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Perceptions of Peace and Reconciliation: Case of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi Sub-County

Amanda R. Kaste
Gettysburg College

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Abstract

This research project explores perceptions of peace and reconciliation among female members of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi Sub-County, Gulu District. It aims to understand how women define the concepts of peace and reconciliation and how women currently perceive peace and reconciliation within their community. It also attempts to further understand these perceptions through examining the women's past experiences and current challenges. The project displays the impact of women's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict mediation in a region that is desperately trying to recover from decades of destruction and violence.

Research was carried out at two separate but related locations in Gulu District: the home of the Lokokwo Peyot group's Chairperson in Paidwe Parish within Bobi Sub-County, and the main office of Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G) in Gulu Municipality. Eleven individual interviews and two group discussions form the foundation of this project. The focus on the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group was made possible through the assistance and cooperation of GWED-G staff members, and the interested group members who so generously donated their time and experiences.

This study discovered that women in the Lokokwo Peyot group have witnessed significant changes personally and locally since the group's founding in 2009, and they feel that an environment of relative peace has developed in the community. Although traditionally women do not speak publicly or actively participate in community meetings, the women's involvement in the group challenges such cultural norms and allows them to feel empowered and respected. By promoting a peaceful environment from within their individual homes and villages, group members have succeeded in decreasing the level of conflict and violence present.

Keywords

peacebuilding, conflict and reconciliation, women's empowerment, northern Uganda

Disciplines

African Languages and Societies | African Studies | International and Area Studies | Peace and Conflict Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Women's Studies

Comments

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Amanda R. Kaste

SIT Uganda: Post-Conflict Transformation

Fall 2014

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“Peace is not something you wish for, it is something you make, something you are, something you do, and something you give away.”

— Robert Fulghum

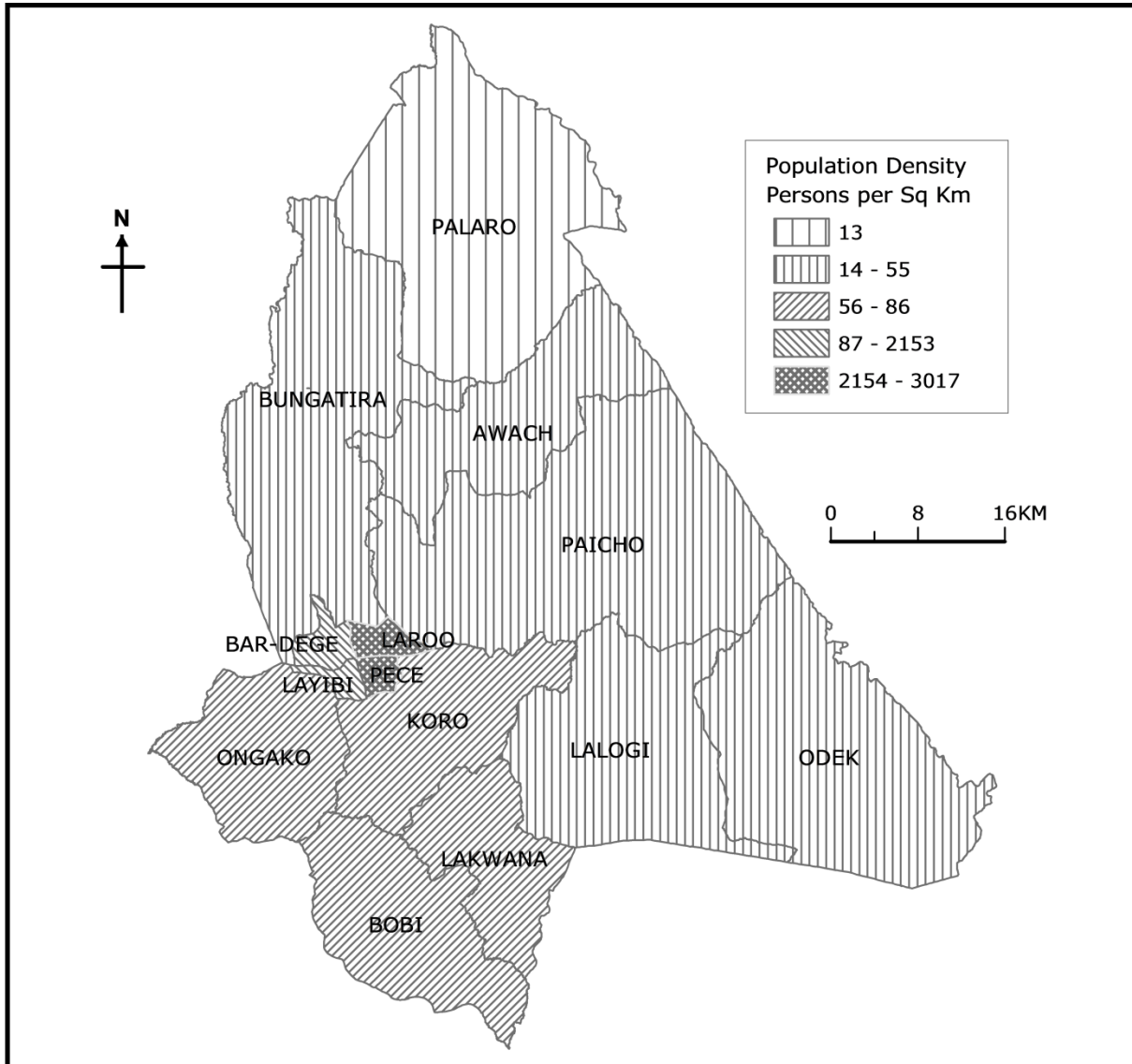
Dedication

This final product of my study is dedicated to the women of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi sub-county. They have been eager to engage with me, and enthusiastic to welcome me with open arms into their community. Their involvement and presence in their community is truly remarkable, and I am extremely grateful that I was able to spend time with them and listen to their experiences.

“Peace is something that gives you happiness and freedom. Because when you have peace in your heart, you are free to do anything. You can eat, you can sleep, you are not stressed . . . without peace you cannot even eat and sleep freely.”

-Ms. Florence Oyella, Group Member, 6 November 2014

Map of Gulu District



Map courtesy of <http://www.lglink.org/index.php/about-gulu>

Abstract

This research project explores perceptions of peace and reconciliation among female members of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi Sub-County, Gulu District. It aims to understand how women define the concepts of peace and reconciliation and how women currently perceive peace and reconciliation within their community. It also attempts to further understand these perceptions through examining the women's past experiences and current challenges. The project displays the impact of women's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict mediation in a region that is desperately trying to recover from decades of destruction and violence.

