combatants, and/or take up arms against the LRA on behalf of the government, often at the risk of violent retribution by the LRA.[1] Much of the initial fighting between the UPDF and the LRA was left to these local defense forces, which were poorly equipped and ill trained (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). The government stopped arming these groups around the time that civilians were sent to camps. As replacements, the government began training civilian home guards tasked to guard the camps. These groups were undertrained and largely unable to protect people in camps from the LRA (Ahere & Maina, 2013).

The CAR

A UNSC report (2012) states that the CAR government gave support to the CAR-based LDUs in the form of arms and goods. No outside information could be found on FACA soldier interaction with LDUs. Participants in this project, however, said that hunters and LDUs worked with the UPDF. As in South Sudan and the DRC, participants from the CAR said that LDUs reported LRA attacks to the UPDF, and then joined forces to attack the LRA together.[2] Participants also said that the Ministry of Defense supplied LDUs with non-military supplies in 2009 and 2010, and that the UPDF sold boots to the LDUs.[3]

South Sudan

Participants from this project presented a variety of opinions regarding the government's relationship with and support of the Arrow Boys. Many participants detailed a cooperative relationship; a typical scenario involved a civilian reporting an LRA attack to the Arrow Boys, the Arrow Boys assessing the situation and reporting it to the SPLA, followed by SPLA troops and the Arrow Boys engaging LRA combatants. Within focus groups composed exclusively of Arrow Boys, the perspective on the relationship with the government differed. Some discussants reported both that the government had failed to support the Arrow Boys,[4] and others reported that the government provided backup for the Arrow Boys when they reported an LRA sighting.[5] Other sources have also detailed that Arrow Boys responded to LRA attacks with the SPLA, UPDF, and/or South Sudanese police, but that these troops were largely unprepared or ill motivated in pursuing LRA forces (Ronan, internal research memo, 2011). The previously mentioned UNSC report (2012) references allegations that the SPLA armed the Arrow Boys, and The Resolve reports that the Government of Sudan promised a significant amount of money to the Arrow Boys in 2010, which had not been dispersed to that point (Ronan, internal research memo, 2011).

The DRC

In the DRC, LDUs arose in reaction to the initial void in government protection against the LRA (Ronan, personal communication, April 7, 2015). Participants reported that LDUs attempted to defend their villages while waiting for the government to intervene. One female former abductee reported that, as in South Sudan, the LDUs fought alongside the army against the LRA.[6] In contrast, other participants indicated that LDU activities ceased when the army arrived, or that the relationship between the army and LDUs was tense.[7] The Congolese government initially funded these groups through tribal leadership (Cline, 2013). In 2009, however, the groups began to clash with Congolese police forces, and the government put pressure on local chiefs to disband the groups (Cline, 2013). Other sources have reported that Congolese authorities outlawed LDUs for fear that they would pose a security risk, and that FARDC soldiers intentionally sought to harm civilians involved in LDUs (Titeca & Costeur, 2014; Cakaj, 2010a). One group of male community members told a story of soldiers who refused to rescue abductees and then took credit for it once LDU members did it.[8]

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1   U02- U04, U06, U11
2   C01, C08
3   C08

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4   S04, S06, S12
5   S07
6   D06
7   D10
8   D10

weapons, and other material supports.[131]The structure of LDUs was similar in South Sudan and the CAR: a semi-organized group of men coming directly from the community they are aiming to serve. Participants from South Sudan and the CAR described multiple factions of LDUs with leadership hierarchies.[132] Arrow Boys and community leaders in South Sudan noted specific roles within the LDUs such as commander, treasurer, and secretary.[133]

In all four countries, participants said that LDUs comprised men or male youth, although focus groups in South Sudan said women were involved in the Arrow Boys via protecting children and preparing food.[134] However, a small number of participants described women as fighters.[135] Participants in the DRC said the LDUs were organized and unified groups of youth, but which ultimately could not provide enough protection.[136] When government troops arrived, discussants said that LDUs either began to partner with them, or ceased activities all together.[137] A group of male community leaders in the DRC compared the LDUs there with those in South Sudan, saying that if the LDUs had more power or more support from the government, they could be like the Arrow Boys and more successfully fight the LRA.[138]

LDUs have arisen in other similar contexts, and have been both civilian initiated and government sponsored (Amnesty International, 2015; Williams, 2014; Reid & Muhammedally, 2011; Goodhand & Hakimi, 2014). While participants from our project did not report thvat LDUs perpetrated violence against civilians, other research documents how some civilian protection groups, like the Mai-Mai in the DRC (UNSC, 2002) and the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2015; Williams, 2014), abused those they purported to protect.

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131   S02, S04, S06, S07, S09, S11, S15, S16, D02, C08
132   C08, S02, S06, S07, S12, S15
133   S02, S06, S07, S12, S15
134   S06, S12, S15
135   S16
136   D01, D02, D10
137   D06, D10
138   D10

Church

Churches played an integral part in supporting affected communities in Uganda, South Sudan, and the DRC through prayer,[139] the sharing of information about the LRA,[140] provision of counseling and advice,[141] and care for IDPs.[142] In South Sudan, the communal role of the church was more prominent, and a key source of community organizing and mobilization in response to the LRA.[143] Participants repeatedly emphasized fasting and prayer as common practices leaders would undertake to act in solidarity with rural communities affected by the LRA.[144] In addition, church commissions in the DRC helped inform communities of actions being taken at higher levels to mitigate the LRA threat,[145] and the church provided support to displaced populations.[146] In Uganda, participants said that the church organized group prayers to help support community members.[147]

Leadership Committees

Given the damage to social and community networks caused by war, it is unsurprising that participants in three countries spoke of tension within resettled communities and between IDP and host communities. For IDPs in the DRC and the CAR, participants described forming committees and holding community meetings to address issues within the displaced and host communities or for community leaders to provide advice or counsel.[148] In Uganda, land disputes were a significant concern among participants since they sometimes escalated into violence, including murder.[149] In response, community elders helped to resolve these disputes since they had pre-war knowledge of which families owned which parcels of land.