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This study discovered that women in the Lokokwo Peyot group have witnessed significant changes personally and locally since the group's founding in 2009, and they feel that an environment of relative peace has developed in the community. Although traditionally women do not speak publicly or actively participate in community meetings, the women's involvement in the group challenges such cultural norms and allows them to feel empowered and respected. By promoting a peaceful environment from within their individual homes and villages, group members have succeeded in decreasing the level of conflict and violence present.

Introduction

This research study is intended to investigate current perceptions of peace and reconciliation in post-conflict northern Uganda. The study will focus on the perceptions and experiences of women members of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi Sub-County. Women and girls were frequently targeted and suffered severely during the conflict, yet there is a lack of research on the status of these victims and survivors now. There is a need for the experiences and perceptions of women to be shared, for women have lived through the conflict as both victims and perpetrators just as men have. Peace initiatives during the conflict frequently involved women, and current peacebuilding efforts in places such as Paidwe Parish are often initiated and led by women. With their capacity for influencing future generations, it is imperative to understand how women perceive the progress of peace and reconciliation in northern Uganda today.

The study was conducted in Gulu District, within Bobi Sub-County and Gulu Municipality. The researcher worked with staff members from GWED-G in order to reach the informants from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group. The group is composed of thirty-one members, and although originally founded as a women's group has recently begun to accept male members. Group members are active in the community as they advocate for human rights, mediate conflict, increase sensitization on prominent issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), and promote women's empowerment and leadership.

In terms of content, the study aims to establish how these women define and perceive peace and reconciliation and what factors have influenced the progress of peace in the community. The role of the women's group within peacebuilding processes, along with the challenges the community has endured on the way to achieving the relative peace which now

exists within the parish, is examined. The researcher also explores the impact of the group's involvement at both a personal and communal level. This study demonstrates the absolute importance of ensuring that women's voices are heard in situations of peace and conflict locally, nationally, and globally.

Background

History of Conflict in Uganda (1980s-present)

The nation of Uganda gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962, and since that time conflict and changes in political power have been prevalent. The current president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, captured power of the state after heading the National Resistance Army (NRA) starting in 1981 with hopes to overthrow Tito Okello and his Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA). Although the NRA did succeed, capturing Kampala in 1986 and gaining control of the government, a variety of rebel groups began to take up arms in resistance to the new leadership. The Uganda People's Army (UPA) fought from 1987-1992 in eastern Uganda, the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) and other groups sprung up in the West Nile region, and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) came together in the southwest – just to name a few. Remnants from these and other rebel efforts tended to congregate in the northern region. Museveni thus set up a military presence in the north (commonly referred to as Acholiland), where the NRA government soldiers made a common practice of physical abuse, rape, and murder in the territories in which they were stationed. Also in 1986, Alice Auma “Lakwena” formed the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). The HSM was originally intended to be a nonviolent movement that would focus on ritual healing and cleansing, but their actions soon became militant and they began fighting government forces. Following the defeat of Alice Lakwena and her forces in 1987, she escaped to Kenya and a new leader emerged to take over the reins of insurgency. This new rebel leader was Joseph Kony, and under his supervision the movement eventually came to be known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Essentially, beginning in 1987, the people of Acholiland would be affected by war for over twenty years (Finnstrom, 2008, pp. 63-86).

The Insurgency and The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Kony and the LRA inflicted terror and atrocity upon the population of Acholiland from 1987 until around 2006 (Insight on Conflict, n.d.). To increase its force and numbers, the LRA forcibly recruited soldiers by abducting civilians, capturing “children and adults to serve as soldiers, and girls to serve as sex slaves to its commanders – and brutalized all abductees to deter their escape” (Human Rights Watch, 2005, p.16). Upon being incorporated into the ranks, abductees were often forced to commit acts of violence in their own homes and communities, and those who did not cooperate would be tortured or killed to serve as an example to others (Human Rights Watch, 2005, p. 16). It is estimated that over 40,000 civilians have been abducted, with about 25,000 of these victims being children (Nannyonjo, 2005, p. 479). The Acholi people became victims of physical abuse, maiming, torture, unwarranted killings, sexual violence, and mental and emotional trauma. Young girls abducted were often forced into marriages with LRA commanders and bore children, in addition to fighting. The LRA had turned against the civilians of the north, and throughout the 1990s and early 2000s they “continued to create havoc and abduct people” (Finnstrom, 2008, p. 90). Violence was the most concentrated and brutal in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. The extensive rebel attacks resulted in widespread cultural, social, emotional, physical, and economic destruction in the region (Uganda Peace Foundation Initiative, n.d.).

The government military, the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF), also committed its fair share of crimes during the insurgency and often times used very similar tactics to those of the LRA. UPDF soldiers would commit violent crimes, at times accusing innocent people of being LRA sympathizers. For this reason, much ambiguity existed throughout the conflict in regards to who could be appropriately identified as the “perpetrator” (Baines, 2010). In 2002, the

government launched “Operation Iron Fist” in efforts to permanently destroy the LRA. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Kony and other top LRA commanders in 2005, which cited “war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape, sexual slavery and enlistment of children as combatants” (MercyCorps, 2006). Formal, organized peace processes known as the Juba Peace Talks began between the Ugandan government and the LRA in 2006. Unfortunately, the Juba Peace Talks were “suspended indefinitely” in 2008, after Kony failed to sign and accept the peace agreement in full (Enough Project, 2009). The Joseph Kony and the LRA rebel movement fled from Uganda, and although it is currently small in number, they have maintained their violent practices and remain in central Africa (Invisible Children, n.d.).

Internal Displacement

During the course of the insurgency, almost 2 million people became internally displaced persons (IDPs) and were forced to leave their homes and property behind and relocate to protected camps (Uganda Peace Foundation Initiative, n.d.). In 1996 the Ugandan government began to force the people of Acholiland to leave their homes and villages and move into designated “protected villages” that would claim to provide improved safety from LRA attacks. However, with high populations and inefficient security and protection, the IDP camps quickly became prime targets for LRA violence and abductions. By 2008, most of the displaced population had started to return home from the camps since the war on the ground had ceased (MercyCorps, 2006). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), IDPs are people who have been displaced from their homesteads but continue to live within the borders of their home nation. In terms of legality, “IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their

flight” (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). The living conditions within the IDP camps were atrocious due to overcrowding, poor sanitation, shortages of food and water, lack of schools and education, and extremely limited opportunities for income generating activities (IGAs).

Rates of Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

(HIV/AIDS) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) increased rapidly because of sexual violence, rape (especially by military forces), and the choice of some women to begin sex work out of disparity for income and survival (Uganda Peace Foundation Initiative, n.d.). Traditional and cultural roles were altered during this time, as men took to consuming alcohol and gambling while women began to fight fiercely to provide for their families out of the meager rations and limited financial resources available (Ahikire, Madanda, & Ampaire, 2012, pp. 18-19). The effects of this time period of displacement have been long-lasting and difficult for the population of the region to overcome.