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139   U11, S01, S03, S04, S06, S08, S09
140   S01, S12, D01
141   S08, S09
142   D01
143   S01, S03, S04, S06, S08, S09, S12, S13
144   S03, S04, S06, S08
145   D01
146   D01
147   U11
148   D02, C04
149   U02-U05, U09
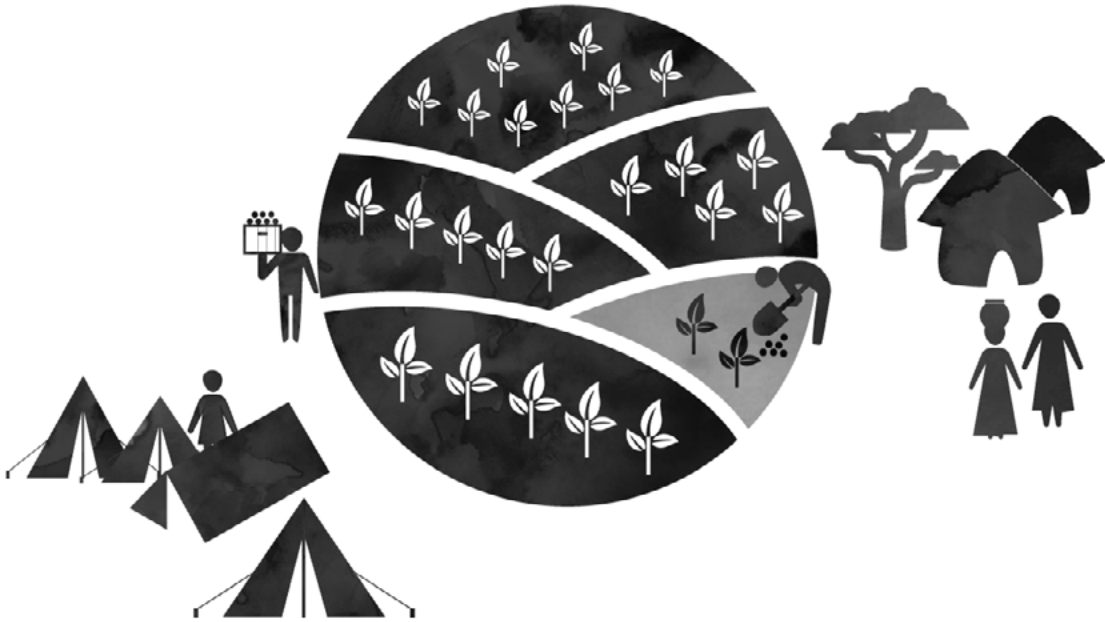
"The problem between IDPs and residents is only related to crops; besides that, there is no issue. It is only when children pick up food without knowing that it causes trouble. When a resident sees that, he comes forward with the issue, which must be brought to justice, and the food must be paid for."

– Male leader of the internally displaced people, the CAR

Committees also worked within communities to hel-support the most vulnerable, LRA returnees in partic-ular. In South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC, commit-tees sensitized community members around issues with returnees, focusing on welcoming them home and advising on how to interact peacefully with them.[150] Awareness campaigns helped facilitate community acceptance of returnees—even those who were often stigmatized, particularly women, children born in the LRA, and long-term abductees.[151] See Sidebars 2 and 3 for additional details on how cultural leaders assist those leaving the LRA.

3.2c Institutional

Military Action against the LRA

Given the LRA's movement across four countries, multi-ple national militaries and military coalitions have or are currently engaging the group. Table 6 displays an over-view of which militaries were operating in which coun-tries by year. Throughout the conflict, the Ugandan Government and the UPDF have been the primary government actors responding to the LRA. Accounts of the extent to which the SPLA has engaged with the LRA are contradictory (Schomerus, 2007).[152] The government in the DRC historically vacillated between denial and recognition of the LRA threat (Titeca & Costeur, 2014). In 2013, however, President Joseph Kabila said that the eradication of the LRA was one of his highest security priorities and that the country publicly denies safe haven to active LRA combatants (USDS, 2014). Despite this, the AU-RTF cross-border operations involving UPDF troops are still not permit-ted given tensions between the DRC and Uganda. In the CAR, the government response to the LRA has been inconsistent due to the high levels of insecurity in

the country.[153] At present, the CAR government gives the AU-RTF jurisdiction over the entire Haut-Mbomou province, where the LRA is still active. Central African Armed Forces (FACA) troops are present throughout the southeast of the CAR in small groups, yet commu-nity members perceived the UPDF to be responsible for security management in the region (S. Poole, per-sonal communication, April 6, 2015).