Returning from Life in the Camps

When people began to return to their ancestral land in the late mid to late 2000s, it was clear that returning to a traditional and independent way of life would not be a simple transition. The lengthy displacement “caused a degeneration in social values and order” which manifested in a culture of being dependent on handouts and neglecting responsibilities, lack of respect for elders and traditional leaders, increased alcohol and drug addiction, prevalent domestic violence, and higher rates of crime. The rate of poverty in Acholiland was consistently high during the insurgency, with an average of 66% of the population in the northern region living in poverty from 1992-2003. Poverty has persisted during resettlement and reintegration, with many families still struggling to provide necessities, such as paying for school fees (Nannyonjo, 2005, pp. 481-483). Conflicts over land ownership and use have occurred frequently since resettlement,

creating unrest in communities. Since most people's property was left unused and untouched during displacement, land was overgrown upon return and without marked boundaries, leading to disputes over who rightfully owned specific tracts of land (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2003, p. 8). With the abandonment of many cultural mechanisms while living in the camps, the Acholi have fought to bring back the traditions that were lost. Reviving some of these cultural practices, such as beloved traditional dances, can "foster peace between elders and youth and restore social structures that can be highly empowering" as they help traumatized survivors to heal and move on. In the years since resettlement, the people of the north have demonstrated resilience as they try to overcome the negative effects that the circumstances surrounding the insurgency left behind (Cagney, 2010, p. 116).

Developing an Atmosphere of Peace & Reconciliation

According to a 2003 report from the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, "the government of Uganda places utmost importance on guaranteeing peace to all Ugandans" in attempts to improve the welfare of the entire nation. Several policies and programs have contributed to the environment of relative peace that has developed in Acholiland. The Amnesty Act of 2000 provided assurance to rebels escaping the LRA that they would not be greeted with violence or retribution upon returning from the bush. The Amnesty Commission promoted dialogue, assisted with demobilization, reintegration, and resettlement, and cooperated with civil society organizations (CSOs) to set up reception centers for returnees. To promote peace and healing in the communities of Acholiland, a variety of initiatives have occurred over time including the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), the Gulu District Reconciliation Peace Team, Centre for Conflict Resolution, People's Voice for Peace, and Human Rights Focus (HRF) Gulu. Efforts have been made by local and district governments to

improve access to education, water, sanitation, healthcare, and economic activity in the region. The conflict left the northern region of Uganda far behind the rest of the state in regards to development, construction, employment, and livelihoods. The Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program (comprised of two phases, NURPI and NURPII) was designed to provide relief and rehabilitation to those affected by the insurgency. This and other programs pursued the creation of activities that would be able to “enhance growth and reduce poverty in order to minimize disparity between the North and the rest of Uganda” (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2003, pp. 12-33). Local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have greatly impacted the communities, frequently developing programs from a grassroots level that deal with issues relevant to the war-affected population. It can be observed that indeed “civil society initiatives at reconciliation and bridge building are showing promise” (Nannyonjo, 2005, p. 486). Although there is still work to be done in order to restore the population to a normal and productive lifestyle, significant progress has been made with the help of initiatives, programming, and the involvement of local organizations.

History of Gulu Women’s Economic Development & Globalization (GWED-G)

The Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G) organization began humbly during the height of the insurgency, when displaced women would come together to meet and find support. These marginalized women had a place where they could freely share their challenges, struggles, and experiences. Out of these discussions GWED-G was born, officially becoming a registered non-profit in 2004. GWED-G employs more than 20 staff members, supports programming in three districts in northern Uganda, and focuses on a plethora of important issues in the communities it works with. Project focus areas include: peacebuilding and reconciliation, human rights, health care and reproductive health, gender-based violence

(GBV), civic engagement, economic empowerment, advocacy, and research (GWED-G, n.d.; Angwech Pamela Judith, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014). The vision of GWED-G for northern Uganda is “a healthy, non-violent environment free from poverty and discrimination.” With a grassroots approach that aims to create “self-reliant agents of change for peace and development” through training, education, and advocacy, GWED-G assists both women and men in changing lives and improving communities (GWED-G, n.d.).

The Lokokwo Peyot Women’s Group

From 2009-2013, GWED-G established 11 women’s groups under a project referred to as “Promoting and Protecting the Rights of War Affected Women in Northern Uganda.” These groups received training on multiple topics, including human rights, community mobilization skills, income generating activity (IGA) selection, planning, and management (SPM), Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) instruction, and knowledge on how to properly document, report, and refer human rights violations as they occur in the community. Specific objectives of the groups may include increasing awareness of gender equality and rights, strengthening and empowering women and their social and economic capacity, promoting women’s access to justice, promoting accountability and good governance, and training and strengthening partner organizations to improve responses to issues of human rights (Frobisa, 2012). Founded in 2009 around the time when people were returning from displacement, the Lokokwo Peyot Women’s Group in Paidwe Parish, Bobi Sub-county, Gulu District is under the umbrella of this project. The group currently contains a total of 31 members – 25 women and 6 men from the parish. On average, the group addresses 8-12 cases of human rights violations per month and strives to increase sensitization of serious social issues within the community (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014).

Review of Existing Literature

International and Local Promotion of Women's Rights

Several organizations and policies have assisted with advocating for the rights of women worldwide, specifically within situations of violence and conflict. The United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions addressing women's rights in relation to violence. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 promoted women's roles in conflict and peace decision-making processes in the year 2000. UNSCR 1820, brought forth in 2008, suggested that violence and abuse against women be categorized and treated as a war crime. The International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC) was established in 1976 and was intended to help with grassroots resistance worldwide. In northern Uganda, IWTC worked with women and women's groups in order to create *The Open Cage*, which was a radio program designed to bring the topic of violence against women into community conversations and spread word of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820. Through such institutions, the women of northern Uganda began to improve their situations by becoming empowered and very aware of their rights (Jones, 2010).

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda refers to the rights of women in Chapter 4, Article 33. It states that "women will be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men," that the state will "enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realize their full potential," and that it is the responsibility of the state "to protect women and their rights." (The Republic of Uganda, 1995). However, there are gaps in the implementation of this and other policies promoting gender equality and women's rights. Domestic and gender-based violence are common especially in the rural areas of the north, cultural traditions such as early marriage lead to young girls dropping out of school, poor access to adequate health services can make access to maternal healthcare difficult, women often have to fight in order to be recognized as rightful

owners of property, and crimes of sexual violence are still met with impunity in some communities (Benedetti & Kijo-Bisimba, 2012, pp. 16-18). Advocacy for women's rights, especially advocacy beginning at grassroots levels, is helping to address these issues in northern Uganda. Women and girls are being sensitized on women's rights, and they are increasingly participating in politics, starting small-scale businesses, becoming members of VSLAs, and making demands for their rights to be recognized (Benedetti & Kijo-Bisimba, 2012).