Participants in this project rarely specified the military actor engaging with the LRA. A small number of partic-ipants in South Sudan identified the UPDF,[154] and one interviewee from the DRC identified the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC).[155] In the CAR, participants identified only the SPLA and the UPDF as engaging with the LRA;[156] one discus-sant mentioned FACA troops' providing direct sup-port to returnees.[157]

Perceptions among participants regarding the effec-tiveness of government protection mechanisms varied among countries, particularly among discussants from South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR.[158] In all countries, to varying extents, participants credited a government army with assisting in the protection of civilians and the defeat of the LRA. Participants from all four coun-tries said that government armies provided protection via proximity, in which civilians either voluntarily relo-cated or were instructed to relocate near to govern-ment forces, or in which government forces provided escort for civilians.[159] Additionally, participants from all four countries reported that government soldiers engaged in rescuing and supporting returnees.[160]

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150   U01, U03, S01, S03, S09, C01-C04, C09, D10
151   C01- C03
152   South Sudanese troops deployed with the AU-RTF in 2013, however, involvement has been further complicated by the recent civil war and fractionalization of the SPLA.

153   In March 2013, a coup by the Muslim militia Séléka created a new wave of unrest throughout the CAR. They were quickly challenged by a group of Christian militias called Anti-Balaka, and LRA counterin-surgency operations were temporarily suspended due to the conflict. (Invisible Children, 2013).
154   S07-S11, S13
155   D03
156   C05, C08, C09
157   C02
158   U01, U02, U04-U07, U09-U11, U13; S03, S07-S11, S13; D02, D03, D05-D07, D09, D10; C05, C08, C09
159   U01-U13, S09, D05, D10, C03, C04
160   U01, U02, U04, U07, U08, S03, S13, D02, D05, D09, C02, C05, C09

Spirituality to Address Returnees' Mental Health Needs

Participants in all four countries spoke at length about mental trauma, both for community mem-bers and returnees. Participants described how many returnees had behavioral issues, with symptoms including anger, depression, aggression, flashbacks, and fear;[1] some thought that returnees' behavior was "not normal."[2] Other studies also describe these symptoms in areas affected by conflict, especially ones where child soldiers were present (Betancourt et al. 2010; Neuner et al., 2012). Community members were concerned about the health of returnees since they perceived the above-mentioned symptoms to be associated with aggressive behavior.

Some believed returnees' worrisome behavior was the result of LRA magic/herbs that remained in returnees' bodies. Neuner et al. (2012) used local conceptions of spirit possession from north-ern Uganda,[3] which were partly fueled by the LRA's mythology of magic and religion, as well as various western scales for mental health to assess the link between spirit possession and war related trauma for both returnees and community members. Cen spirit possession was cor-related with both post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms and was linked to war trauma and dysfunction.

To address the health needs of returnees with these kinds of symptoms, community leaders from the present study offered advice, prayed for the wellbeing of returnees, led awareness cam-paigns against stigma, and performed cleansing rituals. In Uganda, cultural leaders performed rituals that were believed to free returnees of the negative spirits and behaviors left by the LRA. One ritual involved a returnee's stepping on an egg while entering his or her home. Another involved a cultural leader's killing a goat and then walking around the returnee with the goat; this ritual was specifically meant to ward off symptoms of trauma. Participants in the CAR and the DRC, who are from the Zande ethnic group, felt they lacked the skills or knowledge of Acholi culture to be able to remove the remaining LRA magic. In response, they prayed for returnees to become well and offered advice to returnees on proper behavior.

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1   U01, U09, U11-U13, S01, S03, S05, S09, S10, S13, S14, S17, C01-C05, D02, D05, D07, D08
2   D05
3   Acholi have several types of spirit possession; the most common and harmful is *cen*, which "represents the spirits of dead persons, mostly those that have been murdered" (Neuner et al., 2012, p.550). This was the spirit of interest for the Neuner et al. study.

Despite expressions of appreciation for government protection, participants noted that government response was often delayed, resulting in high levels of unchecked violence.[161] Participants in the DRC and the CAR indicated that the inaccessibility of many of the regions in which the LRA was active, as well as the limited number of troops available in the government armies, compounded this delay.[162] As previously discussed in section 3.2b, this delay prompted the creation of LDUs in South Sudan, the DRC, and the CAR.

The general perception of government effectiveness was lower in South Sudan than in Uganda. Some participants, predominantly Arrow Boys and former abductees, said that the government failed to adequately protect civilians and returnees,[163] while others, male community leaders and former abductees and their families, said that the government had protected civilians.[164]

Among discussants in the DRC, the perception of government support was mixed, even within focus groups and interviews. Some said that the government provided protection and support to civilians and returnees,[165] while others thought that the government had failed to protect civilians.[166]

Similar to the DRC, discussants in the CAR differed in opinion regarding the efficacy of the government's efforts to protect civilians. Many discussed the government's protective and supportive actions, such as having troops provide escorts or protection around a town center and rescuing abductees.[167] A few participants said that the government failed to protect civilians in specific ways, expressing that there was a lack of protection in the villages and not enough soldiers to provide adequate, timely protection.[168]

While respondents in all four countries described military engagement with the LRA, some participants, members of the respective LDUs in South Sudan and the CAR in particular, challenged these assertions.[169] One hunter in the CAR said, "The UPDF fight but they have their own agenda and sometimes they aren't allowed to shoot. They only want to capture and it is what has led to the LRA still existing today. If the UPDF would shoot straight away, we would no longer hear about the LRA."[170]

A small number of discussants in Uganda and the CAR recounted abuse of civilians by government soldiers. In addition to allegations of killing and raping civilians,[171] participants in Uganda detailed situations in which government forces enlisted civilians into precarious situations or attacked civilians (Otunnu, 2006; Krilla, 2006). Participants in the CAR also reported UPDF soldiers shooting at civilians.[172] Other sources confirm that UPDF troops committed atrocities against civilians in the CAR (Cakaj, 2010b).