The Victimization of Women During Conflict

Although in the conflict in northern Uganda most soldiers and perpetrators of violence were male, women also participated in combat, and women and children made up the majority of the population of victims. As Sarah Lynn Jones states, "women may be absent from the decision-making processes of war and peace, but their bodies are literally and figuratively sites of violence" (Jones, 2010). The conflict damaged women both physically and psychologically, as they experienced poverty, disease, trauma, mutilation, and sexual abuse. One study has found that 26% of female youth in the region were abducted and forced into the ranks of the LRA. Some women were trained as combatants, others were assigned servile positions such as preparing food and fetching water, and many were forced into marriages with soldiers to bear children or used as sex slaves. UPDF soldiers also commonly committed rape and other sexual crimes against women, particularly in the IDP camps and surrounding areas (Oywa, 2002; Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, 2011). Women witnessed murders of family members and friends, were victims of beatings and torture, found themselves struggling to provide food, water, and necessities for their families while living in IDP camps, and suffered emotional trauma from violence and abuse. Women who were abducted, especially those who bore children, often face stigma upon returning to their villages, and may end up having a lack of

income and education. These experiences have led to prevalent depression, traumatic stress, and anxiety. In general, there are “high levels of psychiatric morbidity” among the displaced population of Gulu District, and so there is a need for psychosocial counseling and networks of social support within communities. Despite the conditions that they have endured, the women of Acholiland have managed to be resilient and in most cases have resettled and reintegrated fairly smoothly (Annan et al., 2011; Roberts, Ocaka, Browne, Oyok, & Sondorp, 2008).

Women’s Roles in Peacebuilding

Historically, women throughout the world have served as advocates for peace. In northern Uganda, this is often viewed as beginning at a local and familial level. As wives and mothers, women begin to promote peace from within their own households, discouraging family members from participating in conflict. Women have used their roles and careers to serve as supporters of initiatives, projects, and government policies that help to develop peace within their communities. For example, in 1989 the Gulu District Women’s Development Committee mobilized women through a peaceful demonstration that demanded an end to the violence and conflict. Then in 1994, female representatives, including a now well-known Acholi woman named Betty Bigombe, were part of a government peace-seeking delegation that attempted negotiations with the LRA. In 1996, a delegation of women requested an audience with President Museveni and other influential government leaders to voice their concerns about the conflict and advocate for peace. Although the group’s request was denied, their actions nonetheless raised awareness of their plea, especially at a local level (Oywa, 2002). Organizations like GWED-G bring women together and organize groups from a grassroots level in order to encourage women to act as advocates for peace in their communities and local governments (Angwech Pamela Judith, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014). Unfortunately, in some cases women

continue to be excluded from conversations surrounding peace and conflict initiatives – but women have proved time and time again that their interest in contributing to these decisions is sincere and necessary (Oywa, 2002). Women activists for peace have worked hard to promote reconciliation and reintegration in the region, and they are successfully addressing issues that have serious implications for their communities.

Research Objectives

This study of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish within Bobi sub-county, Gulu District is motivated by the following objectives:

1. To examine the ways in which women from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group perceive the concepts of peace and reconciliation.
2. To investigate the past and present challenges the women have dealt with, in order to discover how these experiences influence their perceptions.
3. To explore the positive and negative influences on the progress of peace and reconciliation within the community.

Justification

Exploring perceptions of peace and reconciliation is a worthwhile endeavor in the post-conflict environment of northern Uganda. In order for victims and survivors to successfully be re-integrated and reconciled in their communities, there is a strong need for a stable environment of peaceful coexistence (Angwech Pamela, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014). With 90% of the population having been displaced, nearly every individual and household in Acholiland has endured suffering and violence (Uganda Peace Foundation Initiative, n.d.). The only way for Acholiland to flourish once again is if peacebuilding efforts are strong within the region and people's perceptions of the progress of peace and reconciliation are understood.

Within the conflict in northern Uganda, women faced the brunt of the violence as they became victims of rampant sexual violence and abuse. They lost children, spouses, and other family members to abduction and violence, and many women and girls were forced to join the rebel fighting forces themselves. Women living in IDP camps became responsible for the welfare of their families and dependents as men frequently took to drinking, gambling, and other unproductive activities (Oywa, 2002). Yet very little research has been done on the re-integration of women and girls in post-conflict situations, because throughout history the majority of perpetrators and combatants in war and conflict zones globally have been men (Annan et al., 2011). Women remain underrepresented although, despite being such a greatly affected population and playing such an important role in promoting and fostering peace, beginning in their individual families and households.

On a personal level, ensuring that the voices and experiences of women are heard is of vital importance as women gain empowerment in northern Uganda. Traditionally and culturally, it is women who instill discipline, encourage respect, and pass down traditions to the younger

generations in the region. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that if women remain active participants in promoting peace and reconciliation, the progress and success of peacebuilding efforts can be sustained well into the future. GWED-G is helping to empower the women of the region through aspects like human rights advocacy and peacebuilding, and the women of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group have been trained to become efficient leaders in developing peace and promoting change in their community.

Research Methodology

Locations

Data for the study was collected at the following locations. Interviews with Ms. Angwech Pamela Judith and Mr. Omona Venis Frobisa were conducted at the GWED-G office in Gulu town. All interviews and group discussions with women from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group were held at the home of Chairperson Amito Caroline in Paidwe District, Bobi sub-county. All research was carried out within Gulu District.

Population of Study

The population of this study consisted of two GWED-G staff persons and nine women in Paidwe Parish, Bobi sub-county who belong to the GWED-G-founded Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group. All of the women spoken to were displaced and forced to live in IDP camps at some point during the insurgency. The following statistics serve to provide a more complete image of the respondents from the Women's Group, and all of the data is approximate. The average age of these women is 41.5 years, with the youngest respondent being 30 years of age and the eldest being 56. 77% of the respondents are married or widowed, and all of them have produced children, with the average number of children per woman being 4. For 88% of the women, their income is generated via farming and selling the products of their toil for a profit in small-scale businesses. One respondent works as a nurse at the local health center. The majority of the women interviewed were able to receive education for some period of time. 44% have received education through Primary 7 or higher, 33% have reached other levels of Primary school, and the remainder never received the opportunity to study at any level. The average amount of time that respondents have lived in Bobi sub-county is approximately 24 years, with some respondents having resided there their whole lives (apart from the time period when they were displaced) and others having moved to Bobi later in life.

Two groups participated in the study, both composed solely of women from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group in Paidwe Parish. On both occasions, a discussion took place for a period of time prior to carrying out individual, personal interviews with each of the women present. The first group consisted of four women aged 34-56, including the group's chairperson. The second group consisted of five women aged 30-52.

Two staff members from the GWED-G organization were interviewed as key informants. This included one female and one male. Positions of staff persons interviewed included the Founder/Executive Director and the Senior Program Officer for GWED-G's Youth and Human Rights programs. The informants are influential staff members with significant knowledge of the organization and its programs and have served as long-term employees of GWED-G.

Data Collection Methods

The primary methods used for data collection within this study were personal interviews and focus group discussions. The purpose of this was to ensure a wide variety of perspectives, since informants may respond differently in a group setting as compared to a one-on-one setting. This allowed for individual voices to be heard without the influence of others, and for group processing to take place separately. Upon the conclusion of the researcher's time spent with the group, a monetary donation towards the group's efforts was given to the Chairperson as a token of appreciation and compensation for their participation in this study.

Personal Interviews

Personal interviews were conducted by the researcher, with the assistance of a translator when necessary. Interviews with the nine women from the Lokokwo Peyot group took place in a shaded, quiet area of the compound where distraction could be minimized. The one-on-one setting allowed respondents to have time to ponder questions as long as needed before

answering, and to relate their stories and experiences to the researcher without interruption from other group members. Women were asked general questions about topics such as their family, livelihood, and education in addition to questions pertaining to the research objectives. This method of data collection was critical for building rapport and developing a trusting relationship with the women, although the study took place during a quite limited time period. Personal interviews with the two GWED-G staff members took place at GWED-G's headquarters in Gulu. The content of these interviews focused on the history and goals of the organization, current programming and projects, and visible progress in communities that is specifically related to peacebuilding and reconciliation. These interviews provided the researcher with the chance to learn about the broader vision of the organization and gain new insights on the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group (and similar groups founded by GWED-G).

Group Discussions

The focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher, with the assistance of a translator. The first group (Group 1) consisted of four women from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, including Chairperson Amito Caroline, while the second group was comprised of five women (Group 2). Topics discussed included the history of the group, the women's reasons for joining the group, the group's impact on their personal circumstances, and the involvement of the group in subduing conflict and promoting peace within the community. The group setting was an efficient way to collect data because the women could build off of one another's responses, and in some cases they discussed topics amongst each other to develop a more complete answer. Both groups were inclusive and supportive, as the women took turns sharing ideas and opinions.

Observations

During the personal interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher was able to carefully observe the behavior and body language of the informants. In general, respondents seemed to be comfortable and at ease during the one-on-one interview sessions. One respondent was interrupted by someone trying to contact her cellular phone, while another was distracted by their young child that accompanied them to the interview. A few respondents occasionally appeared frustrated because they desired to speak solely in English without reliance on the translator, but the translator was at times needed in order for the meaning of the questions to be more accurately conveyed. The following observations were made during the course of the group discussions. Participants in Group 1 displayed happiness and enthusiasm as they responded, and all four women voiced their opinions consistently. They seemed to be comfortable with the translator, who was a male member of the Lokokwo Peyot group. All of them had met with undergraduate student researchers in the past, which likely accounts for their willingness to engage. Participants in Group 2 looked relaxed, and they took time to carefully consider questions. The researcher had to probe more to receive detailed answers than with Group 1, and questions had to be re-phrased more frequently. All of the women participated, but there were multiple moments of silence and they did not often converse much with each other before responding. The translator for Group 2 was a female GWED-G staff member who had not previously interacted with the group, so it is possible that the women would have preferred and been more open with a translator from their own community.

Documentary Review

The researcher reviewed a variety of documents and secondary sources in order to obtain additional information relative to the study. This included quarterly reports on the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Groups, along with reports that described the origins of the group and the

training that its members have received through GWED-G. Government reports on post-conflict reconstruction, articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda pertaining to women's rights and equality, and reports from NGOs and CSOs related to peace and reconciliation were also reviewed.

Challenges and Limitations

A few challenges and limitations presented themselves during the course of the project. First, the research was dependent on the availability of the Chairperson and group members and what days and time periods the women could volunteer their time. Better planning on the part of the researcher could have allowed for all women members of the group to participate and be interviewed, which would have been beneficial to the project. Second, a translator had to be used for the researcher's interviews and discussions with the Lokokwo Peyot group, so there is always the chance that some of the women's ideas and responses may have been lost or altered in translation. Both of the translators used had a limited amount of time to familiarize themselves with the researcher's topic and proposed questions prior to engaging in interviews and discussions. Finally, inclement weather prevented a planned final group discussion from taking place towards the end of the project, and there was not sufficient time left to reschedule.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were made fully aware of the goals and objectives of the study. Each person and/or group interviewed was required to provide the researcher with informed consent before any interaction related to the research objectives was conducted. An overview of the research project was given to each person who participated, and every respondent was required to sign an informed consent form before they were officially enrolled in taking part in the study. It was explained that individuals would remain anonymous unless they provided consent for the researcher to publish their title and/or name in the final research study paper. They were

informed that the research could potentially be made available to a wider audience through some type of educational publication. Respondents were told that their participation was absolutely voluntary, they did not need to answer any question they were uncomfortable with, and the interview or discussion could be stopped at any time upon their request, for any reason. The participants were informed of the contact details of the researcher, should they have further questions, as well as how the final paper would be printed/published. The researcher did their best to sympathize with participants and remain sensitive to their opinions, perspectives, stories, and experiences.

Findings and Analysis

A variety of concepts were explored throughout the research process. The questions asked of the informants maintained a strong focus on the topic of peace and reconciliation. The participants' perceptions of the concepts of peace and reconciliation, their past and present challenges, and the positive and negative factors that have influenced the progress of peace and reconciliation in the community were investigated thoroughly.

Definitions of Peace and Reconciliation

When asked to define peace in their own words each individual's answer was unique, but common threads presented themselves throughout the responses. Women often associated the concept of peace with freedom, happiness, and security. Some definitions were focused locally, such as "Peace is love amongst people. When there is peace in the community, there should be no fighting" (Anonymous Respondent 1, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Other responses were broader, "I think that peace is when the world is being without any trouble" (Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Frequently, the women refer to peace specifically as a time when there is no longer conflict, which is not surprising considering that they have lived through many years of unrest. At a community level the women feel that the notion of peace implies there is a minimum amount of local conflict between neighbors, and life is easy, comfortable, and without oppression (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014).