While not discussed by participants, attacks by the UPDF, SPLA, and FARDC troops on civilians in both South Sudan and the DRC are well documented (Schomerus, 2012; Titeca & Costeur, 2014; Ross, 2013; Cakaj, 2010a; Deleu, 2015). Moreover, both the UPDF and the FARDC have been accused of blaming their atrocities on the LRA (Branch, 2009; Otunnu, 2006; Titeca & Costeur, 2014).[173]

Government Support for IDPs

Discussants from all four countries reported the existence of a displacement camp in some form, whether organized by the government, international actors, or civilians.[174] Participants from all four countries said that

governments provided erratic support to displaced civilians. Participants said that protection was provided in the form of soldier patrol, escort, or simply by the proximity of troops to civilian populations.[175] Additionally, discussants from all countries described horrendous conditions experienced while in displacement: starvation, poor health, and a lack of economic opportunity.[176] Despite these similarities, many of the participants from each country expressed perspectives unique to their context, which will be detailed below. The Ugandan Government's management of displaced civilians is unique, and will thus be discussed at greater length.

Uganda

As presented in section 1.1, the government employed

a parallel strategy to create IDP camps (UNHCR, 2012). Many participants said that moving people to camps was a government strategy to starve the LRA of their primary resources: villages and their inhabitants.[177] Participants from only two focus groups alluded to civilians being forced to go to camps, reporting that people who remained in villages or in hiding were suspected of being LRA members.[178] Outside sources describe the camps as a violent government campaign of displacement, fueled by the government's fear that Acholi civilians were providing support to the LRA (Branch, 2009, p. 480; Cline, 2013). According to a UNDP survey, however, the way in which the government relocated civilians varied from camp to camp; some households reported voluntarily going to camps, while others were given 48hours to relocate with limited support or instruction (Bøås & Hatløy, 2006).

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161 U05, U07, U09- U11, S07, S11-S13, D01, D02, D06, C08
162 D01, C08
163 S02, S04, S07, S11-S16
164 S01, S03, S08, S09, S13
165 D01, D02, D05, D10
166 D01, D02, D06, D10
167 C01-C05, C08, C09
168 C03, C04, C08

169 U10, S12, C06
170 C06
171 U04, U09
172 C06
173 Schomerus writes, "It is true that both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the UPDF have attacked and looted civilians, and other actors have used the LRA to cover up their own attacks" (2007, p. 16).
174 U01-U13, S05, D05, D06, C04

175 U04-U12, S01, S05, S09, S11, D05, D10, C03, C04, C09
176 U01, U03-U09, U11, U12, S02, S05, S06, S08, S11, S13, D02, D10, C03, C04

177 U03-U06, U10, U12
178 U03, U05

Despite the presence of the UPDF troops, participants said they continued to be attacked by the LRA, including abductions, killings, and looting within camps.[179] Moreover, male community leaders reported the rape of women and girls in the camp by the UPDF soldiers,[180] a charge that is also documented by others (Otunnu 2006; Krilla, 2006). Furthermore, the camps increased the likelihood and intensity of attacks on Ugandan civilians by the LRA, since they served to compound the LRA's sense of vengeance for any government interaction (Baines & Paddon, 2012).

Additionally, participants from nearly all focus groups described the unsanitary conditions of the camps, detailing a lack of access to space, food, and clean water.[181] Participant reports regarding the unsanitary conditions of the camps are supported in outside literature. Reports of rapidly spreading disease, lack of sanitation within the camps, and resource scarcity were widespread (Branch, 2009, UNDHA IRIN, 1996; HRW, 1997; Otunnu, 2006). A World Health Organization (WHO) Health and Mortality Survey (2005) found that excess mortality levels of IDPs were 1,000 per week, over and above the mortality attributable to the crisis. Few economic opportunities existed in the camps and IDPs were deprived of many essential goods. These conditions contributed to the spread of disease and decline in mental health (Roberts et al, 2008).

Some focus groups did discuss how government troops protected civilians within the camps, including providing escort to civilians who were searching for water and firewood, guarding the camps, and preventing people from traveling too far away from the camps.[182] Despite the inhumane conditions of the camp, participants in nearly all of the focus groups said that camps made people safer and were responsible for effectively ending the LRA war.[183]

In 2012, 247 camps were closed (IDMC, 2013).[184] The process of leaving camps was described differently even among different focus groups from the same region. A group of male community leaders from Paimol Sub-County said that communities moved back into their villages from the camp in waves, with men going first to make sure it was safe, and women and children following later.[185] Another group of male community leaders from the same area reported being "chased" out of the camp by Ugandan soldiers,[186] while a group of female former abductees and male and female community members said that the government brought people from the camps back to communities.[187]

South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC

In South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC, the care provided to IDPs by the governments was less formal. Much of the direct government support described by these communities was peripheral; soldiers provided protection to civilians who lived near them, and in some cases, told communities to move closer to army outposts.[188] In South Sudan, much of the support detailed was provided by local authorities,[189] and in the CAR, participants said that non-government-affiliated community leaders provided much of the care and support for the IDP communities.[190] Participants in the DRC also discussed the South Sudanese government's providing goods to IDPs, as well as housing many Congolese refugees.[191]

Outside literature regarding the displacement process involved in these countries is scarce. In South Sudan, the central government was largely absent in managing displaced civilians. Local government officials elected by their respective populations, however, played a more active part in the response. In 2011–2012, a collaboration between the Arrow Boys

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184   While most of the IDPs are resettled, as of 2014, the IDMC estimated that close to 30,000 IDPs remained in camps.
185   U08
186   U09
187   U11
188   S09, D05, D10, C03, C04
189   S01, S05,
190   C04
191   D10

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179   U01, U04-U08, U12
180   U09
181   U01, U03-U09, U11, U12
182   U04-U12
183   U02, U03, U05-U11

"...the community relies on our forces that are there — the army and the boys in the community who do self-defense or hunters. But not the civilians, they don't have weapons; they can't go fight the LRA because they don't have anything. Their hope is on the armed forces."