When asked to define the concept of reconciliation, the women's responses were for the most part quite similar and several of them included concrete examples of situations in which reconciliation becomes a necessity. All of the women referred to reconciliation as what occurs after two or more parties, whether they are groups or individuals, have wronged one another and

must learn to ignore what happened in order to reach peace and forgiveness. One woman gave this example: “Reconciliation is, for example, if one of us kills your son, instead of fighting between us the elders come and we sit and we forgive. Then the forgiveness forges unity” (Anonymous Respondent 1, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Another respondent speaks of how reconciliation can create new beginnings between the opposing parties: “Reconciliation is somebody standing between the two opposed and bringing them together, peacefully getting rid of the issue, so they can start over new. Conflict and war bring about a lot of misunderstanding and fighting” (Florence Oyella, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). The women made strong connections with the processes leading to reconciliation and the hope for achieving relative peace in the community.

Perceptions of the Current Progress of Peace and Reconciliation

The respondents from the Lokokwo Peyot Women’s Group all perceived a level of relative peace in the community. They shared that reconciliation has made significant progress and people have been able to reintegrate successfully. Presently, the women feel that people are “living peacefully” and “staying free with each other” (Lakang Grace, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). There was consensus that peace and reconciliation are viewed positively by community members. The women explain that they, along with their families and friends, feel comfortable, secure, and free now since the rebels are no longer there to disturb them (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014). In the eyes of these women, the presence of peace and reconciliation is the beginning of a path to “developing and moving the community forward” (Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014).

Positive and Negative Influences on the Progress of Peace

Participants were asked to identify barriers to achieving a peaceful community, and then to identify individuals or organizations who have acted as promoters of peace and reconciliation. Common negative influences mentioned included poverty, insecurity, ignorance, and misunderstanding. In the past, community members –specifically women – were not fully aware of their rights which hindered the progress of finding peace. One woman states that, “Before, women did not know about our rights. Women could not stand in front of the community to speak. Now we know our rights; now we can help in the community!” (Florence Oyella, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). Land ownership conflicts, arguments among neighbors, and people wary of following the advice of community leaders or elders have served as obstacles to improving safety and security. According to Florence Apio, problems can occur because of “people who do not fully want peace and cause trouble” (Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). Another respondent, Aciro Caroline, echoes the opinion claiming, “There are those in the community that are not yet ready to live in harmony with others” (Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). The women recognize that regardless of what progress is made towards a peaceful community, there will still be some existing factors that prevent peace from fully flourishing.

Despite any barriers to peace that have existed, the women seem confident in the continued stability of the relative peace which currently exists in the community as a result of positive influences. They believe that GWED-G has “helped with sensitizing the community and preventing violence” (Florence Oyella, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). In addition to GWED-G, the women share their knowledge of other programs and organizations which have been able to assist in the promotion of peace in Paidwe Parish. Local leaders such as

the Local Council 1 (LC1), police, some of the courts, and a sub-county Peace and Reconciliation Team are the government and state-sponsored groups that have been able to help the most. It is mentioned that the Acholi religious leaders have also played a role in bringing peace. CARE, Global Grassroots, GWED-G, War Child Canada, and World Vision are the NGOs that the women have observed impacting the community the most over time (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014).

The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Reconciliation

Akello Grace shared this Acholi proverb: “A home without a woman is not a home” (Akello Grace, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). From this proverb, one can begin to understand a popular view among the respondents: the roles that women play in peacebuilding must begin with promoting peace, love, and respect in each individual household. The women show respect for one another as well as their spouses and family members. Being a part of the Lokokwo Peyot group contributes significantly to the women’s ability to decrease the presence of conflict and violence in their community. Community members have become increasingly sensitized to women’s rights and empowerment since the group’s founding (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014). Since women are now increasingly involved in IGAs, they are able to use their income not only to provide for their families but to participate in VSLAs and help mobilize funds for needs within the community (Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014).

Changes in Gender Roles

Although not all respondents felt that the roles and responsibilities of women were altered because of the conflict, those that have witnessed such changes were able to share multiple examples with the researcher. Before the conflict, the traditional roles of women included mostly domestic and household duties like cooking, caring for children, cleaning and

washing, weeding, and helping bring in the harvest. Men would hunt, gather, farm, clear out land, and work to construct housing. Culturally, it was the responsibility of men to provide for their families (Omona Venis Frobisa, Personal Communication, November 21, 2014; Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014). Since that time, a lot of change has taken place.

During displacement, women were forced to oversee the family and take responsibility for the survival of their dependents. Men began drinking, playing cards, and “sitting and waiting” without trying to improve their situation. Since men were no longer able to participate in digging and farming, they quickly fell into the trap of dependency. Women began small-scale businesses and trade as they tried to find new ways to care for their families. Some women took up teaching, a profession that was traditionally for men, as the IDP population searched for ways to continue children’s education. It appears that life in the camps increased the numbers of roles that women had to play, while rendering many men unproductive and unmotivated (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014).

Now, women are becoming empowered. Florence Apio states, “There is hope for peace now since we have been home and have seen these changes” (Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). They have come together, working to promote peace. Most women in the community now participate in some form of IGA. They frequently find themselves bearing the traditional responsibilities of men in addition to their own traditional responsibilities as women and mothers, and many men are now very dependent on their wives, relying on them to produce food and income. At the present, it is suggested that efforts be made “to make men realize women can help but cannot replace men from doing their roles” because women are overwhelmed with responsibility (Omona Venis Frobisa, Personal Communication, November 21, 2014). Women have fought to know their rights, and they have gained life skills and

leaderships skills thanks to the support of various organizations. They continue to work hard and take on the task of providing for their families.

Past Experiences of the Respondents

Life in the IDP Camps

“There was no education, there was poverty, unwanted pregnancies, child mothers became more common, people were over-crowded. There was a lack of food. HIV/AIDS increased drastically then. Rape and defilement happened often.” -Chairperson Amito Caroline

All women from the Lokokwo Peyot Women’s Group that participated in the study were internally displaced at some point during the insurgency and thus spent a period of time living in IDP camps. They explained the variety of hardships and challenges they were forced to endure at that time. All described a lack of water, food, farmland, proper healthcare, and education. When the camps were attacked by the LRA, commodities would be looted and people would be captured, abused, or killed (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014). Since families were forced to survive primarily on handouts, a culture of receiving and dependency developed as people struggled for survival (Omona Venis Frobisa, Personal Communication, November 21, 2014). As one respondent commented “. . . everything had a price tag” (Anonymous Respondent 2, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). One woman described how in some places people could try to pay landowners to use farmland outside of the camp. However, she went on to explain that instead of this helping families to overcome the food shortage, the owners often demanded a high price and would decide to take away use of the land unexpectedly and without warning (Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Several respondents referred to certain aspects of culture and tradition that began to fade away during camp life. For example, the children became undisciplined and the youth failed to respect their elders and

cultural leaders (Chairperson Amito Caroline, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014; Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Lakang Grace seemed to sum up the breadth of the effects of being displaced, simply saying, “Life was generally hard in the camps. With so many people there, life became difficult for *everyone*” (Personal Communication, November 12, 2014).

Challenges of Reintegration and Resettlement

From speaking with the women, it was found that although they were relieved to head back to their homes and ancestral lands, people were also fearful of what they would find upon returning. Some returned to find that their homes had been destroyed, and the land that was once cleared for farming was overgrown (Florence Apio, November 6, 2014). Land conflict and disagreements between former neighbors broke out as people fought over land boundaries and attempted to discern which tracts of land were legally theirs prior to experiencing displacement (Anonymous Respondent 1, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014; Anonymous Respondent 2, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014; Angwech Pamela Judith, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014). A few respondents claimed that their families were able to return to a normal way of life easily, but most women faced at least minor obstacles during the resettlement process.

Present Struggles of Respondents and Their Families

Education and productivity were the two significant current challenges most frequently identified by the women. Children in some families are not sent to school because there is not always enough money available for school fees (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014). Orphans who are without parents to care for them are usually only supported by the community until around Primary 7, and so beyond that they are unable to complete their education (Chairperson Amito Caroline, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). Dealing with the

cultural changes that have taken place is also a struggle, and “trying to upbringing children morally to live a normal life” is of course difficult in a post-conflict area (Aciro Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Another large problem is a general lack of productivity among men in the community, with many of them continuing poor habits formed during displacement like consuming alcohol and gambling. Even some women have taken to frequent drinking and become alcoholics (Chairperson Amito Caroline, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). Such persons are problematic as they do not contribute to the financial welfare or mental and emotional well-being of their families and dependents. Regardless of the challenges that may still be present in the community, though, the women are grateful that at least for the most part “there is now peace at home” (Lakang Grace, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014).

Sustainability of Peace in the Future

Again, it should be emphasized that the women describe the current environment as one of relative peace. They seem optimistic that this peace will be sustainable and in fact continue to develop and evolve in the future. “Even though the government came to Kony and peace talks failed, I have hope that peace will prevail,” comments Akello Grace, “I think that hope and peace are returning to northern Uganda” (Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). Statements of this kind imply that the women view the community as steadily recovering from the troubles of the past and overcoming the tragedy that afflicted the region. Aciro Caroline says, “I have hopes that the peace that is currently prevailing will continue and even increase” (Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). The respondents recognize that processes of reconciliation must continue to be improved and implemented “so that peace can reign fully” (Anonymous Respondent 1, Personal Communication, November 12, 2014). There is fear among

some people that there could eventually be change for the worse, but most respondents are confident that the peace and freedom has come to stay. “People will not revenge, I do not think people will rebel like that again. No one will go to the bush again,” Florence Oyella says as she shares her hope that the events of the past will never again repeat themselves (Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). All respondents maintain a strong hope that, regardless of how long the process may take, peace and prosperity will fully return to northern Uganda.

Effects of the Lokokwo Peyot Women’s Group’s Presence in Paidwe Parish

Changing the Lives of Group Members

Most of the women that participated in the study joined the Women’s Group upon its founding in 2009, though some had joined in more recent years. All of the women had their own personal reasons for becoming members, and it was clear that their membership has significantly impacted their lives, abilities, and confidence. The respondents explain that, prior to their participation in the group and the training and knowledge they received, they would never have spoken out in the community or become advocates for human rights and peace. One woman, who now describes herself as being quite outspoken, claims that she used to be extremely shy and reserved before becoming part of the group.

Most women explained that they chose to join the group because they were experiencing some hardship at the time, since the group was formed when people were still returning from the IDP camps, reintegrating into the community, and learning to rebuild their lives and homes. They have since been empowered, made aware of their rights, and participated in training that has helped them take action towards fixing existing problems in the community (Angwech Pamela Judith, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014; Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014). For one respondent who is now widowed, the group has supplied a place where she can

find support in others and converse with people who are willing to help her address problems that arise in daily life. Chairperson Amito Caroline says she is running for 2016 Local Council 1 Chairperson in her community. She feels that the knowledge and empowerment she has gained from the group and GWED-G have made her free and ready to lead (Chairperson Amito Caroline, Personal Communication, November 6, 2014). The women feel respected. They no longer fear speaking out in public. They have learned how to be leaders and how to instigate change.

Making a Difference in the Community

At a local community level, the group has helped to empower all women, not just those who are currently members. The group addresses GBV, domestic violence, neglect of children, and other issues of conflict. The women report that as sensitization and education on such issues increases, the number of cases of violence and rights abuses in the community decreases. The group evaluates its progress yearly, and the Chairperson shares that in comparison to the time of the group's inception, there are now very few cases of violence and abuse (Personal Communication, November 6, 2014).

The group provides assistance in many areas of the community and reaches out to men and children as well, not solely women. The group possesses the ability to provide referrals for certain victims that come to them, such as referring victims of defilement or rape to the police and guiding them to a local health center for care. The group makes a point to check in on past cases in order to diagnose whether behaviors have changed or conditions have improved. A neighboring sub-county that lacks any program similar to the Women's Group even brings their cases to the women's group in Paidwe Parish for mediation. On average, the group mediates

around 8-12 cases per month, with the majority of issues and conflicts happening between July and January during harvest times (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014).

Recently, the group has started a focus on youth and children in the community by conducting advocacy and rights awareness programming in local schools. Young girls are encouraged to stay in school and complete their education in efforts to combat drop-out rates and put a stop to traditional early marriages. Aspects of a healthy and functional marriage are elaborated on, in hopes that the children will realize that their education should come first and that there will be plenty of time for marriage in the future. Children whose parents refuse to pay required school fees or purchase necessary school materials can receive help from the group. Through their work, the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group tries to increase the safety, security, and peace within the parish by sensitizing their fellow community members on the importance of preventing conflict and dealing with situations appropriately should the need arise. (Group 1 Discussion, November 6, 2014; Group 2 Discussion, November 12, 2014).

Conclusion

The respondents' generally positive perceptions of peace and reconciliation within their community are evidence that, following decades of conflict, a peaceful environment has begun to manifest itself in Paidwe Parish and elsewhere in northern Uganda. The participants from the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group have faced many challenges in the past because of the insurgency, and even now certain struggles remain. However, those experiences have led them to express interest in limiting conflict and developing peace in the community. The group has had a positive impact both in the lives of its individual members and in the Parish as a whole, and has surely contributed to the current atmosphere of relative peace which the respondents describe. It is of vital importance to acknowledge and explore the role of women in peacebuilding on a local and international scale. By sharing the perceptions and experiences of the respondents, it becomes possible to understand how people view the progress of peace and reconciliation at the local, community level. In a post-conflict region, monitoring the perceptions of groups and individuals can assist in evaluating the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. With the case of the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, it is clear that the women perceive peace within the community as steadily improving over time due to the group and other factors. There are high hopes that peace and reconciliation will continue to progress and be sustained in the future.