– Female community leader, the CAR

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and local government leaders led to the establishment of safe centers in rural areas, where civilians could work and farm under Arrow Boy protection (P.Ronan, personal communication, April 7, 2015). Additionally, another study highlighted the importance of government provided security to IDPs (WFP, 2011). A report from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Danish Demining Group (DDG) emphasized IDPs' feelings of insecurity, particularly those along border regions. Despite some government programming, participants communicated feeling abandoned by the government (DRC & DDG, 2013). In the DRC, another report in the same year revealed disparities between IDP and resident access to basic services, such as education and health care, as well as high levels of tension between IDP and host communities (IDMC, 2013). The report also discussed protection provided by military and local authorities, but said that protection often turned into harassment (IDMC, 2013). In the CAR, 18,200 people are still in displacement in LRA-affected areas (OCHA, 2015). The majority of these IDPs live with host communities or in makeshift settlements in and around Obo (UNSC, 2011; IDMC, 2013). The Enough Project (n.d.) reports that patrols by UPDF and FACA forces around Obo have provided some protection.

NGO Support for Civilians

Participants in all four countries said that NGOs promote economic stability for communities.[192] In addition to encouraging farming collectives in some places, participants from Uganda and South Sudan saw NGOs facilitating agriculture through teaching new farming techniques, providing needed tools and seeds, and purchasing crops.[193] In the DRC, participants said NGOs provide material goods and critical food support, while also hiring locals sporadically for short-term work.[194] While a temporary solution, these strategies were perceived as bolstering the economy by creating demand and adding capital into the communities.

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192   U03, U07, S04, C02, C04, D01, D02, D10
193   U03, U07, S04
194   D02, D10

Similarly, in other conflict settings, NGOs, as well as state welfare, are "essential sources of livelihoods" for affected civilians (Korf, 2004, p. 291).

Participants in all countries also said NGOs provide physical and mental health care, though there was some criticism that the care provided was limited or inconsistent.[195] In Uganda, some participants specifically said NGOs sensitized communities around sanitation issues, which resulted in fewer water-related illnesses.[196] While discussants in the CAR mentioned NGOs being present, the response was generally negative as they felt the support was limited.[197] A community leader in the DRC also expressed some frustration with NGO support because he thought the community need was greater than the NGO response.[198]

International Coalitions

Coalitions within the AU and the UN are also actively responding to the LRA and subsequent needs of affected communities.

The AU-led RCI-LRA was authorized by the AU's Peace and Security Council in November 2011 (AU, 2013). The AU-RTF is a military coalition launched in March 2012 as part of the RCI-LRA (UN News Centre, 2012a). The AU-RTF intends to include 5,000 troops from all four affected countries. However, the UPDF dominates the AU-RTF. As of 2014, more than half of the 2,284 AU-RTF soldiers are Ugandan, with around 400 soldiers each from South Sudan and the DRC (UNSC, 2014). As previously mentioned, the AU-RTF has jurisdiction over the CAR's entire Haut-Mbomou province. There are also an additional 250 Special Forces from the U.S. in the region to aid local forces (Cooper, 2014).

There are also various UN peacekeeping missions and agencies engaged in the response to the LRA on multiple fronts. The strategy developed by the

UN Office for Central Africa includes five key strategic areas for response:

- Support the full implementation of the RCI-LRA objectives;
- Protect civilians;
- Increase efforts around the demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration of LRA combatants;
- Provide humanitarian assistance and protection, particularly of children; and
- Promote development and peacebuilding efforts by LRA-affected governments (UN News Centre, 2012b).

While participants identified soldiers from specific countries as being active, none mentioned the AU-RTF specifically or any of the UN actors involved in the response efforts.

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195 U01, U09, U11, S01, S03, S04, S09, S11, C01-C03, C05, D10
196 U03, U07, U08
197 C02, C04
198 D01

Mboki Community's Response to LRA Returnees

- This case study was Authored by Lindsay Branham and Sean Poole

The town of Mboki in the Central African Republic (CAR) offers a case study in a community's response to LRA returnees. Located near the crossroads of South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mboki experiences high levels of LRA activity. To address this threat, Discover the Journey (DTJ) and Invisible Children (IC) partnered with community leaders in 2013 to launch an initiative to both encourage LRA defections and raise awareness among community members about the importance of accepting LRA returnees. Over time, these efforts have resulted in notable success. Through the creation of a Community Defection Committee (CDC) and the use of multimedia education tools, Mboki has welcomed the peaceful surrender of 32 former LRA members since 2013. In addition, these community structures have evolved into a conflict resolution and community-building tool that is now serving broader needs. As one community participant described, "The CDC has brought together different ethnicities and religious groups to set-up a dynamic program [to] welcome defectors and educate the community members on the spirit of forgiveness and, despite the violence inflicted on the community, build peace."

The idea for the CDC began after in-depth research on the perspectives of LRA-affected communities by DTJ and IC revealed the need for projects that would engage communities to participate in their own protection, rather than rely solely on outside actors. Because of the community's proximity to LRA activity and its stated interest in engaging in proactive defection and peace-building activities, Mboki was an ideal location for a pilot. The first step involved organizing the CDC to represent Mboki's diverse ethnic and religious populations fairly. Afterwards, community members were shown an awareness-raising video about the process of escaping from the LRA and returning home. Nearly all community members watched the video and participated in subsequent workshops. This prompted the community to create locally-relevant defection messaging, including informational leaflets detailing how and where LRA members could escape and FM radio programming that encouraged LRA combatants to surrender. The message from Mboki to LRA members was loud and clear: "Come out; you will be safe."

Additionally, the CDC created a direct line of communication to the Uganda People's Defense Force and U.S. military teams in the region, which allowed for the exchange of timely and accurate information regarding LRA whereabouts. To improve the accuracy of the CDC-reporting mechanisms, U.S. military personnel provided training on map navigation to identify more precisely where interactions with the LRA had occurred. Moreover, through joining Invisible Children's Early Warning Network, the CDC has linked Mboki to 83 other communities in the CAR and the DRC, as well as to humanitarian and security groups. This increased communication capacity improved the response from security forces, effectively shortening the time between

the surrender of LRA members and their handover to appropriate authorities. In February 2014, after the surrender of four LRA in Mboki, Ugandan military forces arrived within three hours to take command of the former combatants and return them to Uganda. Previously, it had taken 24 to 48 hours for defectors to be transported.

As the CDC has gained credibility in the community as a governing body, it has evolved into a general conflict-resolution tool to address any internal or external security threat. The CDC's "Crisis Committee" was created as a subset of the CDC to monitor tensions within Mboki; it works to prevent or deescalate conflict. The Crisis Committee also disseminates accurate information about the broader crisis in the CAR, reducing fear and stigma associated with misinformation. Through this work, the CDC has successfully reduced community disputes and encouraged high levels of participation from the town's diverse population; the CDC's increased inclusion of minority populations in decision-making mechanisms has fostered collaboration across ethnic and religious lines and diversified the response to crises by providing new tools for the community to utilize when conflict arises.

The CDC is a proven example of how communities can play pivotal roles in violence prevention, mitigation and resolution. One community leader engaged in the project stated: "the CDC has created an opportunity for people here to deal with problems with each other openly and a way for them to feel safe by getting involved in their own protection." This model of community-based protection programming has now been established in six other communities within the CAR, the DRC and South Sudan with varying levels of success.

Conclusion

The LRA's brutality against civilians has been well documented throughout the two decades the group has operated in eastern and central Africa. Less well documented, however, are the ways in which societies, families, and individuals have drawn on internal and external support to respond to this violence. The results of this work reveal forms of self-protection that have evolved over decades in some of the most austere environments in the world. Predation on civilians by non-state armed groups is all too common. From Boko Haram in Nigeria to drug cartels in Mexico, communities around the world are facing brutal violence designed to sow terror and control populations. While sources of resilience and resistance will be unique to each community, lessons from those who have faced over two decades of instability can illuminate the ways communities unite to resist and respond to these kinds of threats.

Past literature on civilian protection largely focuses on UN peacekeeping and humanitarian response. New scholarship, however, is beginning to emphasize the importance of mobilizing civil society and local resources to fight atrocities (Baines & Paddon, 2012; Gorur, 2013; Mégret, 2009). There is growing recognition that international response should be grounded in the communities most affected (Mégret, 2009). Many within the humanitarian and peacekeeping fields are looking for better ways to support existing mechanisms of survival forged by those most affected (Gorur, 2013; Baines & Paddon, 2012; Suarez & Black, 2014). This report adds to this literature by providing an insight into mechanisms that may sometimes remain invisible or overlooked by more formal agencies tasked with helping those in distress.

At the individual level, participants in this project described a number of coping strategies, including fleeing and hiding, submitting and cooperating, restricting movement to dangerous areas, and drawing on personal faith and perseverance. Community coping responses included sharing resources, developing early warning systems, organizing local defense units, and drawing on faith organizations to create a sense of hope and unity. Economic adaptations arose during what was often a total collapse of traditional local livelihoods. In response to financial distress, communities created savings groups to purchase necessary tools for work, worked in collectives that allowed people to share limited resources needed to generate income, and organized groups to travel to farms or markets to promote safety.

People described damage to their community leadership, culture, and families as a result of violence and displacement. But these same structures also adapted to respond to the changing realities of conflict. Drawing on cultural practices, and adjusting them when needed, is an important path to surviving instability (Sousa et al., 2013). Past studies show that religious and local leadership can help resolve disputes, identify innovative approaches to coping, and build unity (Sawyer, 2005; Ager, Strang & Abebe, 2005; Korf, 2004)—all functions that were seen in LRA-affected areas.

Traditional and church leaders played important parts in promoting cooperation and understanding. Participants described how new local committees were created to undertake important functions, including addressing disputes, particularly between IDPs and host communities as well as among those returning home from displacement; offering counseling for spouses experiencing tension in their relationships; and providing peer-to-peer support to family and community members in need, particularly for families taking back former abductees.

In South Sudan, the CAR, and the DRC, these committees worked to ensure that those returning from the LRA were welcomed and treated with dignity. Awareness campaigns emphasized the importance of supporting individuals who might otherwise be stigmatized, including women who had been "wives" in the LRA, children born in the LRA, and long-term abductees. In Uganda, leaders performed cleansing rituals intended to promote psychological healing and unity, a practice that has been seen in other conflict environments (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Neuner et al., 2012).