Recommendations

In light of the preceding findings, analyses, and conclusions, the researcher can suggest the following recommendations:

1. *Further Research:* Additional research studies should be conducted in the future in order to understand the changes in perceptions of peace reconciliation in the region over time. Studies could take place involving similar groups, or even entire communities. Raising awareness of how the people of northern Uganda view the progress of peacebuilding allow the local, national, and international community to better assist in the healing and recovery process.
2. *Advocacy & Sensitization:* The advocacy for peace and human rights found in Paidwe Parish and other communities with GWED-G-sponsored groups should continue and be spread to all parts of the Acholi region. If provided with sufficient financial and logistical means, GWED-G and other organizations would be able to found similar groups in all of the affected districts in the region. Enabling women (and all people) to become agents of change in their communities through grassroots approaches can aid in the development of a peaceful and secure environment.
3. *Enforcement of Policy:* Groups such as the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group are an integral aspect of developing peace because policies that are supposed to protect against violence and abuse, specifically laws protecting women's rights, are not always enforced properly. As people are made aware of the full spectrum of their rights as human beings, they become empowered and gain the knowledge necessary to demand the rights and services they deserve (Omona Venis Frobisa, Personal Communication, November 21, 2014). Increasing awareness of rights at a local level can potentially lead to regional and

national changes in policy implementation, decreasing the amount of GBV, domestic violence, small-scale conflict, and other existing obstacles to peace.

4. *Community Recognition & Involvement:* Groups striving to foster peace and reconciliation in their communities must ensure that the entire community is aware of their purpose and objectives. Spreading awareness of the existing issues and the group's capacity to mend such issues is imperative to gaining the community's trust. A strong level of inclusivity and the promotion of the group's services to all community members, similar to that demonstrated by the Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, should be present in all community organizations that mediate conflict and develop peace.
5. *Increasing Education on Gendered Effects of Conflict:* People locally, nationally, and globally should be made aware of how the effects of war and conflict differentiate based upon sex and gender. The experiences of women during conflict often vary greatly from those of men or children, and this needs to be recognized and taken into consideration when dealing with a post-conflict environment (Angwech Pamela Judith, Personal Communication, November 18, 2014).

Appendices

Glossary of Acronyms

ADF: Allied Democratic Forces

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ARLPI: Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative

CSO: Civil Society Organization

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GWED-G: Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization

HIV: Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus

HRF: Human Rights Focus

HSM: Holy Spirit Movement

ICC: International Criminal Court

IDP: Internally Displaced Persons/People

IGA: Income Generating Activity

IWTC: International Women's Tribune Center

LC1: Local Council 1 (Local Government Leadership Position)

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

NALU: National Army for the Liberation of Uganda

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

NRA: National Resistance Army

NURPI/NURPII: Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program (Phase I, Phase II)

SPM: Selection, Planning, and Management

STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNLA: Ugandan National Liberation Army

UNRF: Uganda National Rescue Front

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

UPA: Uganda People's Army

UPDF: Uganda People's Defense Force

VSLA: Village Savings and Loans Association

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Amanda Kaste. I am a student conducting academic research in affiliation with School for International Training (SIT) located in Senior Quarters in Gulu, Uganda. Before you choose to participate in this study, I would like to share with you some additional information. My objective is to investigate how women who were formerly internally displaced perceive peace and reconciliation, based upon their past and present challenges and the progress (or lack thereof) they see in their communities. This research can benefit the community by letting women share their perspectives openly and making their voices heard in regards to the status of peace and reconciliation here in Gulu. I look forward to listening to your stories, experiences, and perceptions should you choose to participate. As you will see below, confidentiality is of extreme importance to the researcher, and no personal information will be included in the final results of the study without your consent. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and should you wish to discontinue your participation at any time, for any reason, during the interview/discussion please inform me immediately. If you would like to view the results of this research study in the future, please let me know. Please feel free to contact me by phone (0794493060) or email (kastam01@gettysburg.edu) should any further questions arise after the conclusion of the interview/discussion.

Thank you very much for your time,

Amanda Kaste

Acknowledgment of informed consent to participate (circle one): YES NO

Would you like your title or name to be included in the final research paper? (circle one):

TITLE NAME BOTH NEITHER/REMAIN ANONYMOUS

I, _____, agree that I have read the above letter in its entirety and understand the objectives of this research study. My consent to participate is voluntary and informed, and if at any point I wish for the interview/discussion to be disbanded, I will alert the researcher immediately.

Signature: _____

Date: _____2014

Interview Guide/Research Questions

Questions Specific to Research Objectives:

How do you perceive peace and reconciliation in your community?

What role do women play in promoting peace and reconciliation?

Have there been/are there now barriers to peace and reconciliation in the community?

Have any specific individuals, programs, and/or institutions assisted with the promotion of peace?

How would you define the concept of “peace”? What about “reconciliation”?

Were you displaced during the conflict?

If so, do you feel that you (and your family) have been able to re-integrate into your community and return to a normal way of life?

Did your role or responsibilities change during the time you were displaced? Was the traditional/cultural role of women challenged, in your opinion?

Do you continue to face specific challenges or struggles currently? Can these present challenges be attributed to your past challenges?

What are your hopes for the progress of peace and reconciliation in the future? Sustainable?

General/Demographic Questions:

How old are you?

What is your level of education (primary, secondary, university, none, etc.)?

What is your livelihood? How do you (and/or your family) generate income?

Are you single or married?

Do you have children? (If so, how many?)

Do other people, besides yourself and your immediate family, reside in your household?

Do you live here in [Gulu District, Bobi sub-county, this parish, etc.]?

List of Respondents

GWED-G Staff Members:

Ms. Angwech Pamela Judith, Founder and Executive Director of GWED-G

Mr. Omona Venis Frobisa, GWED-G Senior Program Officer – Youth and Human Rights

Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group Members:

Acan Grace, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview**

Aciro Caroline, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview**

Akello Grace, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview*

Amito Caroline, Chairperson of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview*

Anonymous Respondent 1, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview**

Anonymous Respondent 2, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview**

Florence Apio, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview*

Florence Oyella, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview*

Lakang Grace, Member of Lokokwo Peyot Women's Group, Personal Interview**

*indicates that respondent is from Group 1

**indicates that respondent is from Group 2

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