The conceptual maps and focus group discussions showed how the social geography of communities changed in the face of instability: communities constricted in size, organized themselves to have defendable borders, abandoned remote farmlands or wells, and stopped traveling on roads. LDUs also arose in all countries, each with a unique character informed by the political history of self-defense. In the CAR, traditional hunters who knew the local landscape continued to travel into the forest, looking for signs of the LRA. In South Sudan, groups of local men and boys organized into a group called the Arrow Boys to protect their communities from attack. While responses in each area varied, LDUs protected communities by undertaking patrols, communicating possible threats, creating safe spaces for farming, providing escorts to civilians, and in some cases following up on reports of LRA sightings and engaging in fighting with the group. Community response to LDUs was overwhelmingly positive, although many lamented that the groups lacked the supplies and support from

national or international actors. Many respondents said that the presence of national military forces was helpful in deterring LRA attacks. Some participants also noted that soldiers engaged in rescuing and supporting returnees. However, much of the military support was seen as delayed and piecemeal.

Economic and health interventions from NGOs were seen as valuable, although the programs were sometimes unpredictable and under-resourced. Participants said that income-generating activities were particularly helpful, including creating farming collectives, teaching new farming techniques, providing needed tools and seeds, and purchasing crops. Physical and mental health interventions were also appreciated, although again participants noted that programs were not always adequate to local needs. Some of the most effective and stable interventions came from grass-roots community structures, including churches and leadership committees. Community education and sensitization, the organization of microloans, and the creation of farming cooperatives were sustainable interventions grounded in local capacities and needs.

The physical, economic, and social landscapes of communities have changed in response to the LRA. The violence outlined in the report was visible, unpredictable, and designed to create a sense of public terror. Desecration of dead bodies, torture, and mutilation were all used to shock the consciousness of populations. Yet this sense of global fear also spurred acts of extraordinary kindness and a sense of coming together— from the people who helped fleeing mothers by carrying their children to safety to the host communities who provided food, clothing, and shelter to displaced communities. Conflict constricts many traditional coping mechanisms (Azam, Collier, & Cravinho, 1994; Bundervoet, 2006; Ibáñez & Moya, 2006; Verpoorten, 2009), but can also give rise to new ones. Scholars have started to document how individuals become experts in navigating chaotic environments to improve their lives in incredibly difficult circumstances (Suarez & Black, 2014; Bonwick, 2006). Participants in this project helped us build on this new field of knowledge by sharing lessons forged in some of the most dangerous environments in the world to reveal how people drew on courage, kindness, and innovation to protect themselves, their families, and their communities.

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Appendix

About the Study Team

About the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative

The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) is a university-wide academic and research center at Harvard University that brings an interdisciplinary approach to promoting understanding of humanitarian crisis as a unique contributor to global health problems and to developing evidence-based approaches to humanitarian assistance.

About the Women in War Program

The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative's (HHI) Women in War program seeks to investigate and address women's needs in today's most troubled settings. HHI's network of diverse faculty, fellows, and researchers examines pressing issues that impact women's security throughout the world. Our projects emphasize the unique vulnerabilities women face in humanitarian settings, including gender-based violence, other forms of exploitation and abuse, and economic insecurity. Our research identifies some of the consequences of social instability and violence on women's livelihoods as well as the key role women can play as agents of social change. Our work highlights the ways in which women are vital actors in their communities—advocates for change, businesspeople, service providers, and leaders. HHI's research attempts to capture the complexities and nuances of these roles and to explore how women interact with other actors.

HHI's investigations inform approaches to reduce the vulnerability of women in conflict and support community-level resilience strategies. The Women in War program employs a participatory research approach grounded in collaborations with international and local non-governmental organizations and community-based associations. This approach helps us bring the voices of the experts—the women affected by violence and instability—to practitioners and policymakers to catalyze the development of more effective programming. The program's goal is to translate the knowledge gained from working with affected communities into timely and impactful programming and policy.

Table 1. Study Participants and Activities: Uganda

Code	Methodology	Location	Participants			
			Number	Age (Years)	Gender	Role
U01	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Lela Chu, Agogo District	12	>18	F	Former Abductees
U02	FGD	Lela Chu, Agogo District	9	>18	M	Former Abductees
U03	FGD	Wol, Agogo District	12	40-70	M	Community Leaders
U04	FGD	Atut Arwenye, Wol, Agogo	10	>18	F	General Community Members
U05	FGD	Atut Arwenye, Wol, Agogo	11	>18	M	Former Abductees and Combatants
U06	FGD	Soloti Village, Paimol, Agogo	10	>18	M/F	Ex-Combatants
U07	FGD	Aloi, Paimol, Agogo	12	>18	F	General Community Members
U08	FGD	Paimol, Agogo	11	>18	M	Community Leaders
U09	FGD	Aloi, Paimol, Agogo	13	>18	M/F	Community Leaders
U10	FGD	Aloi, Paimol, Agogo	9	>18	M/F	Ex-Combatants
U11	FGD	Aloi, Paimol, Agogo	11	>18	F	Former Abductees/ General Community Members
U12	FGD	Kitgum District	12	>18	M/F	Ex-Combatants
U13	FGD	Kitgum District	13	>18	M/F	Ex-Combatants
U14	Key Informant Interview (KII)	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	37	M	Ex-Combatant - Lieutenant Colonel
U15	KII	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	23	M	Ex-Combatant
U16	KII	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	35	M	Ex-Combatant - Lieutenant (2 stars)
U17	KII	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	22	M	Ex-Combatant
U18	KII	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	24	M	Ex-Combatant - Corporal
U19	KII	Gulu Town, Gulu District	1	28	M	Ex-Combatant - Sergeant
U20	Informal interview	Gulu Town, Gulu District	2	Not known	F	Former Abductees

Table 2. Study Participants and Activities: Central African Republic

Code	Methodology	Location	Participants			
			Number	Age (Years)	Gender	Role
C01	KII	Obo	1	39	F	Community Leader
C02	KII	Obo	1	44	M	Community Leader
C03	KII	Obo	1	41	M	Community Leader
C04	KII	Obo	1	38	M	Community Leader
C05	KII	Obo	1	42	M	Former Abductee
C06	KII	Obo	1	50	F	Former Abductee
C07	FGD	Obo	9	28-55	M	Hunters
C08	FGD	Obo	2	22, 42	M	Local Defense Unit (LDU) Leaders
C09	CM	Obo	11	28-55	M	Hunters/ Motorbike Drivers

Table 3. Study Participants and Activities: Democratic Republic of the Congo

Code	Methodology	Location	Participants			
			Number	Age (Years)	Gender	Role
D01	FGD	Dungu	2	>18	M	Community Leaders
D02	FGD	Dungu	6	30-59	M/F	Community Leaders
D03	KII	Dungu	1	17	M	Former Abductee
D04	KII	Dungu	1	19	M	Former Abductee
D05	KII	Dungu	1	47	F	Former Abductee
D06	KII	Dungu	1	50	F	Former Abductee
D07	KII	Dungu	1	56	F	Former Abductee
D08	KII	Dungu	1	70	F	Former Abductee
D09	KII	Dungu	1	20	F	Former Abductee
D10	FGD	Dungu	6	>18	M	Community Members

Table 4. Study Participants and Activities: South Sudan

Code	Methodology	Location	Participants			
			Number	Age (Years)	Gender	Role
S01	KII	Yambio County	1	45-55	M	NGO Staff
S02	KII	Yambio County	1	45-55	M	Community Leader
S03	FGD	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	13	18-35	F	Community Members/ Former Abductees
S04	FGD	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	12	18-32	M	Community Members
S05	FGD	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	12	45-70	M	Community Leaders
S06	FGD	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	9	18-30	M	LDU Members
S07	FGD	Sakure Payam, Nzara County	8	18-39	M	LDU Members
S08	FGD	Sakure Payam, Nzara County	11	18-60	F	Community Members/ Former Abductees
S09	FGD	Sakure Payam, Nzara County	8	40-60	M	Community Leaders
S10	KII	Sakure Payam, Nzara County	1	>18	F	Former Abductee
S11	FGD	Basikimbi Payam, Nzara County	11	40+	M	Community Leaders
S12	FGD	Basikimbi Payam, Nzara County	12	18-35	M	Arrow Boys
S13	FGD	Basikimbi Payam, Nzara County	10	18-35	F/M	Former Abductees / Families of Abductees
S14	FGD	Basikimbi Payam, Nzara County	12	18-35	F	Community Members
S15	FGD	Source Yubo Payam, Tambura County	8	18-35	M	LDU Members
S16	FGD	Andari Payam, Ezo County	10	18-30	M	LDU Members
S17	FGD	Andari Payam, Ezo County	11	18-30	F/M	Former Abductees
	Conceptual Mapping (CM)	Source Yubo Payam, Tambura County	4	18-39	M	LDU Members
	CM	Source Yubo Payam, Tambura County	4	18-30	F	Former Abductees
	CM	Andari Payam, Ezo County	4	18-30	F/M	LDU Members
	CM	Andari Payam, Ezo County	4	18-30	F	Former Abductees
	CM	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	4	18-30	M	LDU Members
	CM	Gangura Payam, Yambio County	4	18-30	F	Former Abductees

Table 5. Timeline of Government Military Presence in LRA-Affected Countries

Timeline	Uganda	S. Sudan	DRC	CAR
1994-2005	UPDF	SPLA; UPDF[1]	FARDC	FACA
2005-2010	UPDF	SPLA; UPDF[2]	FARDC; UPDF[3]	FACA; UPDF (enters in 2008)
2011-2012	UPDF	SPLA; UPDF	FARDC[4]	FACA; UPDF
2012-2015	UPDF	SPLA;[5] AU-RTF (SPLA/UPDF)	FARDC; AU-RTF (FRI/SPLA);[6,7] UPDF (conflicting)[8]	AU-RTF[9] (FACA/UPDF); FACA

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Report Design

Report design and illustrations by Maren Wickwire - Manifest Media / www.manifestmedia.de

1   Schomerus, 2012
2   Ibid
3   UPDF in eastern DRC intermittently throughout the 2000's, but only in LRA-affected areas after 2008
    (Vlassenroot, Perrot, Cuvelier, 2012; P.Ronan, personal communication, April 7, 2015)
4   UPDF forced to leave in 2011 (Agger, 2013)
5   Red Pepper, 2015; Kasasira, 2015; Human Security Baseline Assessment, 2014
6   La Force Régionale d'Intervention—FARDC troops dedicated to the AU-RTF
7   SPLA in DRC from 2013 to 2014. S.Poole, personal communication, April 5, 2015; Ronan, 2013b
8   Cross-border operations with Ugandan AU-RTF or UPDF troops not permitted since 2011;
    however, there have been some reports that UPDF began setting up camp in Spring 2014.
    UPDF has denied accusations (Redpepper, 2014; Lumu, 2014)
9   U.S.-supported Ugandan operations in CAR stopped briefly in 2013 due to unrest (Arief & Ploch, 2014)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

SOUTH SUDAN

UGANDA

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO