



THE STATE OF FEMALE YOUTH IN NORTHERN UGANDA:

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF WAR-AFFECTED YOUTH (SWAY)

PHASE II

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SWAY is a research program in northern Uganda dedicated to understanding the scale and nature of war violence, the effects of war on youth, and the evaluation of programs to recover, reintegrate, and develop after conflict.

SWAY's partners include:



AVSI supports human development in developing countries according to the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, with special attention to education and promotion of the global dignity of every person.



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Cover photographs, left to right:

A young girl, Pader district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

Women preparing food for cooking, Kitgum district. (Photograph by Elizabeth Stites)

A former forced wife with her child, Pader district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

Young children at play, Kitgum district, (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

Map of Districts Impacted by Conflict



Source: Allen and Schomerus (2006), originally obtained from UN OCHA.

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Executive Summary

The Survey for War Affected Youth (SWAY) is a research program dedicated to evidence-based humanitarian aid and development. SWAY employs new data, tools, and analysis to improve the design and targeting of protection, assistance, and reintegration programs for youth in northern Uganda.

Youth have been both the primary victims and the primary actors in the protracted war between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). It is not clear, however, exactly who is suffering, how much, and in what ways. We also have little sense of the magnitude, incidence, and nature of the violence, trauma, and suffering of youth in northern Uganda.

Our understanding of the effects of war on women and girls is especially lacking, whether they abducted or impacted in other ways. Government and NGO officials admit that they have little sense of the true scale of the problems facing young women and the proportion of females facing particular vulnerabilities.

As a result, programming is based on immediate and observable needs and possibly erroneous assumptions about who requires assistance and what assistance they need. Likewise, with only rough measures of well-being available, targeting of services has been crude. The overarching purpose of SWAY is to work with service providers to generate better evidence-based programming.

This report begins with a section describing methodology, before proceeding to theme-focused sections. As peace talks being brokered by the Government of Southern Sudan offer the prospect of an end to one of Africa's longest conflicts, we conclude by offering specific recommendations to the GoU and international and local agencies operating in northern Uganda.

SWAY data and methods

In 2005, SWAY Phase I interviewed 1,018 households and nearly 750 young men and boys across Kitgum and Pader. In Phase II of SWAY we interviewed 619 young women and girls between October 2006 and August 2007., Phase II had four main objectives:

- to identify the long-term effects—as measured by social, psychological, economic, and health indicators—of abduction, war violence, forced marriage, and motherhood on young women and girls;
- to assess the nature, magnitude, and persistence of problems and resilience in the face of war, violence, and displacement;
- to compare and contrast the experiences of men, women, boys and girls; and
- to improve the targeting and design of humanitarian assistance and protection initiatives for war-affected youth.

The SWAY team also conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with a sub-sample of survey respondents, their friends, community members, and family.

The survey sample was drawn from *pre-displacement* household rosters of youth. Migrants were tracked down to their current home with more than 70 percent success, and data were gathered from the families on the young women we did not find, as well as those who had died or been abducted and not returned.

Key Findings

Livelihoods

- Incomes and employment reported by young women are extremely low—most work less than two days a week and earn less than 1,250 Uganda shillings (c. US\$0.75) a day.
- Women’s wages are comparable to those of men.
- The quality and quantity of employment and earnings depend on skills and finance: youth are able to improve their employment and earnings over time (and change their activities) if they can accumulate both types of resources.
- Employment among formerly abducted women is moderately lower than that of non-abductees, although daily wages are little different. The employment gap, however, is unrelated to length of abduction, forced marriage, and childbearing in the bush.
- The most common economic activity reported by women is alcohol brewing and distilling, followed by agriculture.
- Brewing and distilling appears to be dominant because it is a relatively profitable and a low risk use of small amounts of capital on an activity which can be performed alongside childcare and household responsibilities.
- There is no correlation between brewing and distilling, an individual’s self-reported domestic abuse, and her husband’s alcohol consumption.

Education

- One in five female youth have received no education whatsoever, and only one in three are functionally literate. Forty three percent of women report complete inability to read or write and 60 percent say they are unable to read a book or newspaper.
- Under-education and illiteracy among older women is dramatic but they have few opportunities to ‘catch-up’.
- While the youngest women surveyed have levels of educational attainment, enrolment and literacy levels equivalent to that of their male peers it is much harder for females to move on to secondary school.
- Very few females have received any vocational training. Tailoring is the most common form of training offered, yet very few subsequently find opportunities to earn income from this skill.
- Orphans and former abductees have levels of education and literacy almost no different from their peers: however, this is not true of long-term abductees.
- Returning from the bush with children is associated with nearly a third less education: young women with children are mostly unable, disallowed, or unwilling to attend school.

War Violence and Abduction

- Males and females perpetrated violence at similar rates, although males reported a higher number of acts of violence.
- Levels of abduction are immense: more than a third of male youth and a fifth of female youth report abduction by the LRA.
- Abduction has been under-reported: we calculate that at least 66,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 30 were abducted.
- Females forced to become the wives of LRA members report significantly more overall violent events.
- Females were more likely than males to experience short abductions. However, once taken for more than several months, female abduction periods tended to be longer than those of males.
- Twenty per cent of abducted males and five per cent of females have not returned from abduction.
- Females performed vital combat and support roles within the LRA: most were not primarily used as 'sexual slaves'.

Forced Marriage and Motherhood within the LRA

- Forced marriages were perpetrated on a wide scale in LRA-controlled areas in northern Uganda and South Sudan.
- A quarter of abducted females were given to LRA fighters and commanders as forced wives.
- Nearly a half of LRA commanders had five or more forced wives: lower ranks averaged two forced wives.
- Half of all forced wives gave birth to children from these relationships.
- Females with children are significantly less likely than other abductees to return to formal education.
- Few forced wives are released by the LRA or rescued by the UPDF: 83 per cent organised their own escape.
- Half of those forced wives who had children entered reception centres.
- Nearly all formerly-forced wives are currently not living with their captor husbands and do not wish to be reunited with them.
- Most forced mothers undergoing traditional cleansing ceremonies say they been of little use in their recovery.

Psychosocial Well-being and Mental Health

- A small percentage of females experience disabling symptoms of emotional distress.
- Those who were forced wives and forced mothers in the LRA are more likely to report higher levels of distress than their abducted peers. This is explained by their increased exposure to violence during extended stays with the rebels.
- Girls and young women report being exposed to less types of measured war violence than males.
- While most females report positive family and community relationships, one in six report problematic relationships. Thirteen per cent report experiencing domestic violence by a family member or husband in the previous two months.

- On average, being abducted did not impact youth's overall social support or relationships with family and neighbors. Forced mothers did not report more problems with families or communities. However, if they did have problems, they were less likely to diminish over time.
- Sixty percent of women report that their husbands drink alcohol and over a third report their husbands are often drunk. The frequency of husband's intoxication is related to women's emotional distress

Health

- Seven percent of female youth report serious illness or injury.
- Thousands of injured females and males—both non-abducted and formerly-abducted—urgently need medical treatment.
- Nearly half of the health challenges reported by females are physical-illness related, with TB the most commonly reported condition.
- A quarter of female injuries are attributed to the conflict.
- Three-quarters of women believe that wearing a condom protects them from HIV/AIDS, but less than half actually use them.

Sexual and Domestic Violence

- Formerly-abducted females report experiencing more sexually violent events than non-abducted females.
- Forced wives and mothers experienced the highest rates of sexual violence.
- When female youth are physically threatened in the community, less than one percent seek assistance from an NGO or health care worker or a member of the Ugandan armed forces.
- Over two thirds of women believe that clan leaders or husbands do not have a right to beat them.
- Younger females show much lower rates of acceptance of violence against females.
- Over 80 percent of female youth say their husbands do not have a right to sex on demand.

Targeting

- Evidence from both phases of SWAY demonstrate that classic categories of need—abduction, forced motherhood, orphaning—are crude and poor predictors of vulnerability.
- Most abducted youth, including young mothers, are not rejected by their family and exhibit little evidence of disabling emotional distress. Resilience and acceptance rather than rejection or trauma is the norm.

Reintegration

- Two-thirds of formerly-abducted youth have not applied for formal amnesty or reintegration support packages.
- Programming for youth formerly-abducted by the LRA is insufficient to meet their needs.
- Most formerly-abducted youth primarily require support for education and livelihoods.

- Health services and psychosocial support for the most severely affected youth are grossly inadequate: a core group of highly-affected youth are left unaided.
- Large numbers of youth report difficulties with their families and communities when they first return home from abduction, yet for most these problems lessen over time.
- All youth are struggling and suffering due to war and displacement. Neither abduction itself nor specific abduction experiences are good predictors of vulnerability or types of need.

Key Recommendations

The evidence strongly suggests that the Ugandan government and NGOs should abandon crude targeting categories such as abduction, motherhood status, and orphans. Abduction status need not be a special category, determinant, or precondition of aid. Rather, assistance will be more effective if it is targeted to observable measurable needs: illiteracy, chronic unemployment, family estrangement, emotional distress, and serious injury and illness.

We urge policymakers to recognize that:

- Serious emotional distress and family estrangement are the exception rather than the norm among formerly abducted women, including long-term abductees, forced wives, and forced mothers. Returned young women are strong and resilient, not traumatized pariahs.
- Returned Ugandan youth also show no greater propensity for violence than never-abducted youth: in fact they are actually more likely to be active and productive citizens and leaders than never-abducted youth.
- The primary economic activity for youth has been, and will continue to be, agriculture and herding—off-farm micro-businesses may complement, but cannot substitute for, traditional livelihoods. Thus agriculture and enterprise development should be at the center, not the periphery, of assistance.
- Vulnerable young women, especially those with children or orphans to care for, are in most need of livelihoods assistance (including a significant number of single young mothers).
- Even modest amounts of start-up capital and training can help young women develop alternatives to alcohol brewing and distilling.
- All education initiatives should be tailored to meet the special needs of females, including the education gap and child care needs.
- Forced mothers with children born from captivity need education access and skills to offset missed education.
- Broad-based secondary school support—with focus on supporting war-affected females' transition from primary school—must be prioritized.
- Vocational training opportunities should be offered alongside alternatives, including secondary schooling and livelihoods support: women must not only be offered tailoring training.
- The experiences of forced wives go beyond 'sex slave': this simplistic classification perpetuates common misunderstandings which can lead to inappropriate responses in addressing their needs, particularly regarding mental health and stigma issues.
- Alternative education should be accelerated and age-appropriate, offered in afternoons or evenings, with opportunities for child care for young mothers.

- Family-based interventions are needed for those with family problems.
- War surgery and more specialized care are needed.
- Community and local law enforcement institutions must be enabled to appropriately respond to sexual and domestic violence.
- Use of cash in reinsertion packages must be well-planned: action is needed to prevent female cash recipients losing decision-making power over funds to husbands, brothers and fathers.
- Incorrect estimations on children suffering from grave violations during armed conflict are a global phenomenon. Governments and agencies fail to accurately collect data on, and monitor what is happening to, youth on the ground. However, correct data is necessary to inform and create policies or programs that respond to real needs.
- There is a need to take gender into account, from study design, to data collection, analysis, and program implementation. It is also important to appreciate that the age of youth matters and girls and boys experience conflict and its affects differently.

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SWAY team member interviewing young woman, Kitgum district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

I. SWAY Data and Methods

War and displacement in northern Uganda

Rebellion first sparked in northern Uganda in 1986 when rebels from the southern and central regions overthrew a government and army dominated by northern ethnic groups, including the Acholi. Several Acholi guerrilla forces initially resisted the takeover, but settled for peace or were defeated by 1988. A handful of these fighters refused to settle, however, and joined forces with Acholi spirit leader Joseph Kony to continue the fight. Kony was widely believed to possess great spiritual powers, and through armed rebellion sought to conquer Uganda, establish a theocratic state, and restore the Acholi to a position of prominence and power.

The LRA waged a brutal guerrilla war for two decades against the Government of Uganda and the Acholi citizenry. Between 1987 and 2006, nearly two million people would be displaced and impoverished, tens of thousands of youth would be kidnapped, and untold thousands would be killed. Unable to attract sufficient volunteers, LRA abducted tens of thousands of adolescents and young adults. The forced recruitment of boys

and girls as young as eleven is one of the more grotesque, and has become one of the most well-known, features of the war.¹

Several forces are pushing the war to a close. A weakened LRA drastically reduced its abductions and attacks in 2005. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Kony and four of his commanders later in that 2005. A formal ceasefire was reached in mid-2006, and negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the LRA began, brokered by the Government of Southern Sudan. At the writing of this report, a formal peace agreement was extremely close to being reached.

The families displaced by the LRA and the Government of Uganda are slowly returning to their rural homes, but the pace of return and reconstruction activities have been frustratingly slow.

The Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY)

Youth have been both the primary victims and the primary actors in war in northern Uganda. While we know that youth have suffered (and continue to do so), we have not been able to answer with confidence some crucial questions: who is suffering, how much, and in what ways? Moreover, while we know that youth made up the bulk of both victims and perpetrators, we have little sense of the magnitude, incidence, and nature of the violence, trauma, and suffering. The state of knowledge regarding women and girls is especially lacking.

One consequence of this lack of knowledge is that programming is often based on immediate and observable needs and possibly erroneous assumptions about who needs help and what sort of help ought to be provided. With only rough measures of well-being at our disposal, a second consequence is unavoidably crude targeting of services. Service providers are extremely conscious of the limitations of this approach, but in responding to the emergency have been unable to conduct the kind of evidence-based programming they would like to see. The purpose of SWAY is to work with field professionals to generate new and better programming based on in-depth data and investigation.

SWAY Phase I: Young Men and Boys

In 2005 and 2006 we conducted SWAY Phase I—a large-scale survey of 1,018 households and nearly 750 males aged 14-30 in the districts of Kitgum and Pader (see map on page ii). Extensive qualitative interviews were conducted alongside the quantitative survey, including in-depth interviews with more than 40 men and boys, their families, and other members of their communities.

SWAY Phase I produced several important and (in some cases) unexpected findings:

- Vulnerability and poverty are concentrated in a small core of young men with serious health, family, or material challenges, but these youth are not being targeted by NGOs for services in part because many of them do not fit traditional categories of vulnerability.
- The psychological impact of conflict on male youth is not as great as the material impact. There is not much evidence of widespread psychological trauma, and most victims of violence demonstrate resilience. Nevertheless, a small but significant minority exhibit serious symptoms of emotional distress.
- The economic consequences of war and displacement are the most prevalent and severe. Employment levels are low, and earnings abysmal. Economic livelihoods are the chief concern of most youth. The

¹ For a fuller account of the war see Okello (2002), Allen (2005), or Finnström (2008).

absence of livelihoods is primarily due to the loss of livestock and restricted access to land. Vocations and small businesses provide income supplements, not incomes.

- Illiteracy and low education is more common among those twenty years of age and older than among adolescents. Other difficulties, such as ill health, family conflicts, and emotional distress, are similar across both age groups.
- There is a substantial gap in well-being between formerly-abducted youth and the non-abducted. Abducted youth have three times the number of serious injuries, a year less education, 20-30 percent lower earnings, and a tendency to remain in low skill, risky occupations. Economic and educational impacts appear to be the most pervasive consequences of abduction, and disparities worsen with abduction length. Economic impacts are more acute for those abducted as young adults, rather than those taken as children.
- Fewer than half the abductees have passed through a reception center, suggesting that reliance on such centers as the primary mechanism of service delivery to the formerly-abducted has led to underestimates of the number of the abducted and under provision of needed services.

The Phase I findings challenged the paradigm of programming in the north and indicated an overemphasis on children and psychosocial programming. The evidence suggested the need for five principal policy changes, including:

- A reorientation from broad-based psychosocial assistance and community sensitization to more targeted psychosocial and conflict resolution support;
- medical treatment for the most seriously injured, especially those with serious war wounds;
- increased attention to the transition to secondary school;
- age-appropriate programming for young adults, in particular remedial and non-formal education; and
- an increased focus on economic redevelopment and rehabilitation, especially micro-enterprise development, livestock restocking, and (most importantly) a dramatic expansion of agricultural activity and productivity through land access and extension services.

Evidence from SWAY Phase I also suggested that, while the status of ‘formerly-abducted’ appears to be a meaningful predictor of vulnerability and poor well-being, more proximate indicators of need should be employed—including serious injuries, conflicts and lack of connection within the family, and illiteracy—for immediate targeting of assistance.

The full Phase I report is at: www.sway-uganda.org/SWAY.Phase1.FinalReport.pdf

Findings have not hitherto taken into account the war experiences of young women and girls. Although female economic opportunities, activities, and having agency have been identified by the girls and women themselves as key to their reintegration, these aspects have been understudied. Government and NGO officials admit that they have little sense of the true scale of the problem and the proportion of females facing particular vulnerabilities.

Scope and Purpose of SWAY Phase II: Women and Girls

Overall, SWAY aims to bring new data, tools, and analysis to the task of improving the design and targeting of youth protection, assistance, and reintegration programs in northern Uganda. Phase II of SWAY has four main objectives:

- to identify the long-term effects—as measured by social, psychological, economic, and health indicators—of abduction, war violence, forced marriage, and motherhood on young women and girls;
- to assess the nature, magnitude, and persistence of problems and resilience in the face of war, violence, and displacement;
- to compare and contrast the experiences of men, women, boys and girls; and
- to use this knowledge to improve the targeting and design of humanitarian assistance and protection initiatives for war-affected youth in northern Uganda.

Study data and methods

Phase II of SWAY employed two data collection methods in tandem: a large-scale quantitative survey of 619 young women and girls, and a series of in-depth, qualitative interviews with a sub-sample of survey respondents, their friends, community members, and family. The quantitative survey was conducted between January and June 2007, and the qualitative study between October 2006 and August 2007.

The interviews with male youth in late 2005 and early 2006 are in some cases used for comparison in this report. This section describes the study population, design, sampling, and delivery for both samples.

Study population

To understand the impacts of the war on youth, one cannot limit a study to current residents of IDP camps. To do so would omit youth that had moved to town, left the district, married away from home, died, or been abducted and never returned. Our population of interest were females born in our eight study areas before the escalation, between 1971 and 1992, and thus between 14 and 35 years of age at the time of the survey.²

Logistical and budgetary constraints confined the study to two of the Acholi districts: Kitgum and Pader. Within each district we selected four sub-counties, for a total of eight. While survey respondents would be randomly selected *within* sub-counties, security and logistical considerations prevented the random selection of locations. Sub-counties were instead selected to contain IDP camps old and new, large and small, distant and far from town, and with high and low levels of LRA activity. As a result, while we will be able to make statistical inferences about the populations of the eight camps under study, extrapolation to the remainder of the Acholi population must be done with some caution.

Eight sub-counties, or clusters, were selected for surveying: Akwang, Kitgum Matidi, Orom, and Palabek Gem in Kitgum; and Acholi Bur, Atanga, Pader, and Pajule in Pader. Table 1.1 lists the sample characteristics of each sub-county studied.

² Youth under the age of 14 were considered too different and challenging a population to survey without a specially designed instrument and approach.

Table 1.1: Average Household Characteristics in each Camp/sub-County

Characteristic	Acholibur	Akwang	Atanga	K.Matidi	Orom	Pader	Pajule	Palabek
Years household in camp	3.0	2.2	7.9	2.5	2.2	3.2	3.3	8.4
Household head a farmer	97%	82%	99%	84%	91%	91%	93%	89%
Household head a professional	2%	14%	0%	12%	6%	7%	6%	9%
Household head a soldier	1%	4%	1%	4%	4%	2%	1%	1%
Acres of land in 1996	27.1	30.4	25.3	22.9	21.0	25.2	26.7	22.6
Number of cattle in 1996	2.7	34.7	0.0	7.7	9.0	4.9	1.0	14.7
Number of other livestock in 1996	7.4	28.1	0.9	13.7	20.5	7.2	3.9	11.4
% pop in bottom 25% by assets	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4
% pop in top 25% by assets	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.3
% youth male	56%	54%	54%	55%	52%	55%	49%	53%
% youth staying in IDP camp	54%	62%	48%	64%	62%	64%	55%	62%
Avg yrs education (Male youth)	6.1	7.1	7.4	6.1	6.5	6.7	7.4	6.3
Avg yrs education (Female youth)	3.8	5.6	5.4	3.6	4.0	4.5	5.5	3.9
% males 18 to 30 in military	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.07
% youth abducted three days or longer	0.46	0.50	0.41	0.18	0.42	0.52	0.35	0.24
% youth died since 1996	19%	18%	15%	14%	23%	20%	11%	13%

Study design

The study was designed to assess retrospective war and violence experiences as well as current well-being. The quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were developed after several months of field work in the region, including hundreds of youth interviews and extensive consultations with community leaders, psychosocial counselors, youth groups, youth leaders, staff of aid agencies, and other researchers.

In the quantitative survey, war experiences were assessed in two main ways. First, detailed information was collected about any time spent with the LRA, including: time, place, duration, nature of the abduction; experiences as a forced wife or mother to children in the bush; initiation ceremonies; the respondent's roles and responsibilities, rank and promotion; methods of control and discipline; and, finally, experiences with family, community, and NGOs upon return. Second, respondents completed a checklist of war experiences with an interviewer based on a version of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire³ that was adapted to local circumstances by the researchers.

In assessing well-being, the survey takes a multidimensional approach, covering economic activity, physical and mental health, community participation, social support, and risky behavior. Several prior studies of psychosocial well-being in northern Uganda were drawn upon extensively for development of the instrument.⁴ Copies of the survey questionnaires are available at www.sway-uganda.org/Survey.SWAYII.English.Final.doc.

³ Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (1998) (www.hprrt-cambridge.org)

⁴ Catholic Relief Services (2001), Loughry and MacMullin (2002), and Williams, Obonyo and Annan (2001).

Description of the sample

For the survey, youth were randomly chosen so as to be representative of the sub-county populations. Selection occurred in two stages.

In the first stage, roughly 1,100 households (approximately 140 per sub-county) were selected randomly from World Food Program distribution lists created in 2002 and 2003. Each household had a probability of selection proportional to the number of people listed in its household.

A roster of youth living in the household was developed with household members, including information on each household member's age, mortality, and abduction history, and each youth's present occupation, location, and education. In order to obtain a random sample of youth living in the region prior to the escalation of conflict (in the mid-1990s) the household roster completed was a retrospective one; households were asked to recall all youth living in their household in 1996—a year easily recalled by household heads as that of the first national election since 1980.

In the second stage, a random sample of youth was selected from the 1996 household rosters to be followed up and surveyed.⁵ In total 881 surviving males were sampled in Phase I and 857 surviving females were sampled in Phase II. When households or youth had migrated, every effort was made to track them to their new home.

In Phase II, of the female youth (aged 14 to 35) identified in these household rosters, 857 were selected for in-depth interviewing, of which 619 were located—an attrition rate of 28 percent. In Phase I, of the male youth identified in these household rosters, 881 were selected for in-depth interviewing, of which 741 were located—an attrition rate of 16 percent. Attrition rates were lower among males because the follow-up was conducted closer to the date of the household survey and before the process of return and resettlement began.

In each round, a sub-sample of more than 30 youth was selected non-randomly for in-depth qualitative interviews, as well as interviews with their family, friends, neighbors, and teachers.

Survey protocols

Seven highly trained research assistants—each a university-educated Acholi woman—delivered the questionnaires over a six-month period (January to June) in camps, barracks, towns, villages, and cities around Uganda. A small team was employed in order to assure the quality of data and the sensitivity of team members to the youth interviewed and the topics covered.

Migrants were tracked to their new locations. Selected youth who could not be tracked were not replaced. Rather, their household was interviewed for relevant information about the youth, and the survey results have been re-weighted to reflect any bias from this sample attrition. Of the 140 youth who were not interviewed, we collected such information on 129.

One obvious limitation of the survey is recall error on the part of the respondents. A further limitation is that we did not have a pre-war census of households with which to work, and thus would have missed any households that have left the region en masse.

⁵ This second stage of sampling was stratified by sub-county and abduction experience to ensure a minimum number of formerly abducted respondents. All figures reported, however, have been reweighted to reflect the actual distribution of abductees in the population.



A woman sells produce at a northern Uganda market. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

II. Livelihoods

Economic activity in northern Uganda remains low, and improving the number and profitability of income-generating opportunities is the chief priority of most young men and women. The principal economic challenges facing most youth are shortages of skills, working capital, and productive assets such as oxen, farm or business equipment. Given the meagre opportunities available, livelihoods development should be the chief priority of government and humanitarian agencies, with a special focus on agriculture. Key findings include the following:

- Incomes and employment reported by young women are extremely low—most work less than two days a week and earn less than 1,250 Uganda shillings (c. US\$0.75) a day.
- Women's wages are comparable to those of men.
- The quality and quantity of employment and earnings depend on skills and finance: youth are able to improve their employment and earnings over time (and change their activities) if they can accumulate both types of resources.

- Employment among formerly abducted women is moderately lower than that of non-abductees, although daily wages are little different. The employment gap, however, is unrelated to length of abduction, forced marriage, and childbearing in the bush.
- The most common economic activity reported by women is alcohol brewing and distilling, followed by agriculture.
- Brewing and distilling appears to be dominant because it is a relatively profitable and a low risk use of small amounts of capital on an activity which can be performed alongside childcare and household responsibilities.
- There is no correlation between brewing and distilling, an individual's self-reported domestic abuse, and her husband's alcohol consumption.

Summary statistics for women's economic activities are reported in Table 2.1 below.⁶ Figures are given for all females in the sample, as well as for those not presently enrolled in school (representing 77 percent of all respondents). These summary statistics will be referred to throughout this section.

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics

	All females aged 14 to 35	All females not enrolled in school
Neither in school nor working	10%	14%
Neither in school nor working nor performing household chores	2%	2%
Average gross monthly earnings (Ush)	16,337	20,092
Reported zero earnings in past month	26%	17%
Average daily gross earnings, or daily wage (Ush)	2,249	2,325
Has any employment other than household chores	80%	86%
Has any cash-earning employment other than household chores	51%	58%
Average number of days (per month) of work in household chores	22.8	23.7
Average number of days of work (excluding household chores)	10.4	12.0
Average number of days of work where cash was earned	5.4	6.4
Engaged in any brewing in past 4 weeks	42%	50%
Has access to at least one plot of land	82%	84%
Average acres of land (including zeros)	6.2	5.7

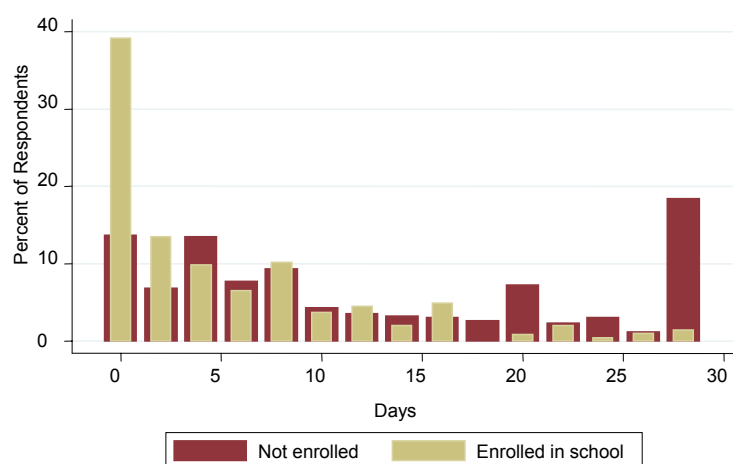
⁶ A few aspects of the data and analysis are worth noting. First, economic activities vary by season. The survey was conducted during the long dry season (between January and May, with the majority of interviews taking place between January and March). Thus levels and types of economic activity may not reflect average activities over the full year. In particular, agricultural activities may be under-represented, and non-income generating activities over-represented. Second, in general we will not make comparisons with economic activities of the young men interviewed in 2005/06. Men were interviewed during a different season (largely between September and February) and at a time when rebel insecurity inhibited access to land. By 2007, security conditions had improved, allowing easier population movement and access to land. Since livelihoods are so variable over time, any comparisons of employment or income levels would likely be meaningless. Wage comparisons may carry some information, but any such comparisons should be taken with great caution.

Low incomes and employment

Young women engage in few economic activities other than household chores. These chores—cleaning, cooking, water collection, washing, and caring for dependents—dominate time use. Women report that on average they are engaged in chores (including fetching water, cleaning, or minding children and elders) six days a week for six hours a day.

Income-generating activities occupy less time and are irregular. Figure 2.1 displays the distribution of days worked in the four weeks prior to the interview for young women both enrolled and not enrolled in school. We define a day of employment as any form of economic activity other than household chores and child care, regardless of whether any cash is earned or whether the entire day is worked. Thus employment includes non-cash earning activities such as fuel collection, animal care, and subsistence agriculture. Among young women not currently enrolled in school, 14 percent reported no days of employment in the past four weeks, and half reported eight or fewer days of employment. Only 17 percent were employed on a daily basis. When employed in an economic activity, women generally reported an average of six hours work/day.

Figure 2.1 Distribution of Days Worked in the Month by School Enrolment: All Females, Excluding Household Chores



As a consequence of these low levels of employment, women's earnings are extremely low. Figure 2.2 displays the distribution of gross earnings reported by respondents in the four weeks prior to interview.⁷ On average, young women not enrolled in school reported earnings of just USH20,092 (approximately US\$12) in the previous four weeks. This average, moreover, is skewed upwards by a small handful of relatively high income-earners. At the median, these young women reported monthly earnings of just USH13,000 (approximately US\$7.60).⁸ Note, however, that the survey was conducted during the dry season and is not representative of average earnings over the year. In particular, dry season earnings are likely to be low and irregular, especially for those engaged in agriculture where income arrives only at harvest time.

⁷ The distributions of earnings and wages in these figures are 'top-coded' for ease of display. For instance, in the distribution of earnings, all those who reported earnings greater than USH 100,000 are displayed in the bar at 100,000 (rather than displaying the 'long tail'). Similarly, wages greater than 16,000 are top-coded at 16,000. All calculations in tables and the text, however, use actual, and not top-coded, earnings and wage figures.

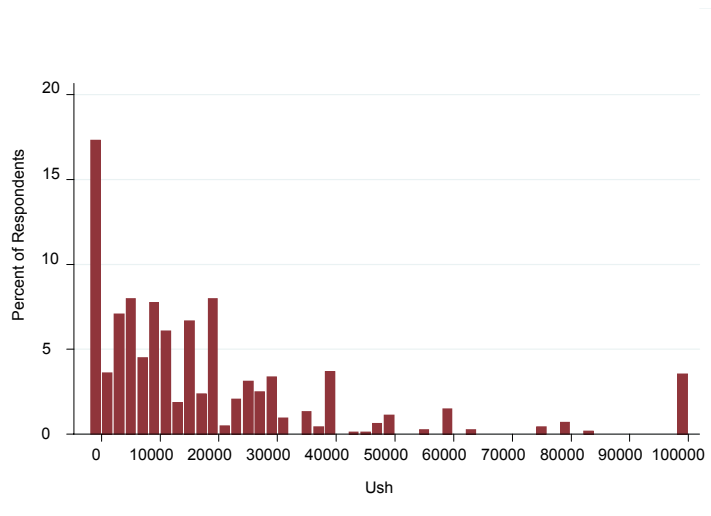
⁸ The measure of earnings in the survey has some important limitations that should be noted. Calculation of exact net earnings (revenues minus any costs of inputs) is extremely difficult and time-consuming to obtain in a survey instrument, and so respondents were simply asked their earnings in the previous four weeks and one week. Not only is this a noisy and error-prone measure, but it also may confuse gross with net earnings. As a very rough indicator of cash inflow and economic activity, however, this measure is probably adequate. It is not an indicator of average consumption or income levels over the year, however, and should not be used on its own as a measure or proxy for poverty.

Earnings are low not simply because opportunities are few, but also because wages and returns are poor. An approximate gross daily income can be calculated by dividing monthly income by days employed. The distribution of these ‘wages’ is displayed in Figure 2.3. The average woman out of school earned just USH 2,325 (c.US\$1.30) per day. This average, moreover, is skewed upwards by a small handful of relatively high wage-earners. At the median, the daily wage is a scant USH 1,250 shillings (c.US\$0.75).

Women’s wages comparable to those of men

Interestingly, these employment levels, earnings, and wages are roughly similar to that of the young men interviewed in 2005 and 2006. The median young man reported being employed seven days in the previous four weeks, earned USH 9,000 shillings in total, at an average of 1,000 shillings per day of work—all figures lower than that reported by women.

Figure 2.2 Distribution of Monthly Gross Earnings: All Female Correspondents Not Currently Enrolled in School



A lower level of days employed and earnings in 2005 and 2006 may be expected, since economic activity was undoubtedly more constrained at the time because of insecurity. Comparisons of earnings and employment between the sample of males and females are thus unreliable. A comparison of wages may be more justifiable, however, since it adjusts for lower levels of economic activity and should give some sense of relative productivity. While we should hesitate to take any male-female comparison across time too seriously, the fact that female wages are higher than that reported by males suggests

that they may be economically disadvantaged in absolute, but not relative, terms. It may be that women’s economic activities are just as productive and profitable as that of men’s, but lower in quantity.

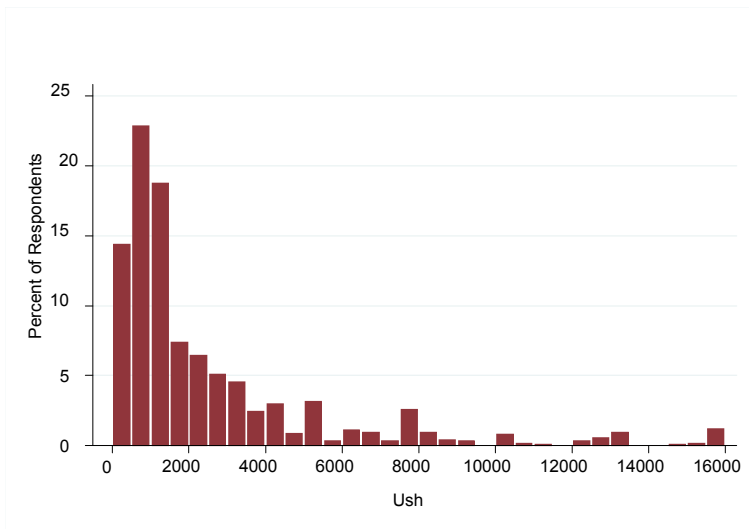
The impact of abduction on livelihoods

Abduction appears to have had an adverse impact on the quantity of employment available to women and, as a consequence, diminishes their gross income. Formerly-abducted women reported approximately 25 percent fewer days of employment outside the home.⁹ Formerly-abducted women are no more likely to have been completely unemployed in the previous four weeks, however, and they report similar wages to that of non-abducted women. Moreover, former abductees are just as likely (or, more accurately, just as unlikely) to be engaged in skilled economic activities. Thus, for women, abduction seems to be associated with a decrease in the quantity of employment but not the quality.

⁹ Technical note: Each of the major employment outcomes was regressed on an abduction indicator and a set of controls, including year and location of birth and a set of pre-war household characteristics. As discussed in the Education section, abduction appears to be indistinguishable from random, conditional on age and location of birth. If true, then the regression coefficient on abduction can be given a causal interpretation. For a more thorough statistical discussion and tests of this proposition, see Blattman and Annan (2007).

This finding is striking, in part because, among young men, abduction appeared to have the opposite effect—it diminished the quality but not the quantity of employment. Abducted young men appear to have been engaged in less skilled and less productive work on average as a result of time away from formal education and workplace experience. Thus, while just as likely to be employed, they were half as likely to be engaged in skilled work and earned a third lower daily wages (see Annan et al., 2006; Blattman and Annan, 2007).

Figure 2.3 Distribution of Average Daily Gross Earnings: All Females with non-zero Earnings and Enrolled in School



Even more unusual is that the employment gap between abducted and non-abducted women does not appear to vary with the length of abduction, nor with having been a forced wife or returning with children. That is, the employment gap is steady among all abducted women, regardless of their experience. None of the other employment and income measures vary with these abduction experiences either. Finally, the gap does not appear to be explained by differences in education, health, emotional distress, current assets or other observable characteristics. The employment gap between abducted and non-abducted women is thus somewhat of a mystery.¹⁰

Employment and earnings are dependent on skills and finance

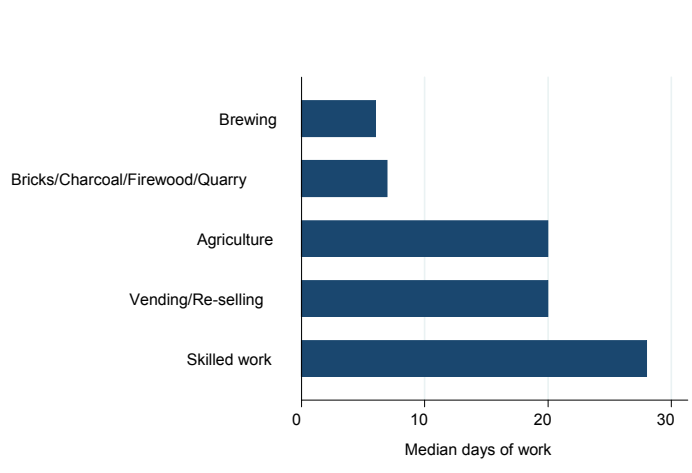
Among women as well as men, we found that youth follow strikingly similar patterns of occupational choice and advancement over time and place. To obtain regular employment and a reasonable income, most young men and women begin with unskilled activities requiring little cash and few inputs. As their skills and capital accumulate, they move to more skill- and capital-intensive (and generally more profitable) activities.

Activities vary dramatically in the skills, capital, and inputs required. Activities such as firewood collection, quarrying, or agricultural labor require no starting capital or skills. Farming, charcoal-burning, brewing, distilling, and vending require some small working capital to purchase or produce inputs and equipment, and well as minor skills and knowledge. More capital-intensive activities include brick-making or the opening of a small kiosk. Most capital and skill intensive of all, of course, are the professions, vocations, and small businesses—each of which require significant literacy, skills, and capital.

¹⁰ One possible explanation is that abducted women are different in unobserved ways, and were less likely to be employed in the first place. For instance, those abducted might be those with the least resourcefulness and initiative. If true, the relationship between abduction and employment (indeed, between abduction and all outcomes) would be a spurious and non-causal one. However, if this were so, we would probably expect to see some of the impact of abduction on employment moderated by the inclusion of things that should be associated with such unobserved characteristics, from wealth to education. We might also expect to see a relationship between abduction and pre-war characteristics such as mother's education or household wealth. Yet we do not.

Many households engage in petty trade in order to acquire cash to meet basic needs, supplement their diets and pay school fees. Firewood and charcoal appear to be the most common items sold in the dry season, and wild greens and seasonal fruits are the most common rainy season items (Stites, Mazurana, & Carlson, 2006). Brewing and distilling alcohol is a dominant activity among women—42 percent of the women we interviewed who are not currently in school engaged in brewing and distilling in the four weeks prior to interview.

Figure 2.4 Days Worked, by Main Occupation Reported: All Females, not Enrolled in School



The most common livelihood strategy appears to be to generate small amounts of financial capital through casual labor, and then to invest this and enormous amounts of further labor into generating still greater financial capital, to be used for food, health and education expenses, or (in some cases) into a more profitable micro-enterprise or vocation.

Capital not only increases productivity and returns, but also increases the *quantity* of employment. Figure 2.4 displays the average number of days worked by young women by their main occupation. We see that those with capital for producing food or for re-selling items, and especially those with the skills and capital for a vocation,

are those with the highest levels of employment. Thus vocations and micro-enterprises raise total incomes in two ways—both in the number of days and the profitability of each day.

Education is associated with higher earnings, but not greater employment—that is, education increases the quality and returns to work but not the quantity of work.¹¹ Pre-war household wealth and current levels of land and capital are much better predictors of employment, but are less associated with earnings. These patterns suggest that education provides the opportunity for high-productivity (and thus high-wage) work, but that financial capital is required to make this higher wage work sustainable and regular.

Further insights are available from a 2006 study by some of the authors of this report (Stites et al., 2006). First, land access is central to achieving a degree of self-sufficiency. Land access seems to have increased dramatically in comparison with young men interviewed in Phase I of SWAY; currently, 82 percent of households report access to at least a small plot of land (Table 2.2). Yet the total land available—an average of 7.6 acres among those reporting any land—is severely underutilized. As interviews were conducted during the dry season, we cannot speak to levels of land utilization during the wet season. However, interviews suggest that most households are only able to cultivate a small fraction of accessible land due to the insufficiency of oxen, tools and other inputs. The need to clear and till fallow land by hand is a chief constraint on future agricultural productivity.

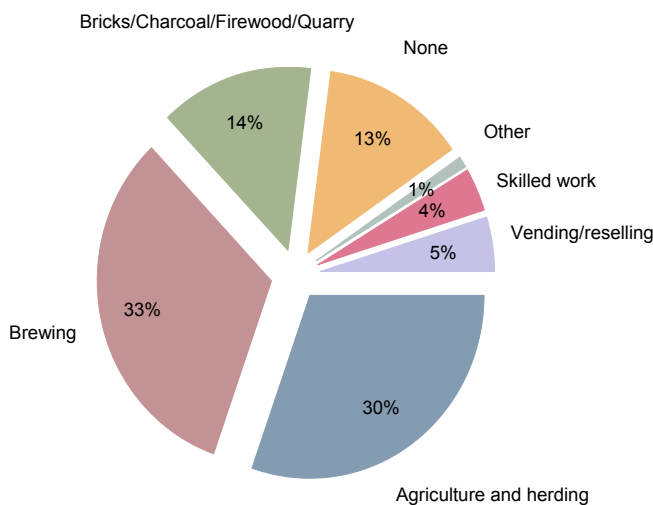
¹¹ The relationship between education and labor market success may of course also be an indicator of ability and individual industriousness. Thus education and earnings are correlated in part because they are driven by these unobserved factors and not simply because education causes higher productivity and earnings. Thus the correlation between education and earnings must be interpreted with caution. That education favors wages and not employment, however, suggests that causal link from education to earnings is (not surprisingly) strong, and may even be dominant.

Second, a lack of starting capital retards the development of more advanced and profitable livelihoods. Table 2.2 indicates the percentage of households reporting ownership of 13 main types of assets, as well as the average number owned (among those households reporting any). Less than a third of households own relatively inexpensive assets, like radios and bicycles. Livestock ownership is miserable: nine percent own fowl; seven percent own pigs, goats, or sheep; and four percent own cattle. The absence of durable assets limits production and severely limits the ability of households to cope in times of hardship.

Table 2.2 Household Assets

	Household has any?	How many (if >0)?
Jerry cans	100%	2.5
Plates	99%	7.4
Wash basins	99%	1.6
Chairs	71%	2.7
Mattresses	47%	1.4
Bicycles	33%	1.1
Radios	29%	1.1
Mobile phones	9%	1.2
Fowl	9%	4.2
Pigs, goats or sheep	7%	3.0
Cattle or oxen	4%	6.4
Ox ploughs	2%	1.1
Acres of land	82%	7.6

Figure 2.5 Main Occupation Outside the Home: Females Aged 14-35 not Currently Enrolled in School



Finally, market opportunities for inhabitants of the camps and semi-settled villages remain limited, and outside traders (as well as, in some cases, a small local elite) appear to be the primary beneficiaries of market transactions, most probably because of their unique access to capital.

Brewing and distilling the primary economic activity among women

While total economic activity is modest, most women are engaged in multiple small occupations, especially brewing beer, distilling alcohol, and agriculture. Figure 2.5 displays the main occupations reported by our respondents—that is, of all of their activities, the one that occupied the most days in the previous four weeks. Note that 13 percent of young women not in school report no occupation outside of household chores.

Incredibly, 42 percent of women report engaging in brewing and distilling activities during the previous four weeks and for a third of all women it was their primary activity. Brewing and distilling even dominates all agriculture and herding activities combined (although this could be due to the fact that interviews were conducted in dry season). Only four percent report engaging in skilled work, such as tailoring or some other vocation.

Figure 2.6 breaks down main occupations further, also looking only at women who are employed (i.e., dropping the 13 percent who did not report economic activities

other than chores). Common activities other than brewing and distilling and agriculture include firewood collection (both for home use and sale) followed distantly by reselling food and household items.

Why are brewing and distilling ubiquitous?

Brewing and distilling alcohol requires little skill and only small amounts of starting capital to purchase the foodstuff and yeast, and to rent (or buy) the pots and distilling equipment. Women commonly reported engaging in paid agricultural work, casual labor, or the collection and selling of firewood to earn such funds. From one respondent:

Q. What else were you doing to help you generate some income?

A. I was brewing alcohol.

Q. I see many girls brewing for money. Is it not expensive to purchase some of these materials?

A. At times it is difficult to get for buying yeast or flour, but I collect firewood myself [for purchasing the materials].

Indeed, brewing and distilling is least common among the poorest women in our sample, most likely because they cannot afford the cost of inputs and equipment. It is women with moderate although still minor incomes—not the poorest and not those engaged in micro-enterprises and vocations—that appear most likely to brew.

The use of casual labor to enable brewing and distilling activities suggests its profitability relative to these activities. Profits still appear to be quite meagre, and revenues appear to exceed the cost of inputs only because many of these inputs can be exchanged for labor rather than purchased with cash. This study did not include a detailed analysis of the relative profitability of different economic activities. However, by its frequency among women with small amounts of capital, we may infer that it is among the highest-return activities when small amounts of capital are available.

In addition to being high in relative return, brewing and distilling also has the virtue of being a relatively low risk activity. Our interviews with brewers suggest that both the quality and quantity of the end product is predictable and stable, with little likelihood of spoilage (especially when spirits rather than beer are produced). Prices and demand appear to be quite stable, and so profits are similarly predictable. The time from investment to production and sale is also quite short (usually only a few days), reducing uncertainty and generating a rapid return.

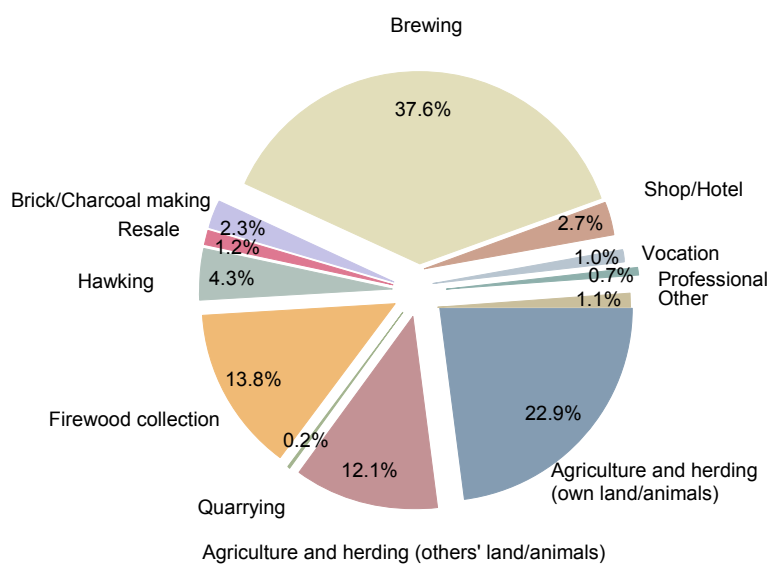
Brewing and distilling can also be conducted in tandem with a woman's other responsibilities. It can be performed in the hot afternoons (when farming is impractical or uncomfortable) or in dry season when few agricultural opportunities are available. Perhaps more importantly, time spent brewing and distilling can be combined and interspersed with household chores and childcare. Like vending items or running a home enterprise, it is easy to multi-task, but requires less capital.

Brewing and distilling also creates a flow of cash and profits from men to women. Women even commonly reported making their husbands pay for any of the product they consumed. There were also some indications that men do not demand brewing and distilling profits from women—that unlike other forms of household income, money earned from brewing and distilling is the woman's to spend. While the truth of this statement needs to be explored further, it may indicate that brewing and distilling *offers a relatively greater source of*

empowerment for women than other activities. Indeed, we found that it was not the activity itself, but the generation of income that was associated with greater decision-making power among women.

Brewing and distilling is, in fact, one of the few ways women can obtain cash at all—cash that is necessary for buying different foods, paying health and education fees, and even for engaging in more capital-intensive and profitable economic activities. As one woman noted: “I brew everyday but it doesn’t bring much money. It is just to get some money to hire help in the garden.”

Figure 2.6 Main Occupation Outside the Home (if Employed): Females Aged 14-35 Not Currently Enrolled in School



Are brewing and distilling associated with violence?

Brewing and distilling are typically viewed as undesirable activities both by local peoples and by government and humanitarian agencies. Naturally it is seen as an unproductive use of household resources. Probably more importantly, it is viewed as a source of violence and unrest (Mazurana & Carlson, 2006). Such violence or unrest may even come back to the brewer herself, via domestic violence or by assault from drunken customers. Young and unmarried women that brew may be particularly at risk. From an interview with one respondent:

Q Have you experienced any difficulty with men who come to drink from you?

A. Yes, at times they disturbed me. In particularly, one tried to rape me, but I reported the case to my uncle who solved it.

Q. You said your uncle solved the case. So how did he solve it?

A. Well, my uncle wanted me to marry the man. But I refused, and that is why he refused to pay my school fees.

Alcohol abuse and violence are indeed common. Half of all married women reported that their husbands take alcohol and (at least sometimes) become drunk. A fifth says that such drunkenness occurs ‘often’. Meanwhile, approximately one in eight women reported at least one incidence of domestic abuse in the previous two months.

Alcohol and violence are also closely tied. Women who reported frequent drunkenness by their husbands were 50 percent more likely than other married women to report an incident of domestic abuse.

Surprisingly, however, women who brew are no more likely to report alcohol consumption and drunkenness by their husbands, and are no more likely to say they were abused.¹² One explanation is that brewing and distilling raise drunkenness and abuse at the community level, but do not raise the risk of abuse within the household because of the easy availability of alcohol elsewhere. Alcohol and violence may thus represent a collective action problem in Acholi camps and villages.¹³

How might brewing and distilling be reduced? Above we argued that women use brewing and distilling as a means to generate cash for still more capital-intensive activities. This finding suggests that, were women to have larger amounts of capital made available to them, that they might forego brewing and distilling activities for more cash-intensive and profitable activities.

¹² While these results suggest that in-house brewing and distilling does not significantly raise the risk of drunkenness or domestic abuse, we should emphasize that the evidence is not conclusive. For instance, women whose husbands are most likely to abuse them may tend to choose other activities than brewing and distilling. If this were the case, the observed correlation between brewing and distilling and abuse would be lower than the underlying true association.

¹³ Widespread brewing and distilling may raise overall levels of domestic abuse, making it in women's common interest to reduce or cease the activity. Yet difficulties of coordination, and the availability of outside alcohol, could make such a coordinated outcome difficult to sustain. Consider the evidence above, which suggests that brewing and distilling profits are privately kept, but that the costs and risks of alcohol consumption (i.e. abuse) are borne by others, potentially in the form of violence against women and children linked to over-consumption of alcohol. If so, these social costs may not factor into a woman's private decision to brew, even though all women could potentially be better-off if none brewed. This situation resembles a classic coordination and commitment problem commonly referred to as the Collective Action Problem. While all women could be better-off if none brewed, each faces a strong incentive to deviate from any such coordinated solution, since she can increase her profits without having to bear the full costs and risks of the consumption of that alcohol. This is especially the case if outside alcohol is available, since a coordinated decision not to brew has few gains. Solutions to the Collective Action Problem typically take one of two forms: an externally-imposed penalty to discourage the action (e.g. from a secular authority, fines; condemnation); or a collective, internally-imposed, and self-enforcing compact to penalize (e.g. through social pressure). The important point is that any 'solution' to the brewing and distilling 'problem' will need to address the incentives that promote brewing and distilling and the absence of active social mechanisms to discourage it.



School girls, Gulu district. (Photograph by Lindsay Stark)

III. Education

The primary school system in northern Uganda is achieving high levels of enrolment and basic literacy among adolescents, both male and female. The main educational challenges facing young women are adult illiteracy and (for those presently enrolled) managing the transition to secondary school. Each of these challenges is shared with young men, but they are arguably more acute for young women.¹⁴ Key findings include the following:

¹⁴ Gender comparisons must be made with caution since male and female youth were interviewed in different years. Since education and illiteracy accumulate over time (and fluctuate relatively little) we may be confident in the comparison of the SWAY I and II samples. Characteristics such as current school enrolment are more variable, however, and so comparisons must be made with more caution. Also note that, unlike the survey of males, the survey of females included those aged 31 to 35. In order to make meaningful comparisons between young men and women, females over age 30 are dropped from the education analysis unless otherwise noted.

- One in five female youth have received no education whatsoever, and only one in three are functionally literate. Forty three percent of women report complete inability to read or write and 60 percent say they are unable to read a book or newspaper.
- Under-education and illiteracy among older women is dramatic but they have few opportunities to ‘catch-up’.
- While the youngest women surveyed have levels of educational attainment, enrolment and literacy levels equivalent to that of their male peers it is much harder for females to move on to secondary school.
- Very few females have received any vocational training. Tailoring is the most common form of training offered, yet very few subsequently find opportunities to earn income from this skill.
- Orphans and former abductees have levels of education and literacy almost no different from their peers: however, this is not true of long-term abductees.
- Returning from the bush with children is associated with nearly a third less education: young women with children are mostly unable, disallowed, or unwilling to attend school.

Summary statistics for men’s and women’s education are reported in Table 3.1 below. These summary statistics will be referred to throughout this section.

Table 3.1: Summary Statistics

	Males (2005/06)	Females (2007)
Illiterate (unable to read or write at all)	11%	43%
Able to read a book or newspaper	71%	40%
Average years of education (among all)	7.0	4.9
Average years of education (among those ever enrolled)	7.1	6.1
Never attended school	1%	19%
Never attended school (if currently under 18)	0%	4%
Currently enrolled (if under 18)	90%	74%
Dropped out of primary school	19%	45%
Dropped out of secondary school	31%	43%
Ever attended university	0.6%	0.3%
Ever received vocational training	19%	6%
Completed grade 7	53%	33%
Made transition to secondary school (of grade 7 graduates)	76%	73%

Low levels of education and literacy

Nineteen percent of women aged 14 to 30 reported that they have never attended school, compared to just one percent of males the same age. Figure 3.1 displays the distribution of educational attainment (i.e. highest level of education completed) for men and women.¹⁵

¹⁵ This measure of education includes years of vocational and post-secondary training in addition to primary and secondary school.

We see that young women who did attend primary school were more likely to drop out than young males. Among youth who completed their first grade, 45 percent of females failed to complete seventh grade compared to 19 percent of males (excluding those youth currently enrolled).

The result of this under-education is that young women have had only 4.9 years of schooling on average, compared to 7.0 for young men. Even if limit our analysis to youth who completed at least the first grade, females lag a whole year behind males on average.

Low enrolment and early dropout has had dire consequences for female literacy. Reading and writing skills are typically developed in the later primary grades, especially 6 and 7. In rural areas and camps, the early years of primary school appear to confer few skills. Thus 43 percent of women report currently that they are unable to read or write at all, and 60 percent are unable to read a book or newspaper (what we deem ‘functional illiteracy’). In comparison, males report just one quarter the rate of complete illiteracy, and half the rate of functional illiteracy.

Figure 3.1 Distribution of Educational Attainment by Gender (Females Interviewed in 2008, Males in 2005/2006)

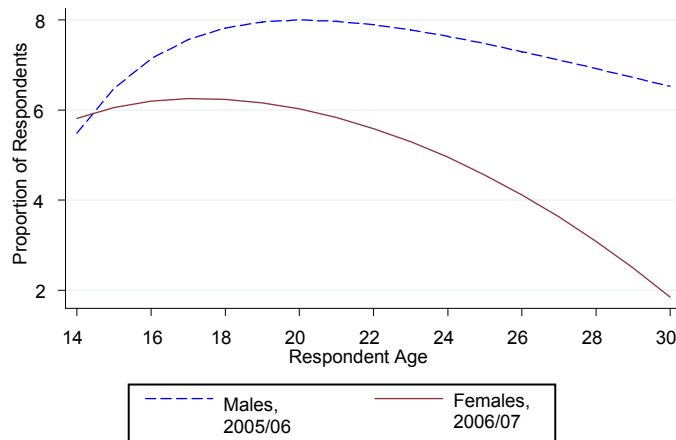
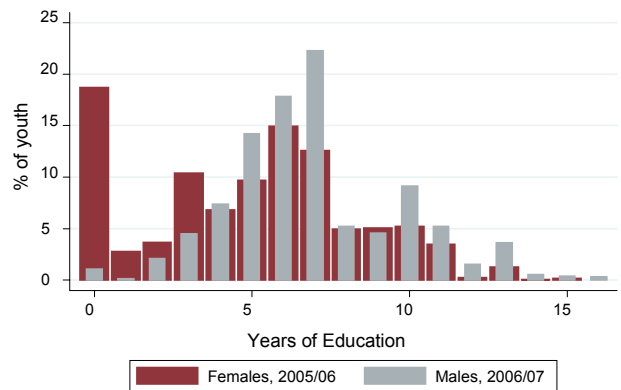


Figure 3.2 Average Educational Attainment for Young Males and Females: by Age of Respondent



Education and literacy gap driven by older cohort

The education and literacy gap we see, however, may be ‘historic’, as it is driven almost entirely by gaps between adult men and women. Figures 3.2 through 3.5 display levels of educational attainment, functional literacy, any literacy, and current school enrolment by current age. All four measures fall steeply with female age—far more steeply than for males.

Under-education and illiteracy among older women is dramatic. Among women aged 26 to 30 in our sample, 38 percent have never attended school, only 18 percent can read a book or a newspaper, and none have attended university.

Figure 3.3 Reports Being Able to Read a Newspaper (by Age of Respondent)

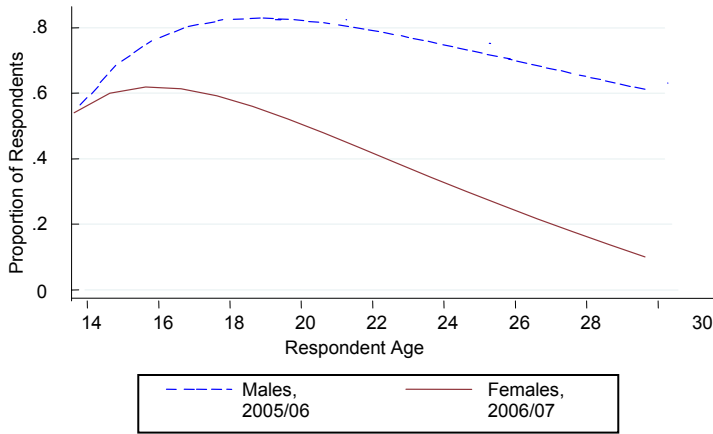


Figure 3.4 Reports Being Able to Read or Write at All (by Age of Respondent)

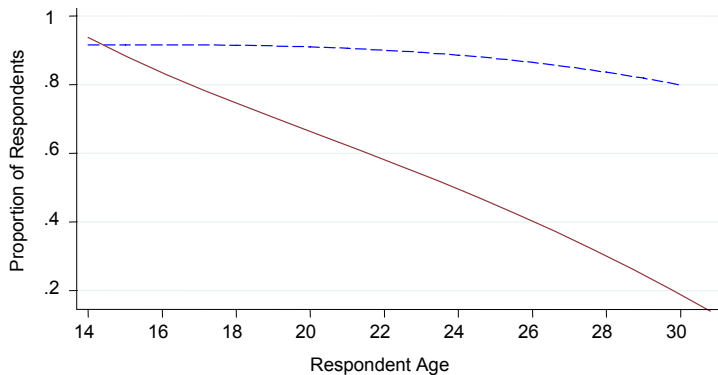
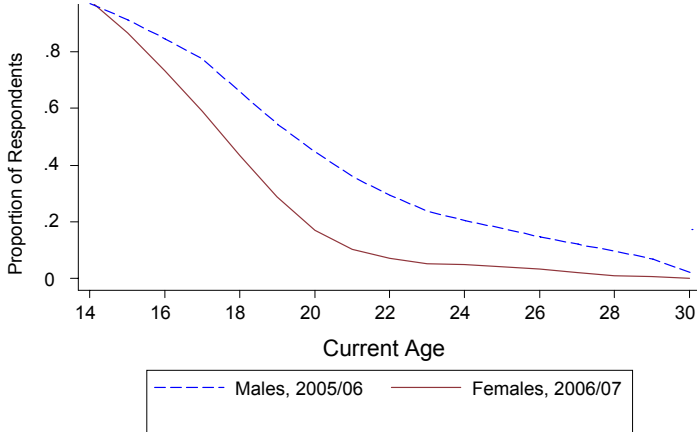


Figure 3.5 Proportion Enrolled in School (by Age of Respondent)



improved educational position of young women (and explains the large educational gap between older men and women). To build on this positive trend in enrolment, it seems important to encourage regular attendance and improve the quality of education provided.

Unfortunately, there are few opportunities for these young adult women to 'catch-up' in literacy or education. Only a small number of adult learning programs exist, and fewer still (if any) offer accelerated learning. Just seven of the 619 women interviewed (or roughly one percent of women aged 16 to 30) reported having enrolled in an adult learning program (programs that are generally designed to provide primary school equivalency, especially literacy and numeracy).

Two of the women had no formal education, while the other five had completed up to fourth to sixth grade before dropping out. Just two women's programs were paid for by an NGO. These programs are generally two years in length, and nearly all are recent, e.g., all respondents had just completed the program as of 2006 or were still enrolled at the time of interview.

In contrast, the education and literacy gap is smaller, and perhaps closing, for the youngest women surveyed. Among women under 18, only five percent have never attended primary school, and 74 percent are currently enrolled in school.

In fact, girls who are currently aged 14 report levels of education and literacy that are not only high, but also equal to that of boys of the same age (at the time the boys were interviewed in 2005 and 2006). All 14-year-old boys interviewed and 96 percent of the 14-year-old girls reported that they were currently enrolled in school.

Efforts towards improving attitudes towards girls' education, economic opportunities for the skilled, and reducing idleness in camps have undoubtedly contributed to high levels of adolescent enrolment. The provision of free and universal primary education beginning in 1997, however, has likely contributed to the

Difficulties transitioning to secondary school

Parity in education and literacy between 14-year old boys and girls is an important achievement, but the data suggest that this parity may not persist. Figures 3.2 through 3.5 suggest that this young generation of adolescent women likely face difficulties making the transition to secondary school.

In Figures 3.2 and 3.3 we see that educational attainment and literacy is climbing among young men aged 14 to 19, suggesting that they have been remaining in school and improving their skills. Not so for young women, whose education and literacy appears to level off after age 14.

While the literacy and educational attainment of current 17-year-olds is not necessarily indicative of the future of current 14-year-olds, the pattern suggest that young women continue to stop their schooling at the primary level. Younger generations of women drop out at slightly higher levels, and do so sooner than their male peers.

Of girls aged 14 to 20 who have reached grade six or higher, 62 percent reached secondary school (excluding from the analysis those girls still in grade 6 or 7). In contrast, of boys aged 14 to 20 (at the time of the Phase I survey), 84 percent had made it to secondary school.

Less than five percent of women aged 20 to 24 have completed high school (and almost all are no longer enrolled). The majority of those women that reached secondary dropped out in grades 8-10. Thus while a reasonable number of women have made the secondary transition, today's young adult women have been unlikely to complete.

Vocational training

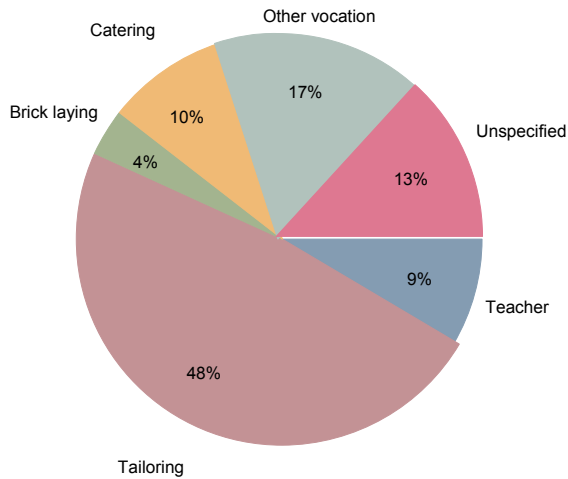
Table 3.2 Summary Statistics for Youth Aged 16-30

	Males (2005/06)	Females (2007)
Received vocational training (if 16 or older)	19%	8%
NGO paid for vocational training (if ever trained)	8%	29%
Received adult education	0%	1%
NGO paid for adult education (if ever received)	n.a.	8.7%
Ever attended university	0.6%	0.3%

Nineteen percent of young men aged 16 to 30 reported having received vocational training by 2005/06, while less than half this proportion of young women aged 16 to 30 (8 percent) reported receiving training in a vocational skill by 2007. These figures and others can be seen in Table 3.2.

Interestingly, NGOs paid for the training of just eight percent of men who were trained, but paid for 29 percent of all females who received training. This is driven by three factors: NGOs may be directing their vocational training programs disproportionately at women; women may not have the same means to pay for themselves and the government does not support women: six percent of men who received training reported being helped by the government, but no women.

Figure 3.6 Type of Vocational or Certificate Training: Females Aged 14-35

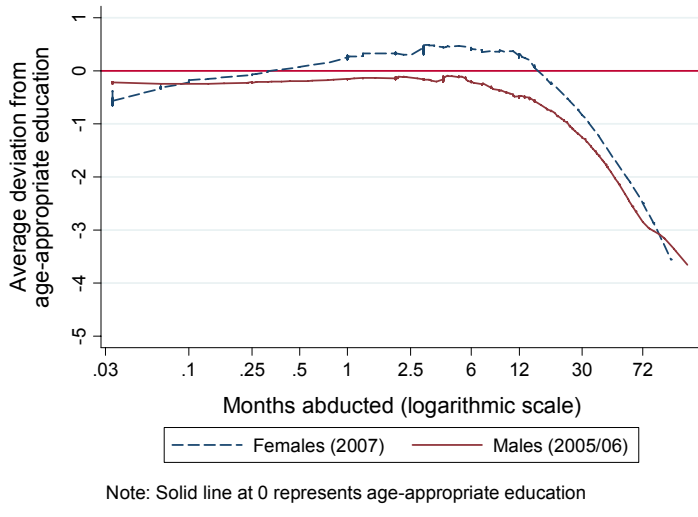


Tailoring is the most common form of training

Among the 38 women in our sample who received any vocational training, nearly half were trained in tailoring. The distribution of training skills can be seen in Figure 3.6. Far behind tailoring in frequency are catering, teaching, and brick-laying, as well as other skills such as weaving and auto repair. Self- or family-funded training was just as likely to be in tailoring as NGO-paid training.

The value of tailoring training, particularly that by NGOs, is questionable.¹⁶ Only six of 16 of the women who received tailoring training reported doing any tailoring work in the four weeks previous to the survey. Moreover, only one of these women, were among the group that had received training from an NGO. While these numbers are too few to be statistically accurate, they do suggest that tailoring skills, especially those received from NGOs, may have had little impact on women’s livelihoods.

Figure 3.7 Relationship between Abduction Length and Educational Attainment



Impacts of orphaning and abduction on education

Two of the most commonly used indicators of vulnerability are former abduction status and (among children at least) the loss of at least one parent, or being an orphan. Neither experience seems to be associated with lower levels of educational attainment or literacy among women, however. Formal statistical analysis (not displayed) suggests no systematic difference between abducted and non-abducted women, or women who lost a father or mother before age 15, and their non-abducted, non-orphaned peers. In contrast,

¹⁶ Some may contend that although tailoring training does not translate into economic skills, that the training was valuable for other reasons e.g., building solidarity among returnees, giving them something productive to do soon after return, boost to self image, and so on. However, we argue that those same benefits could have been achieved along with real economic gains by teaching them a more marketable skill. Economic gain is presumably the primary goal of the programs. If it is not, it is certainly the primary goal of the girls we interviewed. Either way, tailoring is not the most effective use of these aid resources.

the average male former abductee lost nearly a year of education relative to his non-abducted peers.¹⁷

While we must be cautious about drawing any conclusions about the exact causal relationship between abduction, orphaning, and education, these results do suggest that abduction and orphan status are unreliable predictors of under-education.

Long abductions and education

One reason that abduction may have little systematic association with female education is that, by the time of abduction, most girls would already have been out of school. As will be seen in section IV more than half of women were abducted at age 15 or older. As they were more likely to drop out of primary school than boys, abduction would be expected to have a lower impact on their educational attainment than in the case of young men.

Another reason that we see little average impact of abduction on education is that most female abductions were not only short, but also slightly shorter (on average) than that of young men. Abduction lengths are reviewed in section IV. Long abductions, however, do appear to be associated with educational gaps among both male and female abductees. Each year of abduction is associated with roughly a quarter of a year loss in educational attainment among young women.

The relationship between abduction length and educational attainment is displayed in Figure 3.7. The vertical axis measures how far above or below a youth is from the education level of his or her peers—non-abducted youth of the same age, location, and background. The horizontal axis measures length of abduction on a compressed (logarithmic) scale. We see that for youth abducted less than a year their education is little different than that of their peers. Those abducted for longer than one year see significant losses relative to their peers. The relationship between years abducted and years of education lost is less than one-to-one, however, because youth may return to school after coming home, and because many youth would have been finished their schooling at the time of abduction in any case.

The effects of forced marriages and childbearing on education

Women who have returned from the bush with children today have attained significantly less schooling—roughly 1.3 fewer grades—than their other abducted peers. These forced mothers are also considerably more likely to be illiterate. This education and literacy gap persists even when accounting for abduction length, forced marriage, age of abduction (or return), education level at the time of abduction, and other possible confounders. Considering that average educational attainment is less than five years among women in general, and that long abductions are associated with falls in education of 0.5 to 1 year, an additional fall of 1.3 years is quite considerable.

¹⁷ If abduction is unrelated to a person's individual characteristics (that is, if abduction is as good as random) then we can interpret this as the causal impact of abduction on later outcomes). As discussed in Annan et al. (2006) and (at greater statistical length) Blattman & Annan (2007), male abduction is indistinguishable from random, and the causal interpretation of abduction on later outcomes is a reliable and appropriate one. The same seems to be true of abduction among females—the probability of abduction is unrelated to observed pre-war household characteristics, and is only influenced by year and location of birth. Of course, we cannot eliminate the possibility of unobserved selection into the rebel group, which if present (and related to the outcomes of interest) would impede the causal interpretation of abduction on an outcome like education.

Not surprisingly, the evidence suggests that bush mothers are less educated and literate because they are less likely to return to school after coming home. From an interview with one respondent:

Q. Did you ever think of going back to school after you returned?

A. When I had just returned I had thoughts of going back to school, but I couldn't make it because I was already a mother of three children and I could not leave my children alone.

Roughly 41 percent of former abductees returned to school following abduction, including 28 percent of long-term abductees (those held captive for eight months or more). The likelihood of returning to school following return is reduced to nearly zero, however, for women returning from the bush with children. Only two of the 29 women who returned with children pursued any further education after return. This gap persists even after controlling for abduction length, age of return, and forced marriage. Interestingly, forced wives who were 'married' in the bush, but who did not bear children, were no more or less likely to return to school than unmarried long-term abductees, further suggesting that children are the binding constraint on women's education.



A wall painting within a reception center, Gulu town. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

IV. War Violence and Abduction

The twenty-two year war in northern Uganda has left few families unharmed. War-making and experiences of war are gendered in that they affect males and females differently. This section seeks to understand how and why gender and age matter. Key findings include the following:

- Males and females perpetrated violence at similar rates, although males reported a higher number of acts of violence experienced than females.
- In every category we measured, abductees report higher levels of violence witnessed, experienced, and perpetrated than non-abductees.
- Levels of abduction are immense: more than a third of male youth and a fifth of female youth report abduction by the LRA.

- Females forced to become the wives of LRA members report significantly more overall violent events (an average of 13) than other female abductees (an average of eight), including other long-term abductees.
- The likelihood of having family problems increases with the number of violent acts received and perpetrated, particularly for males. The chance of having family problems is also positively associated with symptoms of emotional distress among both males and females.
- Females were more likely than males to experience short abductions. However, once taken for more than several months, female abduction periods tended to be longer than those of males.
- The average age for longest-lasting abduction is 16 for females and 15 for males. Four times more males than females never returned from abduction.
- Females performed vital combat and support roles within the LRA, and the vast majority were not primarily used as 'sexual slaves'.
- Only half of abducted females passed through the Ugandan armed forces before returning into the community: only a third ever went through one of several reception centers set up to cater to the needs of the formerly-abducted.
- Just under a half of formerly-abducted males and under a quarter of formerly-abducted females had traditional cleansing ceremonies performed for them. While longer held abductees are more likely to participate in such ceremonies, this finding does not hold true for forced mothers, who participate ten times less than other female abductees in such ceremonies.

Measuring Violence

Through our many semi-structured interviews, we constructed a scale of 30 events to represent the most common as well as the most brutal and traumatic acts of violence experienced, and also gave youth an opportunity to identify a violence event not mentioned in the list.

There are admittedly several limitations to the approach we use to measure violence, however.

For instance, this scale does not distinguish between different levels of intensity of (or length of exposure to) certain types of events. Thus we cannot distinguish between someone who was shot at on a single occasion versus someone who was shot at weekly.

Furthermore, ours is obviously not a comprehensive list of the violence experienced by youth. Omitted are domestic abuse, verbal abuse, forcible displacement (experienced by essentially the entire population) and the immense structural violence associated with daily living in the camps. Some of these come out elsewhere in our analysis, however.

Finally, we did not ask who the perpetrator of the violence was. From our qualitative interviews, we feel comfortable saying that in most cases the violence was perpetrated by the LRA.

Nevertheless, there were indeed cases where the violence (being beaten, property stolen or shot at) was perpetrated by the UPDF, or a community member.

The measure does, however, give us an indication of incidence and magnitude of violence, one that will help us understand how the traumatic events of this war impact the well-being of youth.

Youth in northern Uganda have experienced tremendous amounts of violence. Our study measured direct acts of violence that male and female youth witnessed, experienced, and perpetrated. We present the percentage of youth responding that they have experienced these violent acts by gender and abduction status. These potentially traumatic events range in intensity from mild (hearing gunfire regularly) to more severe (the violent death of a parent or being forced to kill). The box below explains how we sought to measure violence.

Violent events witnessed, experienced, and committed

Table 4.1 (below) shows the percentage of male and female youth who reported having witnessed and experienced different types of violent events. Males have experienced a higher number of violent acts than females—on average, nine against six for females. These findings refer, however, to whether or not one experiences an event in one’s lifetime, not the frequency or severity of the violent acts.

Table 4.1 Violence Ever Witnessed and Experienced by Abducted and non-Abducted Male and Female Youth

Violent acts witnessed or received	Male Abductees	Non- Abductees	Female Abductees	Non- Abductees
Someone took or destroyed your personal property	82%	78%	97%	88%
You heard gun fire regularly	79%	76%	71%	71%
A parent disappeared or was abducted	17%	14%	21%	14%
Another family member or friend disappeared or was abducted	69%	64%	93%	86%
You witnessed beatings or torture of other people	90%	55%	83%	36%
Another family member or friend was murdered or died violently	60%	53%	53%	45%
Someone shot bullets at you or your home	54%	39%	23%	14%
A family member received a serious physical injury from combat or a landmine	45%	34%	24%	20%
You witnessed a killing	77%	39%	64%	27%
A parent was murdered or died violently	31%	29%	24%	17%
You witnessed the setting of houses on fire with people inside	56%	26%	42%	21%
You received a severe beating to the body by someone	60%	22%	45%	11%
You witnessed a massacre	64%	18%	38%	14%
You were forced to carry heavy loads or do other forced labor	87%	13%	70%	5%
You received a serious physical injury in a battle or rebel attack	43%	10%	35%	4%
You were tied up or locked up as a prisoner	63%	7%	22%	3%
You witnessed the rape or sexual abuse of a woman	21%	3%	27%	5%
Someone attacked you with a panga or other weapon	26%	2%	23%	5%
You were forced to have sex	3%	0.10%	26.30%	0.20%

More than a third of male youth and a fifth of females have been abducted. Abducted males were more likely to experience acts of violence associated with combat such as physical injury and being held as prisoner, and were more likely to witness massacres and killings and the setting of houses on fire with people inside than abducted females. Abducted females, however, are more likely to have a family member or friend disappeared or abducted, and been forced to have sex and to kill or beat strange civilians than abducted males.

It is important to note that we believe the number of youth which reported being forced to have sex is significantly unreported, particularly in the case of those being raped by non-LRA perpetrators. We believe this is due to a number of factors, including stigma, cultural norms and definitions regarding forced sex.

Table 4.2 illustrates violence youth reported that they committed, and which often they were forced to carry out, again broken down by gender and abduction status. Abducted males and females committed significantly more violence than their non-abducted counterparts.

Table 4.2 Violence Ever Committed by Abducted and non-Abducted Male and Female Youth

	Male	Non-	Female	Non-
Violent acts committed	Abductees	Abductees	Abductees	Abductees
You were forced to steal or destroy someone else's property or possessions	54%	6%	57%	8%
You were forced to kill an opposing soldier in battle	15%	0.2%	17%	0.3%
You were forced to step on or otherwise abuse the bodies of dead persons	23%	1%	25%	0.2%
You were forced to beat or cut a civilian who was not a family member or friend	12%	0.0%	21%	0.3%
You were forced to kill a civilian who was not a family member or friend	7%	0%	21%	0.3%
You were forced to kill a family member or friend	18%	0%	5%	0.2%
You were forced to betray a family member or friend	8%	0%	8%	0.4%

Table 4.3 gives a break-down of violence that male and female youth witnessed, experienced or committed.

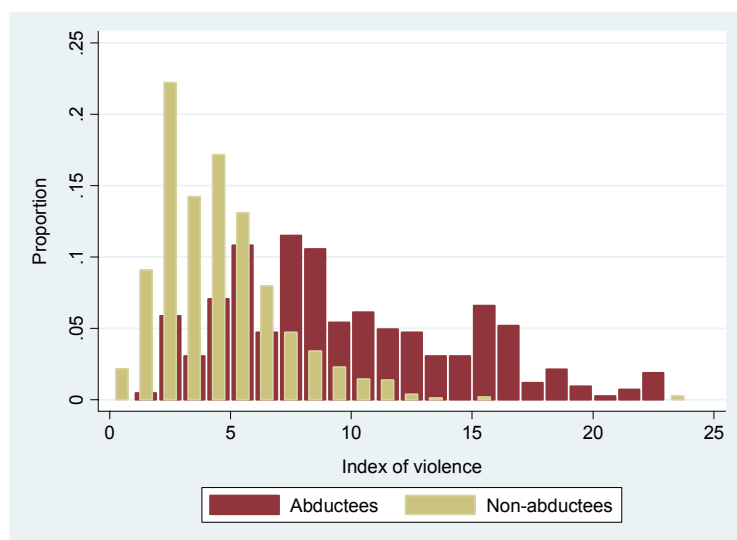
Table 4.3 Violence Ever Witnessed, Experienced, and Committed by Sex

Violent acts witnessed or received	Male	Female
Someone took or destroyed your personal property	81%	90%
You heard gun fire regularly	77%	71%
A parent disappeared or was abducted	15%	16%
Another family member or friend disappeared or was abducted	66%	88%
You witnessed beatings or torture of other people	70%	46%
Another family member or friend was murdered or died violently	56%	46%
Someone shot bullets at you or your home	46%	16%
A family member received a serious physical injury from combat or a landmine	39%	21%
You witnessed a killing	55%	35%
A parent was murdered or died violently	30%	18%
You witnessed the setting of houses on fire with people inside	39%	26%
You received a severe beating to the body	39%	18%
You witnessed a massacre	38%	19%
You were forced to carry heavy loads or do other forced labor	45%	19%
You received a serious physical injury in a battle or rebel attack	24%	11%
You were tied up or locked up as a prisoner	31%	7%
You witnessed the rape or sexual abuse of a woman	11%	10%
Someone attacked you with a panga or other weapon	13%	8%
You were forced to have sex (with a woman / man)	1%	6%

Violent acts committed	Male	Female
You were forced to steal or destroy someone else's property or possessions	27%	13%
You were forced to kill an opposing soldier in battle	6%	4%
You were forced to step on or otherwise abuse the bodies of dead persons	10%	6%
You were forced to beat or cut a civilian who was not a family member or friend	5%	5%
You were forced to kill a civilian who was not a family member or friend	3%	5%
You were forced to kill a family member or friend	8%	1%
You were forced to betray a family member or friend	3%	2%

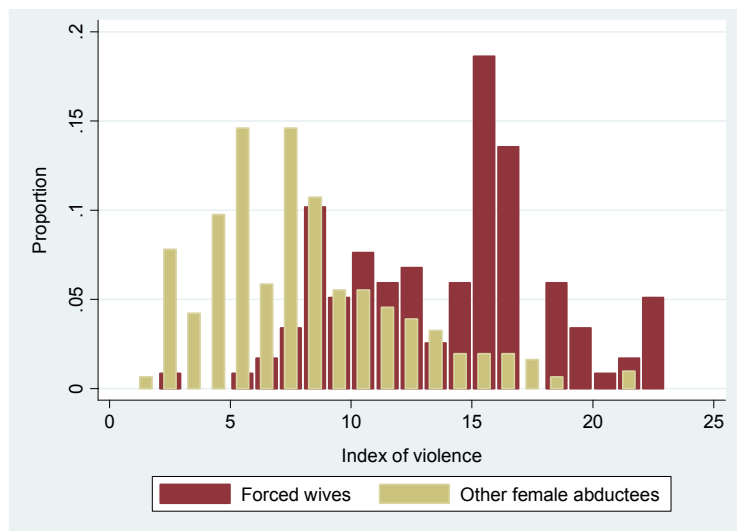
Not surprisingly, abductees report higher levels of violence witnessed, received and perpetrated than non-abductees. To illustrate, on average, female youth who have been abducted report nine of the violent events listed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 above, while non-abducted females have typically experienced three or four of these events. Hence, on average, abducted females have experienced more than twice the number of violent events than non-abducted females (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Experiences of Violence for Abducted and non-Abducted Female Youth



Females who were given to LRA commanders and soldiers as forced wives have experienced significantly more violent war-related events than other abductees, even those abducted the same length of time. Forcibly married abductees report an average of over 13 forms of violence. Consequently, abductees who were not forcibly married experienced violence at about 75 percent of the rate of forcibly married abductees (see section V on forced marriage and motherhood within the LRA), as the graph below illustrates (Figure 4.5).¹⁸

Figure 4.5 Experiences of Violence by Forced Wives and Other Abducted Females



Importantly, for both males and females, experiencing violent acts has a stronger impact on distress (discussed in detail in section VI on psychosocial wellbeing) than if the youth perpetrated the violent acts. For both males and females, the number of violent acts experienced and perpetrated is also associated with a higher probability of having family problems (see section VI).

Scale of abduction

The scale of abduction is immense. Taking attrition into account (i.e., the fact that some abductees have not returned and some have moved away), the data suggests that 44 percent of the male sample and 22 percent of the female sample (i.e., male and female youth living in these eight sub-counties in 1996) experienced an abduction (of any length) by the LRA. We

find that 39 percent of males and 40 percent of females who were abducted were abducted for over two months or longer (Figure 4.3). In the box below we consider the implications for the number of youth abducted overall in the course of the war.

¹⁸ This data refers only to the forms of violence listed in tables 4.1 and 4.2 and does not include data on family violence.

Have We Underestimated Total Abductions?

Based on the number of children passing through reception centers, the UN has estimated that 20,000 to 25,000 children have been abducted. Counting the abducted is a difficult task, at best an exercise in educated guesswork. Survey evidence from SWAY, however, suggests a more accurate framing and estimate may be at least 66,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 30.

Without including those abducted for less than a week, survey responses from eight sub-counties suggests that only half of male returnees passed through a reception center (see the discussion in the following section). Moreover, we estimate one fifth of males never returned. Finally, at least one fifth of abducted youth are not children, but were between 18 and 30 at the time of abduction. These figures suggest that for every three children in the official count, ten youth were actually abducted. Such higher numbers seem consistent with the high proportion of youth ever reporting an abduction—over a third of males and a sixth of females. These estimates are described in more detail throughout this section.

Note that these estimates are based on working backwards from UN figures using estimated proportions of youth not observed in the UN count. An alternate method would build up from the rates of abduction reported in the survey. If the lowest rate of abduction from the eight camps were applied to the population of young, rural, Acholi males, the estimate would likely exceed 66,000, suggesting this number is a bare minimum. Note also that the emphasis on abducted *youth* (rather than *children*) is important, as young adults appear to be underserved by NGOs and therefore less has been known about their abduction.

Why are these numbers so high? First, there is the possibility that abductions are falsely over-reported. The box below discusses the specific risks and the measures taken, and argues that they are unlikely to be overstated by more than five percentage points.

Is Abduction Over-Reported?

A concern often raised is that not all those taken by the LRA are necessarily ‘abducted’. This is not so much a debate about the willingness of the individual to go with the LRA, but rather the recognition that many are released or escape immediately. A second concern is that youth who were never with the LRA at all falsely report abduction in the hopes that they will receive assistance from an NGO.

What constitutes abduction is an important question to some abductees. From one respondent:

The formerly-abducted people I know who are here in Acholibur are about 75 [in number], but some people just claim they were. Some of them were just taken from the garden and asked to direct the rebels for a distance of about six miles and then told to go back home. Such a person also claims he/she was abducted but when he has not reached the core where we have reached. Such a person, when asked, cannot tell you the sufferings we have gone through.

The questionnaire deliberately tried to capture these short abductions, asking youth if they ever went with the LRA for any length of time. Youth were then asked whether they were released, rescued, or escaped on their own, data which help us determine the nature of their abduction and the rebels’ intent at the time. These short abductions are especially important to capture because they often still included a large amount of violence. Moreover, in most cases it seems that the intent of the rebels was to keep the youth for as long as possible. Less than five percent of male youth reported they were released—in almost all cases because they were either “too young” (under 11), “too old” (over about 23), or too injured to walk. Thus if male adolescents and young adults

remain with the LRA for only a matter of days, it is likely because they escaped rather than were released. Accordingly, for the purposes of this report we consider any time with the LRA—regardless of length as ‘abduction’, but will try to explore impacts by length of time spent with the group.

There remains the second concern, that youth may be falsely reporting abduction in the expectation of benefits. We guarded against this in several ways. First, we initially asked household heads about who in their household had been abducted, before asking the youth directly. Second, detailed information was gathered on all abductions from the youth, making detection of any inconsistencies more likely. Misrepresentation would be challenging as former abductees were asked twenty to thirty minutes of questions on their abduction, return, on the composition of the unit, their commanders, discipline and movements. Third, our enumerators were careful about checking for inconsistencies. In all, roughly ten percent of reported abductions appeared suspicious due to discrepancies between the reports of the household head and the youth. In half of the cases this occurred where the abduction period was very short (such as a single day) or when the youth had left the household some years before. Still, we regarded these reports with some scepticism. In these cases we are inclined to give the youth the benefit of the doubt.

In the remaining cases (less than five percent of all abductees) the youth’s report is sufficiently divergent from that of the parent that our suspicions are aroused, and it is possible that abductions are overstated by this amount. It is also possible, however, that parents sought to conceal abductions. Fortunately, the estimates of the impact of abduction presented in this document do not change materially when these youth are re-classified as ‘non-abducted’.

Second, a number of the reported abductions are extremely short in length. Figure 4.6 breaks down the distribution of abduction length for males and females separately. While Figures 4.7a and 4.7b show the distribution of length of abduction for all abducted males and females. Nearly 11 percent of male abductions and 20 percent of female abductions are only one to three days in length. Moreover, 28 percent of male abductions and 39 percent of female abductions are less than two weeks in length. Overall, the data suggests that one third of male youth and 16 percent of female youth present in 1996 were abducted for two weeks or longer.

Figure 4.6 Abduction length for All Male and Female Youth Aged 15-36

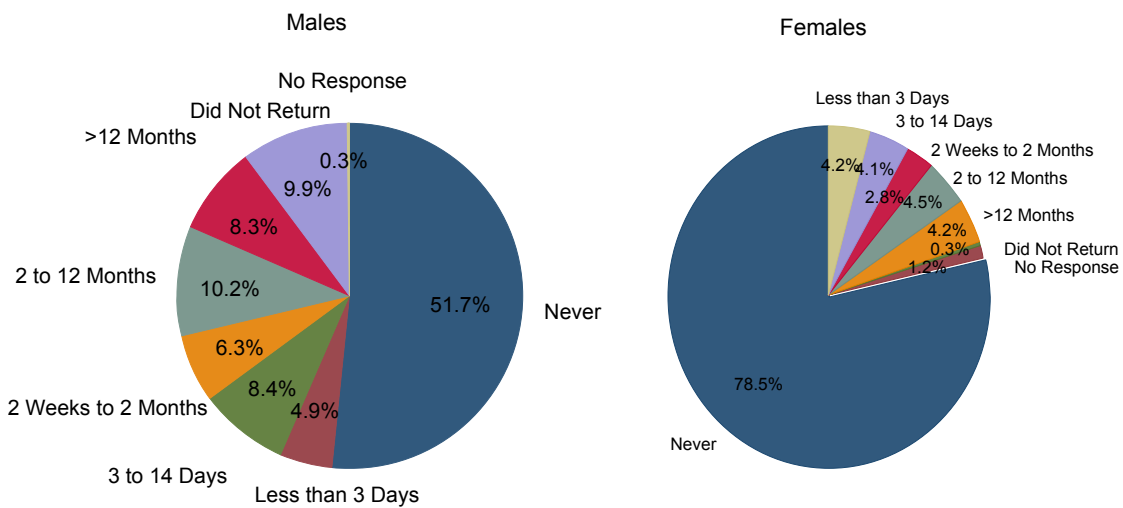


Figure 4.7a Abduction Length for All Abducted Female Youth

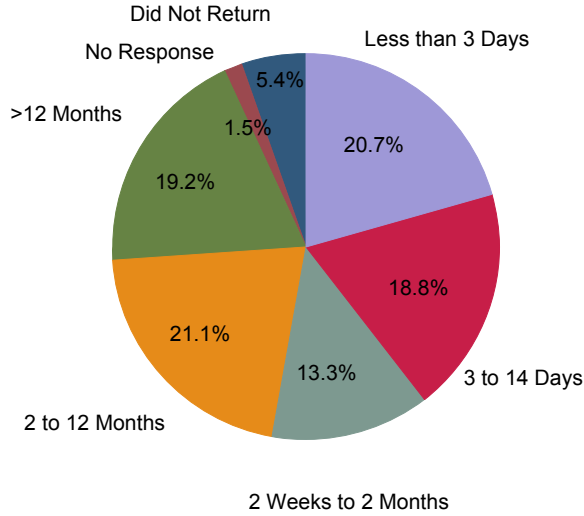
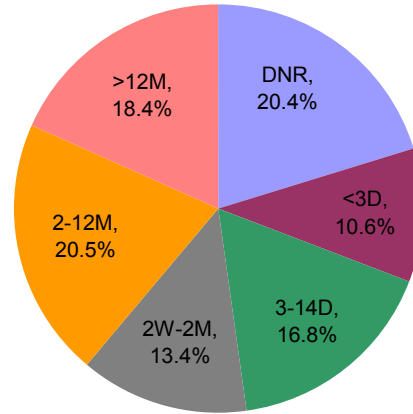


Figure 4.7b Abduction Length for All Abducted Males Aged 15-30



Finally, the abduction rates include male and female youth who have not returned. Tragically, we estimate that 20 percent of male abductees and five percent of female abductees are dead and will never return (the percentage returning disabled are discussed in section VII on health). This amounts to roughly nine percent of the 1996 population of male youth and one percent of the female population alive in 1996.

The average age for females at first abduction is approximately 16 years of age, with the majority of females experiencing abduction between the ages of 10 to 18 years of age (Figure 4.8). For males the average age for first abduction is 15 years of age, one year younger than the average female (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.8 Females Age at Time of First Abduction

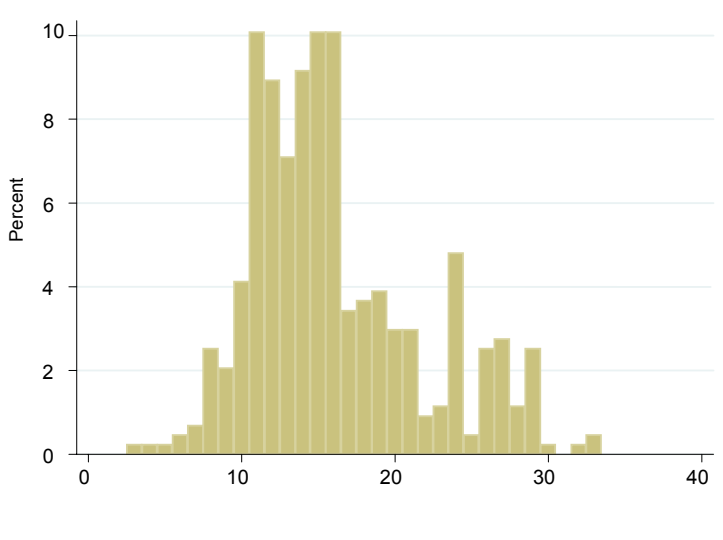


Figure 4.9 Distribution of Age at Time of Longest Lasting Abduction

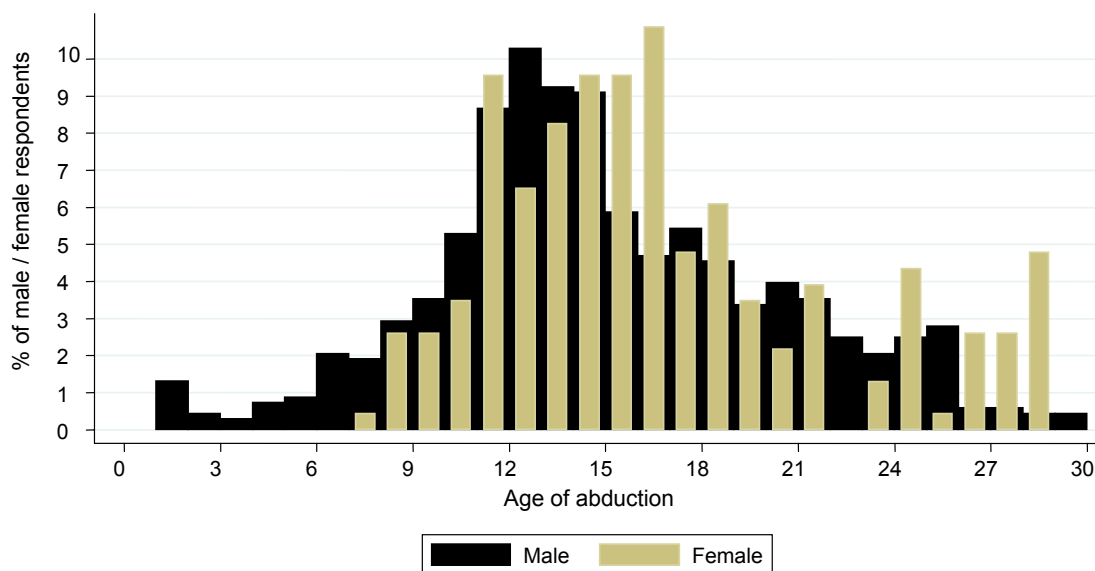
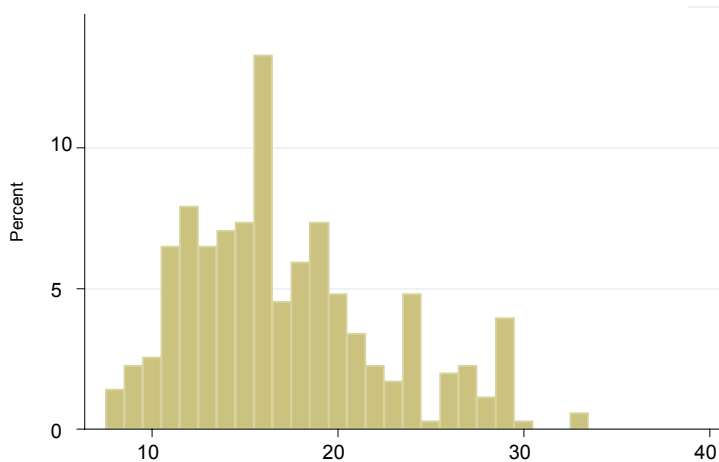


Figure 4.10 Age of Female Returnees at Time of Return from Longest Abduction



We also find that approximately a third of females that were abducted and returned were over 18 years of age upon their return (i.e., no longer children under international standards), hence programs that set targets based on age (e.g., privileging services to persons under 18 years of age) would likely miss one in three formerly-abducted females (Figure 4.10).

Female roles within the LRA

In contrast to the numerous claims by popular media and others, we find no evidence that captive females within the LRA have been primarily used as

sexual slaves. Rather, we find that females abducted for longer than two weeks served in a variety of roles necessary to enable the LRA to function as a rebel force (Figure 4.11). Notably, while males compose the largest proportion of fighters, more than one in every ten females reported that her primary role was as a fighter.

If we group support roles (cook, porter, garden, and water collection), combat roles (fighter, spy and soldier’s aid) and social roles (forced wife and childcare), we find that the majority of females were primarily providing support functions while 14 per cent were principally engaged in combat (Figure 4.12). While a rate of 14 percent females primarily engaged in combat may seem to suggest that females are performing non-essential roles within the LRA, such a simplistic assessment would be incorrect. We can compare this break-down to professional armies, such as the United States military, where only 15-20 percent of forces actually engage in

Figure 4.11 Self-Reported Primary Role of Females Abducted > Two Weeks

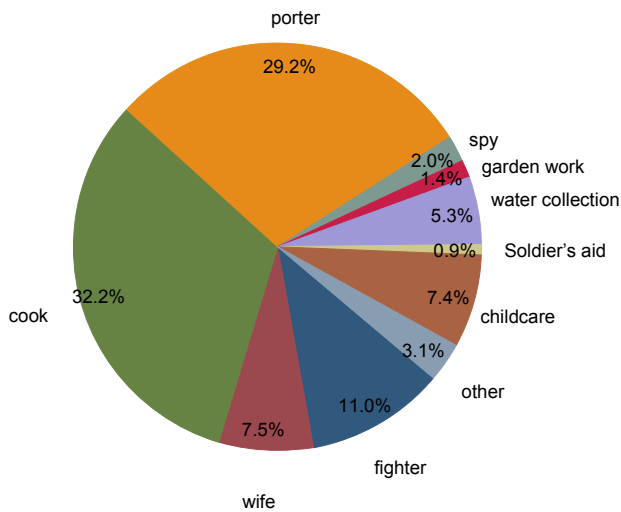
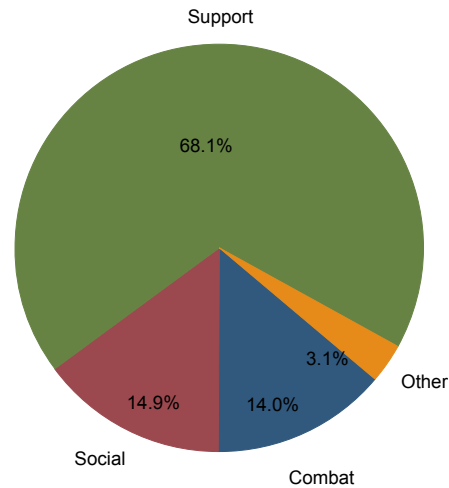


Figure 4.12 Self-Reported Support, Combat and Social Functions Performed by Females in the LRA: Abduction Length > Two Weeks



active combat and the overwhelming majority serve crucial back-up and logistical roles in service and support units. Note that these percentages represent the *primary* roles, and therefore it is likely that a higher percentage engaged in some combat. Unfortunately, these figures are not available from our survey.

If we look at females who were abducted for less than 2 weeks, we have a similar result, with nearly 12 percent in a primarily combat role and the majority in a primarily support role (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13 Self-Reported Support, Combat and Social Functions Performed by Females in the LRA: Abduction Length < Two Weeks

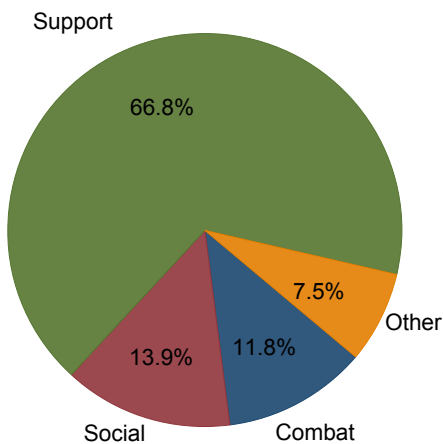
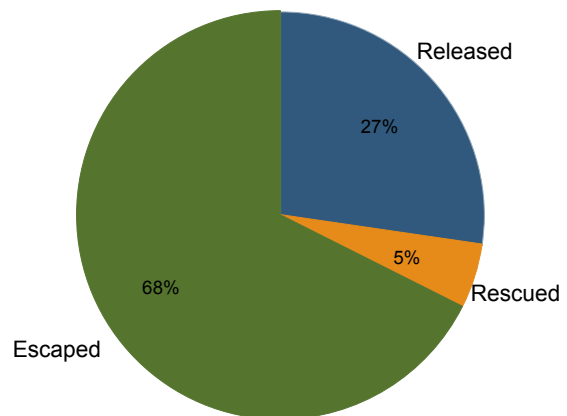


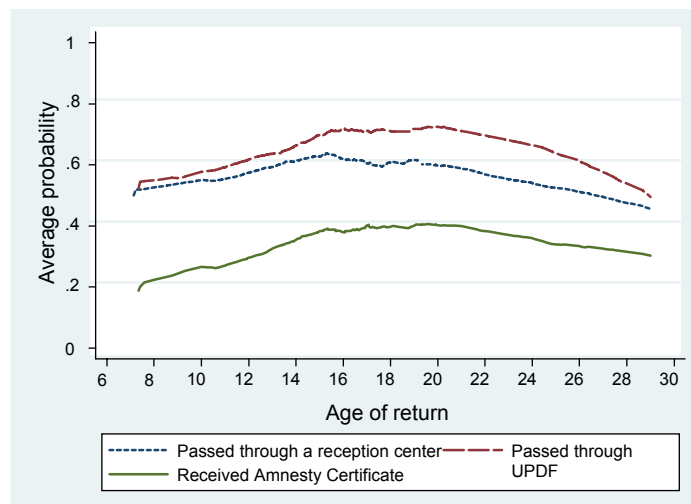
Figure 4.14 Manner of Departure from LRA: All Females Abducted for Longer than Two Weeks as Longest Abduction



Formal reception process

The vast majority of females abducted for longer than two weeks (68 percent) had to escape from LRA captivity. Although the Ugandan media and the Ugandan President have consistently reported that the UPDF is primarily responsible for freeing captives, our data shows that the UPDF was only responsible for the liberation

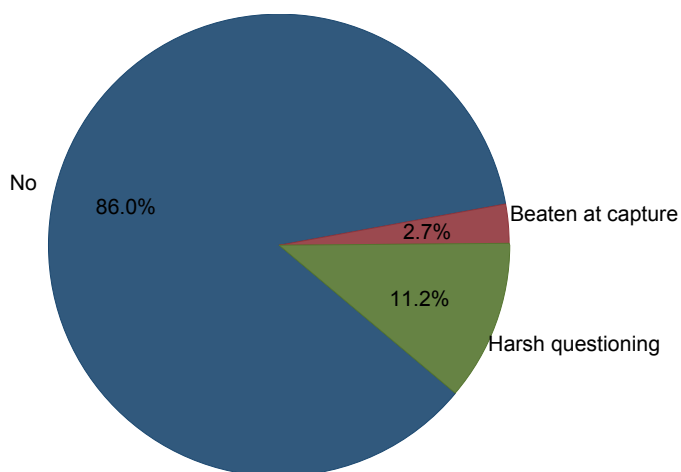
Figure 4.15 Percentage of Youth Passing through a Formal Reception Process (by Age of Return: Youth Abducted for > Three Months)



of one in twenty of the females who managed to leave the LRA (i.e. who were 'rescued') (Figure 4.14).

Notably, females who are kept as forced wives (including both those with and without children born in the bush) are released at significantly lower rates than other abducted females (e.g., seven percent of forced mothers were released compared to 27 percent of other female captives). Qualitative data suggests that this is likely due to the fact that forced wives and, if applicable, their children are considered the property of an LRA commander or fighter. They are often watched to ensure they do not escape, and they are less likely to be in areas where the LRA and UPDF engage in combat (and hence have lower chances of escape or rescue). Notably, one in every ten girls that was abducted between the ages of 12 and 18 conceived while in LRA captivity. A more detailed analysis of forced wives and mothers in LRA captivity is presented in section V.

Figure 4.16 Female Abductees Reporting Harm by UPDF upon Leaving LRA



of waiting before being admitted to a reception center, and lack of effective coordination to ensure awareness of amnesty opportunities. However, the report suggested that the reception centers provided a safe place where former abductees could recover from injuries and prepare for transition out of life in the LRA.

More than half of all abducted females who left the LRA passed through the UPDF upon return. The vast majority of these females report not having been harmed by the UPDF. Those who reported mistreatment most commonly reported harsh questioning and beatings (Figure 4.16).

Among all abducted females, only a third passed through a reception center, while half of abducted males enter into reception centers. We sought to understand what variables are associated with the greater likelihood of passing through a reception center. First, we found that females who were abducted at a very young or relatively old age are the least likely to pass through a reception center. This is due to the fact that, on average, they are held in captivity for shorter durations than their adolescent counterparts.

4.17 Percentage of Youth Passing Through a Formal Reception Process (by Abduction Length)

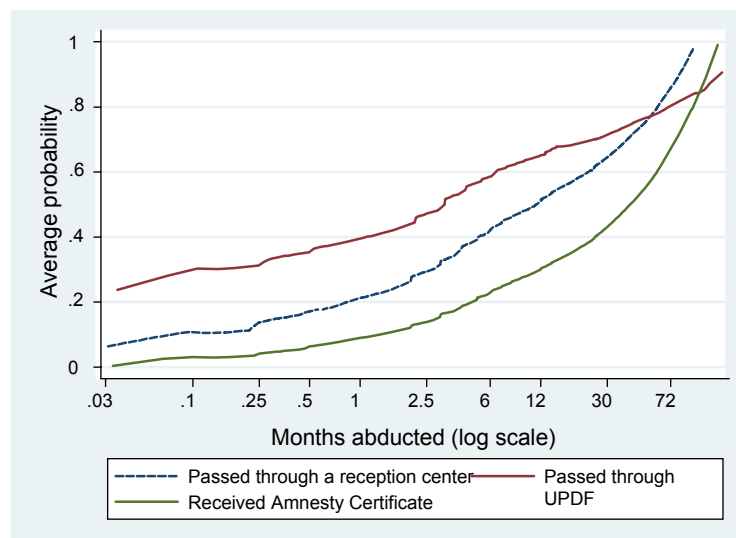
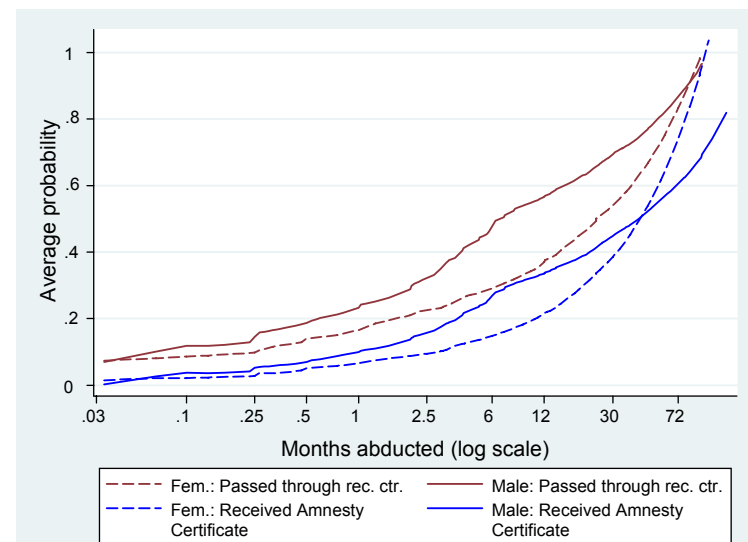


Figure 4.18 Percentage of Youth Passing through a Formal Reception Process (by Abduction Age and Sex)



Second, we find essentially the same result when we look at age at return in relation to passing through a reception center, which is unsurprising, since age at return and abduction age are closely related.

Third, we find that females who have experienced longer periods of abduction are significantly more likely to have passed through a reception center. To illustrate, doubling a female’s abduction length nearly doubles her chances of passing through a reception center. Hence, long-term abductees are more likely to pass through a reception center upon their return (Figures 4.17 and 4.18).

Fourth, we asked the females themselves why they did not pass through a reception center. Overall, the majority simply said they went straight home. We found that many of the youth, whether they knew about reception centers or not, were focused on getting back to their families and loved ones. For those who gave specific reasons as to why they did not go to a reception center, a third said they were not informed about their existence and a third said they were too far from their homes. While the remaining female youth gave a variety of reasons for not going to a reception center, less than five percent said that they did not go because they were afraid, the centers were too crowded or that they were rejected. Reception centers are discussed more in depth in section X on reintegration.

We also find that less than a third of both male and female abductees have applied for and received an Amnesty Certificate from the Amnesty Commission (discussed in more detail in section X).

Traditional cleansing ceremonies and formerly-abducted female youth

Traditional cleansing ceremonies are performed by Acholi elders to cleanse formerly-abducted youth from *cen* (evil spirits) and are seen as appeasing the spirit with an animal sacrifice. Baines (2005) and Caritas (2005) describe these ceremonies and their significance in detail. Harlacher (2006) has also outlined a variety of traditional healing ceremonies, including rituals related to receiving returnees home, conflict resolution, and individual healing (including cleansing for someone who has killed in war).

Just under one half of abducted males and under a quarter (22 percent) of abducted females had a traditional cleansing ceremony performed for them. One of the most significant factors as to whether a female participates in a traditional cleansing ceremony is the length of her abduction, with longer-held females participating at significantly higher rates.¹⁹ However, this finding does not hold true for forced mothers. Abductees who bear a child in captivity are significantly less likely to receive a cleansing ceremony. Indeed, forced mothers are only about one-tenth as likely as other abductees to participate in a traditional cleansing ceremony (see section IV).

¹⁹ The probability with which an abductee underwent a traditional cleansing ceremony upon return is uncorrelated with either their age at abduction or age at return



Children born in captivity collect washed clothing within a reception center, Gulu town. (Photograph by Feinstein International Center)

V. Forced Marriage and Motherhood within the LRA

During the course of the armed conflict in northern Uganda, thousands of girls and young women were abducted by the LRA. During their captivity, they were forced to fight, cook, carry supplies, fetch water, and clean for LRA fighters and commanders, including those that organized and carried out their abduction (see section IV on war experiences and abduction). Many were also abducted to serve as forced wives to male members of the group. This section focuses on the experiences of women and girls forcibly married within the LRA and their attempts to reintegrate in civilian life after captivity. (Forced wives' and mothers' experiences of stigma, rejection and community conflict are discussed in detail in section VI on psychosocial wellbeing and mental health.) The main findings for this section include:

- Forced marriages were perpetrated in a widespread and systematic manner within LRA-controlled areas in northern Uganda and South Sudan.
- A quarter of abducted females were given to LRA fighters and commanders as forced wives.

- Nearly a half of LRA commanders had five or more forced wives, with lower level fighters averaging two forced wives.
- Half of all forced wives gave birth to children from these relationships.
- Females with children are significantly less likely than other abductees to return to formal education.
- Few forced wives are released by the LRA or rescued by the UPDF.
- Half of those forced wives who had children entered reception centres.
- Nearly all formerly-forced wives are currently not living with their captor husbands and do not wish to be reunited with them.
- Traditional cleansing ceremonies are problematic for forced mothers and they remain in need of additional services to address psychological and physical ailments.

Females' roles as forced wives

Females taken as forced wives have been inaccurately characterized as 'sex slaves'. This narrow classification perpetuates misunderstandings about their experiences and can hinder development of appropriate programs to assist them and their children.

The imposition of marriage has forced these females to take on roles as sexual partners, mothers to the children born from these relationships, cooks, domestics, water collectors, porters, food producers, and gatherers. Additionally, many of the forced wives were trained and expected to fight. While in captivity, these females experienced various forms of violence including rape, torture, slavery, forced labor and forced pregnancy (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). They also witnessed these same forms of violence perpetrated against other females within the LRA (see also section IV on war experiences).

Distribution of females as forced wives

Our data finds that a quarter of all females abducted for any length of time were forcibly married to members of the LRA. Indeed, within our study sample, approximately ten percent of all female youth surveyed—abducted and non-abducted—were forced wives.

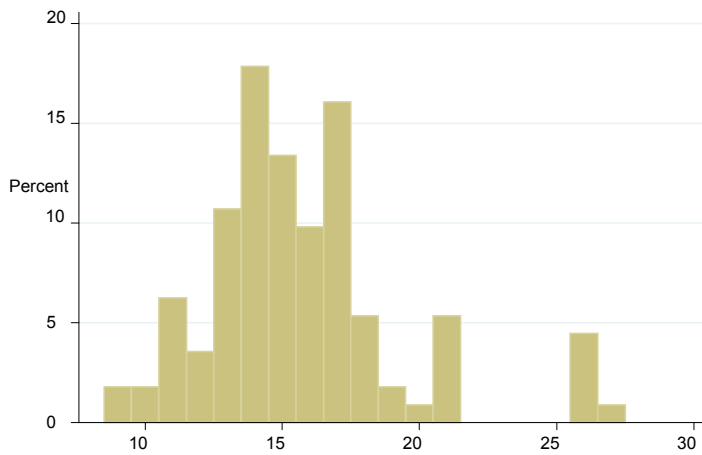
Females held captive by the LRA for long periods of time were more likely to be distributed as forced wives. Of all females abducted and held longer than two weeks, 42 percent were forcibly married. Females are reported to be taken as wives after reaching puberty. Older females, particularly those who were or believed to have lived with another man at time of abduction, were taken as wives if considered free of disease or illness. For younger, prepubescent females, they would be distributed as wives after puberty, about 15 years-old. The majority of females forced into marriage were between 13 and 17 years at the time of their distribution to a male (Figure 5.1).

Girls were distributed to LRA males in various ways. Those we interviewed reported that the manner in which females were distributed depended on such things as the commander or number of girls to be distributed. For example, female abductees were sometimes distributed as a group among multiple males. A former forced wife described the process by which at 17 years of age she was forcibly married shortly after her abduction:

After reaching the LRA camp I was grouped with other females who were recently abducted. [Second in command of the LRA Vincent] Otti gave the orders to his escorts to distribute the wives. Clothes were placed in bags and put into a pile. The men who wanted wives stood

nearby and watched as girls were told to pick a bag of clothing. Whoever owned the clothing then became the man to that girl. The clothes I picked belonged to a 35 year-old fighter.

Figure 5.1: Age at Time of Forced Marriage to Male LRA Member



Females were given as a forced wife on an average of nine months after being abducted. However, many were given as wives shortly after their abduction with one respondent reporting that she was given as a wife the day after her abduction. The length of time between abduction and forced marriage varies for a number of reasons.

It has been reported in interviews with returnee males and females that commanders typically waited until females reached puberty because they are expected to perform sexually for their captor husband upon becoming a wife and pre-pubescent girls were determined to be unfit for sexual activity. If females were considered too young to become a wife they were still distributed to men as one former forced wife testifies:

Girls too young to be married were told to stay with the father (fighter or commander) of the household and were told they would eventually be taken as a wife when older. Sometimes they were given by that man to another man at the time the tink-tink (young, unmarried girl) was to become a wife, but in most cases she would stay with the man she was first given to.

Often young girls were used as babysitters for other wives who had children. These roles, in addition to general domestic labor such as water fetching, cooking and cleaning, were also performed by lower-ranking fighters' wives for wives of ranking commanders.

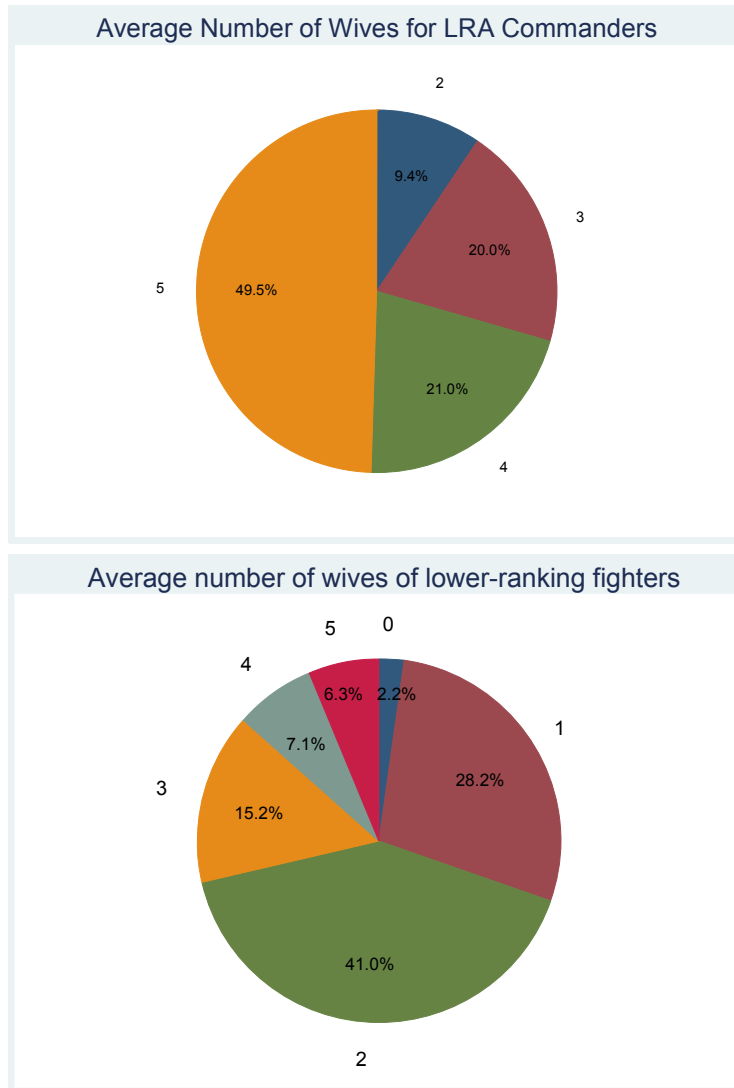
If captor husbands were killed or disappeared, females were redistributed to other LRA males. One former forced wife said it was gainful for a male to rise in rank as it meant more loot, provisions and, perhaps also as incentive to fight bravely and encourage loyalty, more wives:

When a commander was killed in a fire-fight, the wives of that commander would be given to the man who replaced that dead commander. The more people were under a commander, the more wives and children he had, the larger the food ration he would receive.

Less frequently, males and females reported that wives of killed commanders or fighters were sometimes released or left "widowed" but still held in captivity. The release of wives of a dead captor husband, which is reportedly rare, was likely to happen during intense or protracted engagements with the UPDF. Additionally, interviews reveal that when units wanted to increase mobility or when food and water resources were too scarce to maintain large numbers, some wives and children are released. This was the case during Operation Iron Fist I and II, the name given by the UPDF to cross-border offensives against the LRA in southern Sudan.

High-ranking LRA commanders are reported to have multiple wives, with nearly half having five or more forced wives. In some cases, commanders had as many as 15 forced wives. Lower-ranking fighters had an average of two forced wives (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Comparison of Average Numbers of Wives: Commanders and Lower LRA Ranks



Concurrent wives is the norm when more than one wife is present. However, females given to an individual male may not all be co-wives concurrently. Females report that males may have wives that are replaced over time as others disappear, are killed or escape.

Females who were distributed to men already having multiple wives reported being treated badly by the other co-wives. One female was pregnant at the time of her abduction and gave birth three months into her captivity. She was not immediately taken as a wife but was given to a man after the death of her three month-old child:

I was told by members of the LRA that (my baby) was a useless civilian baby because it was not fathered by an LRA man. My baby died of sickness after three months and I was then given to a commander as a wife. I was the sixth wife to that man and was beaten by him regularly and treated poorly by the other wives. They would tell the man I was a thief and wasted water and because of those lies I was beaten and given little to eat.

The highest ranking LRA commanders, such as Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, and Kenneth Banya, were reported to have had the most wives. Females report that LRA males with multiple wives were also likely to have multiple children from more than one forced wife. This complicates efforts by forced wives to oblige ‘husbands’ to acknowledge paternity and provide maintenance should he return from captivity.

It was reported that LRA commanders do not want to give up their forced wives and children born in captivity. One formerly-abducted woman spoke about what she observed for females within captivity. Within her unit, an agreement had been arranged with a local chief that some wives and children would be released in 2003:

Some of the women who were with men were being released with their children. There was one commander, the second in command, who had four wives but refused to release any of

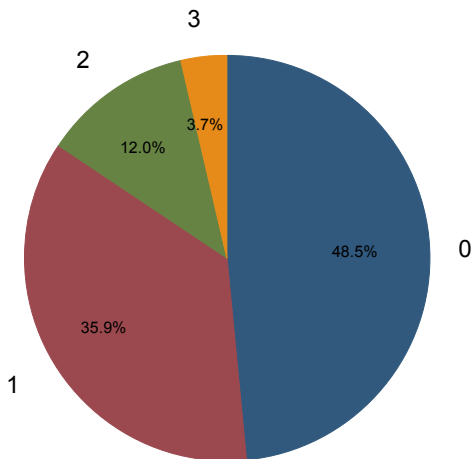
them. They wanted to go but he said that ‘as long as I am in the bush they will stay. If they leave then I will get them and kill them.’

There are many variables influencing how and what a former forced wife and or mother will do after exiting the LRA. It should not be assumed that all returnee females have the option, or would choose such an option, of returning to their captor husband or of receiving maintenance for themselves or their children from him. Such an ‘option’ is talked about among prominent government and religious officials in Acholiland as a viable one for returnee forced wives, but our data contradicts such assertions.

Forced marriage and childbearing

Close to 40% of females forcibly married had one child (Figure 5.3). Of those who gave birth, a quarter were under 18 years old at the time. Females reported having limited access, if any at all, to medicine or help from trained midwives or other health professionals during child birth within the LRA.

Figure 5.3 Number of Children Born by Forced Wives While in Captivity



Former forced wives and education

Girls who return from captivity with children are three-times less likely to return to school than those who do not conceive children in captivity and ten times less likely to return to school than girls who were never abducted. Survey data also shows that they are more likely to be illiterate. Our data finds that their inability to return to school is correlated with constraints associated with having children. The reasons, while not entirely clear, most likely reflect an absence of child care, a need to earn income, and or an unwillingness of schools to accept young mothers.

Of the forced wives within the survey, only six percent pursued any further education after return. Notably, for those females who were taken as forced wives but who did not return with

children, they are no more or less likely to return to school than other long-term abducted females never taken as forced wives at all (see section III on education).

During qualitative interviews, two former abductees—one a former forced wife—claimed that commanders preferred females with some formal education:

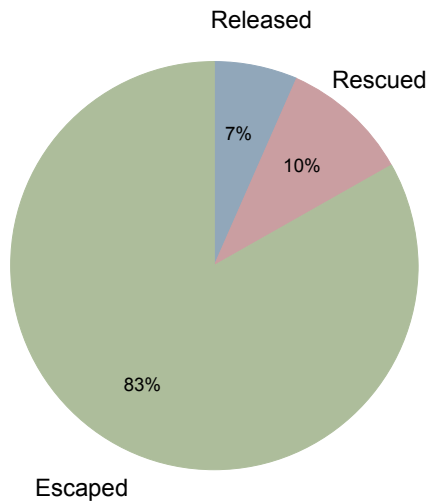
Commanders usually chose girls based upon physical appearance and education level. The prettiest, more educated girls were the first to be chosen and commanders always chose before fighters were given wives. (Commanders) preferred girls with education because they needed them to write down numbers when radio codes were coming in.

Exit routes from the LRA

A total of 83 percent of forced wives left LRA captivity by means of escape. Among all female abductees, levels of escape, as compared to release or capture by UPDF soldiers, are highest among forced wives (Figure 5.2).

Their rates of escape are similar to male abductees (with 81 percent escaping). While there have been a few cases of LRA commanders releasing their wives, returnee females reported that fighters and commanders have refused to release wives when others, such as young boys, sick or wounded abductees, have been released. For abductions lasting one month or longer, females are, on average, held captive six months longer than males.

Figure 5.4 Manner of Departure from LRA for Forced Wives



Forced wives report fear that captor husbands would follow up on threats made while in captivity to come looking for their children and kill their forced wives should they escape. One female reported that her captor husband once spent nearly a week away from the camp looking for another wife and her child after they escaped from LRA captivity. Another planned her escape with other forced wives saying that she saw no other alternative:

There were four of us who planned to escape. One other was a co-wife with me. There were others who had escaped before and I did not know of another way (out). It was difficult for us because we had to move so much and I had become pregnant again from this man. It was during Operation Iron Fist, and we all escaped during a UPDF attack.

Reception centers

Forced wives and mothers appear to have gone through reception centers at high rates relative to other abducted populations. Over 50 percent of forced wives and 70 percent of those with children spent some amount of time within a reception center. These high percentages are largely explained by abduction length, as longer time abductees enter reception centers at significantly higher rates than others (see section IV on war experiences and abduction). Forced wives also report higher rates of receiving an Amnesty Certificate as compared to other abducted females. Of the total population of forced wives who birthed children in captivity, 54 percent received an Amnesty Certificate compared to only 11 percent of other abductees.

Post-captivity and former captor husbands

Forced marriages between abducted females and male LRA commanders and fighters are not recognized or binding by any legal standard in Uganda, nor are they recognized by customary law or practice in northern Uganda.

None of the females we interviewed who experienced a forced marriage currently live with their captor husband. This is significant for two reasons: First, for those who conceived children with these men, they do not rely upon financial or material support from the men who fathered the children. Second, it counters opinions shared among some people within religious, political, and clan communities that females who have

been forcibly married should, and often do, choose to remain with their captor husbands after they exit from the LRA. In fact, nearly one in four former forced wives have married men other than their captor husbands since exiting the LRA.

Of all forced wives, an overwhelming 98 percent report that they are better off living apart from their captor husband out of captivity. Females respond differently when asked about the primary reason why they are no longer with their captor husband. In some cases the captor husbands have died or their location is unknown. Others report they have new husbands or simply no longer want the captor husband in their life. One woman expressed no interest in ever seeing him again:

If he returns from the LRA I never want to see him again and I will never accept to have anyone take my child (born from captivity) away from me. If he wants the child he should not have any rights in regards to my child and will never take it from me.

The high rate of rejection of future involvement with a former captor husband is especially noteworthy when considering the future of those forced wives who remain in captivity today. Our data suggests that it is very likely that they, too, will choose to live apart from their captor husbands if they are given the space to make decisions for themselves and their children. On two occasions, it has been reported that former LRA male commanders returned from the bush with their forced wives and that at least one female remains with her captor husband despite efforts by police and her family to have her released. The moment forced wives return from the bush with captor husbands is the most important time to allow for the freedom of choice.

Traditional cleansing ceremonies

Cleansing ceremonies are a part of the return process for a number of returnee males and females (see section IV on war experiences and section VI on psychosocial wellbeing). Abductees who bear a child in captivity are significantly less likely to receive a cleansing ceremony than other abductees. Importantly, for females that returned from experiences of forced marriages there are no specific ceremonies that address the types of violence such as rape and other forms of sexual abuse that these females experienced while in captivity. Although there are cleansing ceremonies for instances of rape, it is a requirement that female victims return to the site where the rape occurred in order for the ceremony to be performed (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). For girls forced into marriage and subsequently raped and sexually abused, it may well prove too difficult to return to locations where such crimes took place. Importantly, when it is not possible to return to the exact place of the rape, clan elders say that there is no other option available for the performance of the ritual and traditional cleansing.

Former forced wives described traditional ceremonies as “wasteful” and “useless.” One former forced wife described her frustration with the ceremony and complained about how she was treated by the elders:

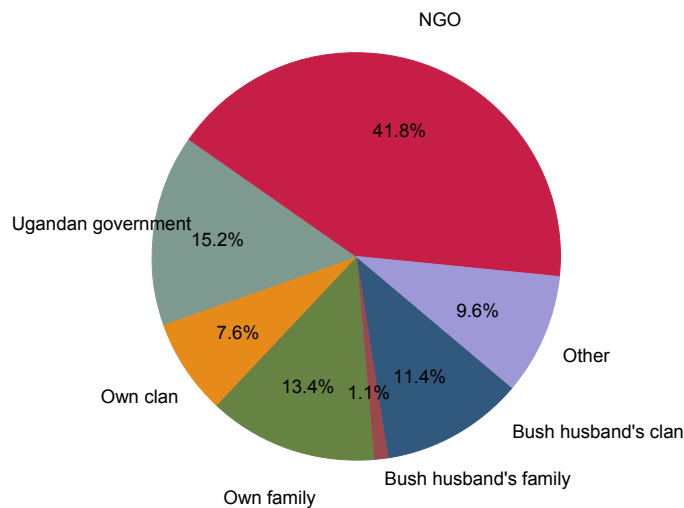
I was given an egg to step on after my first abduction but there were no ceremonies after I returned from my second abduction. I don't know what the egg was for or what it implied but it is what the elders wanted and I did it only because they told me to do it. I was told it was Acholi culture so I must do it but there was no further explanation than that. After I stepped on the egg I wasn't even allowed to wash it off until I walked all the way home.

Another former forced wife felt that the ceremony alone was insufficient to help her deal with the trauma she experienced during her captivity:

The ceremony has done nothing for me as I still experience psychological trauma and physical discomforts. It is what the community people want, but it was not enough.

In one IDP camp where we worked, the male clan elders claimed that all the former female abductees, including forced wives, had gone through a cleansing ceremony. However, only two of the four former forced wives individually interviewed in the camp had participated in a ceremony since returning from captivity over a year earlier. Some clan leaders are unaware of who has gone through such ceremonies and appear unable to monitor who has or has not benefited from cleansing ceremonies if they have been performed.

Figure 5.5 Responses of Mothers Asked Who Should Help Raise Children Born in Captivity



Accountability and assistance

Support for children among forced wives is an important consideration. Sixty-one percent of forced mothers said that someone should be responsible for helping them with the maintenance of their children born from forced marriages within the LRA (Figure 5.3). Of those who feel entitled to assistance, 41 percent responded that NGOs should provide this help. This is likely due to the assumption that NGOs have the resources to provide assistance. The next highest response, at 15 percent, cites government responsibility to assist these females and their children.

Clan leaders interviewed also agree that those forcibly married and with children should receive assistance from the government.

However, they are skeptical if any assistance will be forthcoming. In one camp, clan elders felt that there could be compensation given when a man returns from the bush and pays money to his former forced wife's family in order to stay with her. As one clan leader explained:

If both return and are willing to stay together then the boy will most likely need to pay some kind of compensation to the family of the girl. When there is compensation to be given, then it is given to the female's father and if there is a son to be married then it will likely be used for this, but in this camp there are no cases of compensation to the families of any girls who have returned from captivity with children.

Some females with children from captor husbands reported that the fathers of the children should be held accountable and support the children. However, when considering that such support would require some form of contact between the captor husband and the female, there is hesitation on the part of the females as they want no further contact with these males.

Other females have responded that Joseph Kony and other top LRA commanders who orchestrated their abductions and distribution as forced wives should be responsible for providing financial assistance. Going even further, in several interviews, former forced wives and others said top LRA commanders should face capital punishment for their role in forcing females into marriage and child birth. One former forced wife explained that because of what was done to her during captivity:

The top commanders to the LRA should be killed. No one in this community can help me. Those who are the commanders of this conflict should be made to pay a price and I think that should be death.

Few former forced wives thought that traditional justice mechanisms were the best approach to dealing with the LRA leadership. However, one former forced wife in a unit which included Vincent Otti said:

The LRA leadership should be given amnesty and dealt with by Acholi traditional methods. We can forgive them because most of them were abducted also.

This is consistent with a previous survey (Pham, Vinck, Stover et al., 2007), in which a significant proportion of respondents said that local customs and rituals would be useful to address LRA members and that LRA members who return to their communities should undergo a traditional healing ritual. Another former forced wife believed that many of the males were forced to take wives and they should not be punished for actions they could not control. However, she was less sympathetic towards top LRA leadership:

There should be forgiveness to the other abductees like the boys who had to take wives. But for the commanders, they should be hanged like Saddam Hussein. When the commanders come out of the bush they should be able to relax and settle in and forget about what they have done. Then, that would be a good time to hang them.

Others were more pragmatic about how justice should be served:

Kony should be the one blamed. He controlled his commanders to do what they did. All the young people being abducted and being abused and the girls sexually abused—this is what my priority is when I think of justice. I will feel very great relief when Kony is taken away in a high court or the ICC.



This woman provides mental counselling and support to female youth within her IDP community, Pader district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

VI. Psychosocial Well-being and Mental Health

Psychosocial well-being has been the focus of many programs in northern Uganda, seen as important given its potential implications on youth's education and livelihood. It can be defined in various ways but generally refers to a person's thoughts and feelings and their connection with family and community relationships. This section is concerned with both psychosocial well-being and mental health, looking at relational problems and psychological symptoms while also examining coping and resiliency within the specific cultural context in the north.

SWAY findings show that a small, but significant, percentage of female youth struggle with frequent symptoms of distress or with troubled family relationships. While this demonstrates strong resilience in the community, it also highlights the need to support those with psychosocial problems. This section explores psychological symptoms and social relationships and details the following points:

Our psychosocial questionnaire, developed over several months of field work and testing, was adapted from Loughry & MacMullen (2002) and used first in SWAY I.

Symptoms of Emotional Distress

- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Nightmares and insomnia
- Hyperarousal
- Feelings of loneliness and helplessness
- Feeling unloved
- Feeling sad
- Extreme fear of losing one's family
- Keeping to oneself when worried
- Crying when thinking of the past
- Headaches, chest pain and shaking from 'over-thinking'

- A small percentage of females experience disabling symptoms of emotional distress.²⁰
- Overall, formerly-abducted youth experience more emotional distress than non-abducted females and this is largely explained by their increased exposure to violence.
- On average, those who were forced wives and forced mothers in the LRA were more likely to report higher levels of distress than their abducted peers. This is explained by their increased exposure to violence during extended stays with the rebels.
- Girls and young women report being exposed to less types of measured war violence than males. Less than two percent of females report experiencing none of the violent events measured.
- The majority of females report positive family and community relationships, which are key protective factors for emotional distress. Orphans

are not more likely to have high levels of distress unless they have low levels of connectedness with their families.

- However, one in six females report having negative family relationships and 13% report experiencing domestic violence by a family member or husband in the previous two months.
- On average, being abducted did not impact youth's overall social support or relationships with family and neighbors. Forced mothers did not report more problems with families or communities. However, if they did have problems, they were less likely to diminish over time.
- A small minority of women report drinking alcohol. However, 60 percent report that their husbands drink alcohol and over one-third of these that their husbands are often drunk. The frequency of husband's intoxication is related to women's emotional distress.

Symptoms of distress

The average number of emotional distress symptoms reported by female youth ranges between six symptoms experienced often to 16 different symptoms experienced on rare occasion. Symptoms of distress include nightmares, difficulty concentrating, shaking from worrying, crying, feeling lonely, and becoming easily irritated (for a full list of symptoms on this scale see box above). The average score is just above the bottom quarter of possible scores on the scale described and under one percent of females scored in the top quarter of possible scores. There is no significant difference in distress by age.

²⁰ This study was not designed to determine any clinical cut-off (i.e., stating that people are clinically depressed or have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and therefore levels indicate approximations based on other widely used psychological instruments with similar populations²⁰. One of the challenges of measuring psychosocial well-being is that levels of severity can differ across countries and cultures and, therefore this should be considered merely an estimate of levels of symptoms in the region.

While most female youth in this area reported some symptoms of distress, many are able to cope with their symptoms and continue with their daily activities. It is when the symptoms interfere with daily functioning—when they become an obstacle to education, income generation or relationships—that that they are of serious concern.

This study found that there is no overall relationship between emotional distress and education or employment. However, as addressed in previous sections, there are many other factors that impact female education and employment, which makes this relationship difficult to determine.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with girls and young women who reported the highest levels of emotional distress and many reported that their lives were greatly affected by their symptoms.

This young secondary student who was abducted for one month describes how her symptoms affect her studies and friendships:

I dream of dead people. At times I could dream that am killing someone. I can't sleep at night because of too much thinking. At night I could find myself talking alone and sometimes my friends could ask me if am normal because of the things I was doing at night. I always go to one of the teachers for advice because even if I try to read my books I don't understand what is in the book. I always get thoughts of the things which were happening to me when I was still in the bush.

After returning from abduction and finding that her parents had been killed during a rebel attack, she decided that she still wanted to take her end of primary school (grade 7) exams. Unfortunately, she failed the exam. Determined to continue with her education, she decided to try again the following year. This time, she passed the exam but found no further funding for secondary school. Finally, she convinced a relative to pay for her studies but when she returned, she found herself impeded by nightmares, difficulty concentrating, and a desire to isolate herself from others. She described how others thought she was “mad” and called her a “night-dancer,” afraid that she was possessed by spirits.

Her desire to continue with education, along with support from a few caring teachers, has allowed her to continue her education. But she described another peer who ended up leaving school for a similar reason:

Q. Do any of your friends also have nightmares?

A . They are there. One was being disturbed by nightmares and evil spirits but she left studies. But the people [who have nightmares] are not many.

Another woman in her thirties who takes care of five children—two of her own and three from her late sister—described how her symptoms affect her work.

Q. Do these nightmares interfere with your daily work like digging, cooking and the way you normally live?

A . Yes, they do because I feel sickly and weak in my joints [from the nightmares]. Sometimes I can feel like I am so cold and can't even gather enough strength to do garden work

Traditional ways of healing and coping

Most people in the region have a spiritual interpretation of their symptoms, attributing nightmares and other traumatic reactions to *cen*—vengeance by a spirit that has been mistreated. *Cen* is seen not only as harmful to the individual but many believe that the spirit can pollute families and neighbors, which can result in stigmatization of the individual. Eleven percent of females report being haunted by spirits. Others who have converted to evangelical Christianity similarly attribute symptoms to possession by evil spirits and individual or community prayer is seen as essential for healing (of course, there are many in the region that simultaneously hold both traditional and Christian beliefs). Rituals, ceremonies and prayers are therefore seen as essential for individual healing as well as for broader acceptance into families and communities. Those in captivity for longer periods are more likely to have rituals and ceremonies than those who were abducted for less time. However, forced mothers were less likely to have rituals than other returnees. Several of the rituals mark an end to or leaving behind of what was done in the past and a new beginning with the family. Other ceremonies offer compensation to help appease the vengeful spirit (for a detailed explanation of rituals and ceremonies, see Baines (2005) and Caritas (2005)).

Some of the young women interviewed explained how rituals had helped to decrease their nightmares or strong memories. However, others described continued problems even after a ritual or ceremony was performed.

Q. Is there anything that you have ever tried to do to stop these bad dreams and nightmares from disturbing you?

A. Just only prayers which in most cases I pray on my own to God so that he may forgive me of any wrong that I might have done if at all I committed it. The nightmare and the evil spirits all disturbed me. It used to happen twice a week. I tried prayers, and it also helped me for sometime but the time came when it started disturbing me again, until now. It disturbs me at least once in a month. But I don't know whose spirits they are.

When experiencing distress, girls and women reported that spending time with friends and talking with someone about a problem were important coping mechanisms. Some explain that the main advice friends or family members give them is to forget the past and move forward. While this seems to comfort some by encouraging them to think of things other than their past trauma, others find it impossible to forget their experiences. To some, this advice sends a message that the past events should not be talked about. Given the vast amounts of traumatic experiences in this area, keeping silent about past events may be a way to avoid triggering other people's memories. However, since traumatic events often leave people with vivid, intrusive memories, this message may leave some feeling isolated with their memories, unable to explore ways of understanding what has happened to them.

Another common method of coping was "going somewhere else." This may be a way to avoid places, people or things that trigger certain memories and reactions. One woman explained how she refused to leave town and return to the rural area with her parents because it brought back powerful memories of *olum*—a word literally meaning grass but synonymous for both the "bush" and the rebels. While avoiding certain reminders of the past can at times be a useful and adaptive coping mechanism, it can also be very limiting. Further, it can keep fears and symptoms entrenched if people continue to avoid the things that remind them of their difficult past. People's tendency to avoid certain reminders may become more evident as they move home to places where atrocities have been committed.

Gender differences

Girls and young women report experiencing more emotional distress than males who were surveyed one year previously. On average, females report an increase of just over one symptom compared with their male counterparts (or an increase in the frequency of two to four symptoms). This gender difference in the reporting of symptoms is consistent with other psychological studies, which show women reporting higher symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (Tolin & Foa, 2006).

In this study, however, it is important to note the difference in timing and therefore the contexts of the interviews between the two genders. Females were interviewed approximately one year after the male interviews were conducted. During the time of the male interviews, the rebels were roaming Kitgum and Pader Districts and were regularly attacking people on roads and in the fields. There were fewer abductions during this period but communities had heightened fears of rebel attacks. Further, nearly the entire population was in the government-enforced displacement camps during the male interviews. In July 2006, peace talks began between the Ugandan government and the LRA and a ceasefire was signed in August 2006. Months went by with no rebel attacks. Interviews of females followed these events, beginning in November of the same year. Throughout the female interviews, there was very little rebel activity and some people began leaving the displacement camps, settling in new sites closer to their land.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to know what female scores would have looked like if they were conducted at the same time as the male interviews. The ongoing rebel attacks may have meant that female distress scores would have been even higher, showing a larger division between males and females. Contrarily, it may be that the current situation with relative peace and security has brought more normalcy into people's lives, allowing them to experience more distress symptoms than they were experiencing last year. This would mean the gender gap would be even smaller than it is now.

In measuring psychosocial symptoms, it is important to note that levels often change over time, depending both on individual reactions and current circumstances. While for the majority of people who experience stress reactions to a traumatic event, symptoms of distress decrease over time, it is also possible for people to have delayed onset of symptoms. This woman who spent nine years with the LRA describes her experience:

Q. How was your life taking you in the past few months?

A. I have been staying [well] but you know, when someone is abducted in the bush at least she has to kill a person. So when you first came here and interviewed me [several months ago], I did not have any problem. But now the evil spirit has started disturbing me. Just of recent, we tried performing some traditional rituals and I was given some local traditional herbs that can stop the spirit from disturbing me.

Q. How did it start disturbing you?

A. It could just come like sunshine and all of a sudden attack me and if it comes, it wants to kill me. But since we performed the traditional rituals, there have been some changes.

Q. Why did it start disturbing you of late?

A. You know these things come slowly, slowly. Even if you get this thing, it can stay for the whole year without disturbing you but can start later. You can think you are sick but when you go for the rituals that is when you know you are being disturbed by the spirit...

Formerly-abducted youth

On average, formerly-abducted females experience one more symptom of emotional distress (or an increase in the frequency of two to three symptoms) than those females that have not been abducted.

Figure 6.1 Distribution of Emotional Distress Among Youth

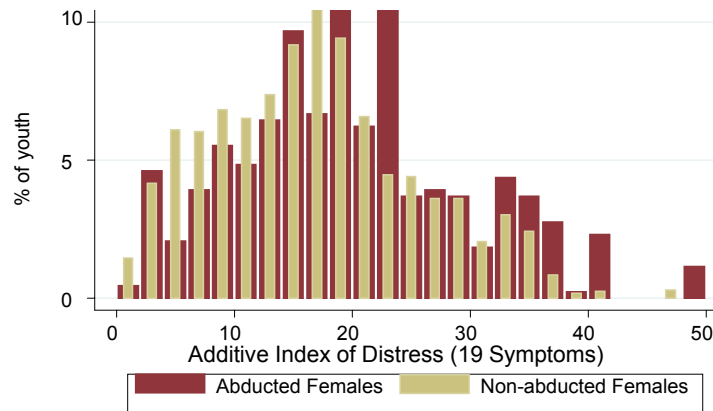
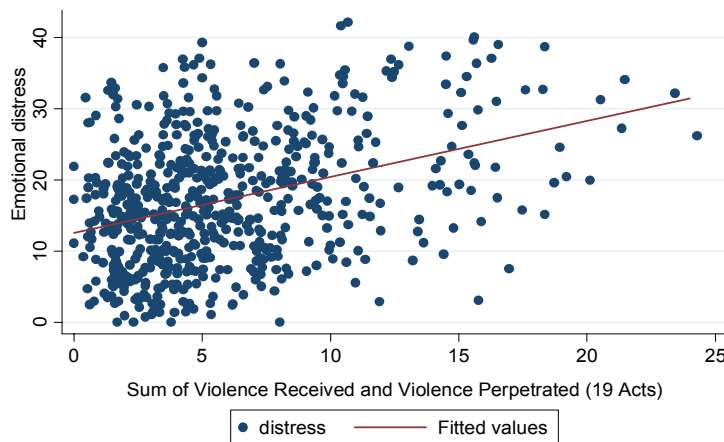


Figure 6.2 Experiences of Violence and Number and Frequency of Reported Distress



symptoms of distress. In the qualitative interviews with these respondents, their relationships with husbands and other male figures were often cited as a reason for distress.

Q. Are you still having the dreams and nightmares that you described to us last time?

A. Yes, they still disturb me. Because when my husband quarrels or causes chaos and fights, I develop thoughts about my past life and the good times I use to have with my mother who is already deceased. Sometime back this made me to suffer heartburn and I had to visit the doctor in order to get some treatment and I realized some improvement afterward. However, I still experience the bad dreams.

Past and current violence is not the only factor that impacts women's emotional distress. Other current life stressors can have an impact on psychosocial wellbeing. In this study, having fewer household assets and having a physical injury are also predictors of higher levels of distress. Women also stressed the health of their children

The heightened emotional distress in the abducted group is explained by their increased experiences of violence—those who experience more traumatic events report higher levels of distress. This relationship remains even when controlling for length of abduction, which means it is the violence, not prolonged time with the rebels, that explains the distress. This is consistent with findings in other war-affected populations (Mollica, McInnes, Poole, & Tor, 1998).

Figure 6.2 shows the relationship between increased experiences of violence and increased number and frequency of distress reported. However, it is interesting to note that while this is true on average (shown by the red line), there is also a lot of variability in distress reactions (shown by blue dots). Other factors related to distress include family and community connectedness, having a serious illness or injury, and having fewer household assets.

Further, while the abducted experience more distress on average, a number of young women who have not been abducted also suffer from numerous

as a major concern. Further, relationships with families and communities can be an important protective factor and will be further discussed later in this section.

Forced wives and forced mothers

Compared to their abducted peers, women who were given in forced marriage and those who bore children from the LRA have higher levels of distress on average. This seems to be largely explained by their increased exposure to violence from their prolonged time in the bush as forced wives spent an average of 45 months in captivity versus an average of six months for abducted females who were not given as wives.

This means that while those who are forced mothers are more likely to experience distress, increased experiences of violence is a better predictor of distress. It also means that those who were not given as wives but who experienced high levels of violence are still likely to experience high levels of distress.

Exposure to violence

On average, girls and young women experience five of 25 of the violent events measured. There is a large difference between those abducted and those who have not been abducted, with those abducted reporting five more types of violence, on average. In the sample of 619 females from age 14 to 35, less than two percent reported never experiencing any of the violent events measured. The list of traumatic experiences is presented in section IV on war violence and abduction.

This is lower than the average reported number by males at nine types of traumatic experiences. The difference in traumatic events reported shows that males in this area are reporting that they are exposed to more *types* of the war violence measured; however, it is important to note that this measure does not account for the *length or severity* of the traumas experienced.²¹

Perpetrator violence

Fifty-seven percent of abducted females reported perpetrating some form of violence—looting, beating, or killing—confirming that females are not merely passive recipients of violence in this war. Females perpetrated the same types of violence as males did. Twenty-five percent reported having to kill a stranger, friend, or family member. Some are able to understand this violence as part of what they were forced to do, however, others are haunted by what they did. One adolescent explained clearly, “*I was forced to kill some man and he keeps coming in my dreams.*”

Another vividly described her nightmares and flashbacks related to her own violence.

If [the spirit] comes, it wants to take all of your body. It wants to kill and that is why I had to go for rituals.

... Q. How did you know it wanted to kill you?

A. It moves with weapons for fighting and it could say we have killed him so he wants to kill us also, he wants me to be like him.

²¹ It is also important to remember that the context in which males and females were interviewed differs dramatically, which may affect how they responded. However, there is evidence that traumatic memories are consistent over periods of time (Porter & Peace, 2007).

Those who blame themselves for the violence they perpetrated experience higher levels of emotional distress. Importantly, the more time that a youth has been back from abduction, the less she blames herself for the violence she perpetrated. This is most likely evidence that for many female youth, self-blame diminishes as time away from the rebels increases.

Positive family and community relationships as protective factors

Beyond war experiences, distress is also related to current stressors. Both family and community connectedness—defined by comfort, closeness, and lack of fighting—is related to lower symptoms of distress. The same is true for orphans; it is the quality of relationship with the families that is significantly related to the amount of distress rather than whether one is an orphan or not. However, it is the case that on average orphans are more likely to experience difficult family relationships.

Abducted youth's relationships

Contrary to some perceptions, abduction, on average, does not negatively impact girls and young women's relationship with their families and community, nor does it impact how much support one receives from friends and family. In comparison, abducted males reported less comfort and more quarrels with their families although they had similar levels of support from family and friends.

However, 40 percent of females do have problems with their community at some point after their return. This formerly-abducted youth describes her experience when she returned:

When I returned home life was not good because people could point at my back when I was passing by, especially the neighbors. They use to talk bad things about me like that I was a rebel, that we were killing people, and [ask] what is it that is making us to come back home. [They would say that] we should all be killed.

For the majority of female youth, community connectedness strengthens over time—the longer they are back from the bush, the more connected they feel. However, this is not the case for everyone.

Q. Do your neighbors still disturb you or talk bad things about you even now?

A. They still talk about it but my people [my family] love me and they feel I am important to them.

In this case, this woman's family acceptance seems to act as a protective factor for those who do have problems with their neighbors. Family and community reintegration is further discussed in section X.

The family's perspective

One of the issues that has not been widely explored in the region is the family's experience of a youth's abduction and return. Some families describe struggling with how to deal with those who return and act in ways that are different from what they remember. This younger brother explains about his sister's return:

She was not staying normally. She had changed; she was not the person we knew before. She was running [with] so many men and she didn't want us to say anything. She even talked of committing suicide.

Qualitative interviews revealed many concerns from parents and guardians struggling with how to parent in camp life where there are more outside influences on their children's behaviors. In the box below an aunt describes her feelings of impotence as her niece's behaviour made her increasingly vulnerable in the displacement camp.

A Guardian's Perspective

My niece, when she left home, she was different than when she returned. I realized changes in her behavior because whenever I could ask her question, she broke into tears. She could not say a word. I had to leave her [alone] so that her mind should first get settled. At times if I asked question, she could break into loud crying and at times she just kept quiet for a long time. And in most cases I could fail to predict what was wrong with her or the reason for her silence. So knowing what exactly had happened to her was difficult.

Q. How was she relating to the others at home when she returned?

A. Her behavior was the same. If she was annoyed with her fellow children, she would just beat them. So when we realized the changes in her, we all got scared of her. We kept on monitoring her and acting politely until when she realized that people were not giving her easy time and due to fear, she eloped when she was still young and during her first birth, she produced a premature baby. And the child died from the hospital.

Later on she came back home and when she was old enough, she went with another man...I think what made her to leave home by that time was because of our position from the camp. We were staying at the extreme end of the camp and the rebels when they come, they passed through our compound and all the time we were hearing gun shots. From that time, she started looking for shelter in the centre where she can commute at night in order to protect her life and by the time I realized what was going on, she was already pregnant. She got her belongings and went with that man.

We tried to follow her and see if she could come back home but she was only crying to us. So we left her because she told us that she doubt if she will be alive on this earth.... Her first husband was old if I'm to compare with my niece because he first eloped with some other girl and then later on with my niece. He beats her and even injured her when she was pregnant. So blood started coming out of her body and we took her to the hospital and then her mother in law came and took her to Lacor hospital. When she returned from the hospital her husband did not welcome her. He refused to talk to her and even knowing her condition, he did not bother. So we went and brought her back home.

Difficult family relationships and domestic violence

Being estranged from one's family is grave in an area where family relationships are important not just for emotional well-being but also for livelihoods. One in six females report having negative relationships with their family, either their own or their husband's, where they do not feel comfortable and have frequent fights. Females with serious family problems often have few outside alternatives given the social norms and economic dependence.

Thirteen percent of females report having been beaten by a family member or husband in the past two months. Sexual and domestic violence is discussed in detail in section VIII.

Alcohol use

Only 11 percent of women reported drinking any alcohol with a very small minority reporting having more than one drink per week. However, a majority (60 percent) stated that their husbands drink alcohol. Of these, one-third reported that their husbands were often drunk, suggesting a higher prevalence of alcohol abuse than the SWAY I report indicated, where men self-reported their alcohol use. Women whose husbands are drunk frequently report more emotional distress.

Alcohol is often described by women as associated with physical or verbal aggression toward them or other dependents (see section VIII for a detailed discussion of domestic violence).

In most cases [when my husband drinks and I want to keep myself safe], I run to his brother who stays near our home here. He is the one who usually settles issues that crop up between me and my husband and his brother can tell him point blank the wrong that he always does. Like one day, he took alcohol, came back home and began to quarrel a lot up to a point where he got two pangas [machetes] and sat with them in front of the door. When I saw that, I went to his brother who had to come and settle that problem.

It is not only those who are married who are affected by alcohol abuse. Below is an adolescent who describes her relationship with her uncle, who has been her guardian since her parents died:

[My uncle] was not taking good care of me because if he is drunk, he could tell me that am not his child and he can abuse me and my deceased parents. At times I could leave home and return when he is already asleep...He could say my parent were stupid because they did not run when the rebels came and that is why they were both killed. But my parents could not run because the rebels had already got them at home...At times he beats me when he is drunk. He doesn't want to see me reading, because he wants to see me working in the garden.

The link between alcohol abuse and domestic violence is seen in many other contexts (WHO, 2005) and is an essential component to combating gender-based violence in the region.



Women collecting water in an IDP camp, Pader district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

VII. Health

This section discusses health issues that are not discussed elsewhere in this report. The main findings presented in this section are as follows:

- Seven percent of female youth report serious illness or injury.
- Nearly half of the health challenges reported by females are physical-illness related, with TB the most commonly reported ailment.
- A quarter of female injuries were attributed to the conflict.
- Three-quarters of women believe that wearing a condom protects them from HIV/AIDS while less than half actually use them.

Injury and illness

Seven percent of female youth and 13 percent of male youth report a serious illness or injury (defined as the inability to complete one or more basic tasks without great difficulty, including walking for three miles, carrying a jerry can, and/or standing-up from a sitting position). These figures suggest that there are thousands

of non-abducted and formerly-abducted in urgent need of treatment. Of those with serious injuries, nearly 80 percent say that their inability causes them a great deal of distress.

Almost one-third of females say that they were unable to work, attend school, or carry out their normal duties because of an injury or illness at least once during the past four weeks—there is no significant difference between abducted and non-abducted females. Those reporting serious injuries missed an average of 3.64 days of work or school in the previous four weeks compared to an average of 1.06 days missed among those reporting no physical injuries. Furthermore, those with serious injuries worked on average three hours fewer per day in the last previous four weeks than those without serious injuries.

Assistance for injury and illness

Forty percent of formerly-abducted females who report disabilities or major difficulties performing basic tasks report receiving medical assistance from an NGO or a community-based organization (CBO) assistance to address their injuries. This is compared to 18 percent of non-abducted females reporting the same disabilities or major difficulties. Females injured while with the LRA or those captured by UPDF soldiers stood a greater chance of receiving NGO or CBO medical support due to possible entrance into reception centers. Non-abducted injured females would not have this option, but would need to seek out medical attention by other means. Among abducted and non-abducted females, 21 percent report receiving somekind of medical assistance from an NGO or CBO to address their injuries.

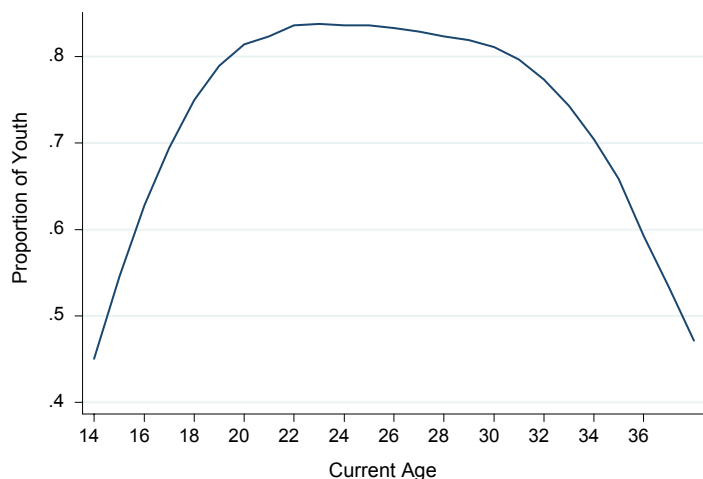
LRA related injury and illness

A previously abducted female suffering from an injury is substantially more likely to have been injured by the LRA than a female who has no history of abduction. For those reporting serious injuries, 20 percent were inflicted by the LRA and seven percent by the Ugandan army.

A quarter of female injuries and a third of male injuries were attributed to the conflict (in most cases inflicted by the LRA). A higher propensity for males to be abducted, as well as injured as a consequence of abduction,

accounts for most of the excess in injuries reported by males over females. These figures suggest that two to four percent of youth exhibit a persistent war-related wound or injury. In fact, two percent of males reported still having shrapnel or bullets in their bodies.

Figure 7.1 Proportion of Youth Agreeing Condoms Prevent Spread of HIV/AIDS



HIV/AIDS and condom usage

Less than half (48 percent) of women reported that they use condoms regularly. Of that number, 77 percent believe that the usage of condoms will protect them from the spread of HIV/AIDS. Younger women are less likely to realize that condoms prevent the spread of the HIV virus.



Women elders who work with females concerning issues of domestic violence, Pader district.
(Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

VIII. Sexual and Domestic Violence

This section details findings regarding female youth's experiences of, responses to and attitudes about sexual and domestic violence.²²

- Formerly-abducted females experienced more sexually violent events than non-abducted females and both abducted and non-abducted males. Forced wives and mothers experienced the highest rates of sexual violence.
- Of the female youth who reported that they were beaten and physically abused in the previous two months, the majority were beaten by their husbands or domestic partners and family members.
- When female youth are physically threatened in the community, approximately one in four say they turn to a Local Council (LC) official²³ to help them, while another one in four say they seek the

²² Based on our study design, it is not possible to determine which acts of violence were gender-based, and therefore we focused on sexual and domestic violence.

²³ The Resistance Council (RC) system of governance was set up in 1982 to create order in Uganda. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) cites the local councils as one of the highlights of their democratic credentials. According to President Yoweri Museveni, RCs were started to help the guerrilla army organise. The organisation of the RCs ensured that villagers were part of the revolution. When the NRM came to power in 1986, RCs replaced officials known as Mayumba

assistance of the leader of their father's clan. Less than one percent report that they seek assistance from an NGO or health care worker or a member of the Ugandan armed forces.

- When females are beaten by husbands or domestic partners, they are most likely to turn to their husband's clan leader, an LC official, their father's clan leader or a community or camp leader for help. They are least likely to seek help from a religious leader.
- The vast majority of female youth, over 70 percent, believe that clan leaders or husbands do not have a right to beat them. Over 80 percent of female youth said that their husbands do not have a right to sex on demand. Younger females show much lower rates of acceptance of violence against females than do their older counterparts.

Experiences of sexual violence

Formerly-abducted females have experienced significantly more sexually violent events than non-abducted females. We measured sexual violence as experiences of sexual abuse, being forced to have sex with a man, and witnessing rape or sexual abuse of another woman.²⁴ Indeed, approximately a quarter of formerly-abducted females reported experiencing each of the aforementioned sexually violent events.²⁵

Among abductees, forced marriage is the main determinant of having experienced or witnessed sexual violence. While forced mothers do experience more distress than their abducted peers,²⁶ these elevated levels appear to be explained by their increased exposure to violence (see section VI on psychosocial wellbeing). Interestingly, we know that forced mothers experience more violence than their abducted peers even when we take abduction length into account (see section V on forced marriage, and section IV on war experiences). We believe this increased rate of violence is due to the fact that forced wives are under the control of not only LRA commanders, but also their captive husband, who is able to enforce another layer of control and abuse onto them.

For decades in northern Uganda, there were few services or remedies available for survivors of sexual violence. The increased presence of international NGOs in northern Uganda, much of it in the last five years, has expanded both advocacy on decreasing sexual violence and services for survivors. However, there continues to be little remedy (particularly legal remedy) for survivors of sexual violence.

Kumi (In charge of 10 houses). Parish Chiefs and sub-county chiefs were posted for Parish and Sub-County respectively, while District Commissioners were posted to districts. RCs became Local Councils (LCs) after the making of the 1995 Constitution and the Local Government Act in 1997. LCs took on a more political roles as specified in the decentralisation system specified the roles of the LC system. LC5 comprise a district, LC3 a sub-county, LC2 a parish while LC1 is a village council. Although the officials in the higher levels of the LC system are paid, LC1 and LC2 work as volunteers. However, LC1s have created their own sources of income. For example, they levy fines and charges on residents. Most LCs charge a fee whenever they issue a document to a resident and they charge a fee from whoever buys or sells land in a given area. Excerpts from Joshua Kato, "LC system: NRM's greatest claim to democracy," *New Vision*, April 7, 2008.

²⁴ We believe that sexual abuse was under-reported by both males and females, abducted and non-abducted. In particular, reported rates of sexual abuse among non-abducted females are unrealistically low, at three percent. As in other countries, in Uganda sexual abuse is highly taboo (for the victim) and is often perpetrated by persons close to the victim, hence leading to shame, fear and under-reporting by survivors.

²⁵ Importantly, this finding refers only to war-related violence as indicated in Tables 4.1 and 4.1 in the section on war experiences, and does not refer to family violence which is measured and captured later in this section.

²⁶ Controlling for age, location and abduction length we find that on average, forced wives have a level of emotional distress that is four points higher than that of their abducted peers. The difference is significant at the ten percent level.

Physical abuse and assault

In the two months prior to being interviewed, approximately eight/ten percent of females reported that they were beaten or assaulted by their domestic partner, six percent were beaten or assaulted by a family member, and one percent were beaten by clan elders or LC officials. There are no significant differences between abductees and non-abductees in terms of the percentage of females who have recently received beatings or were assaulted.

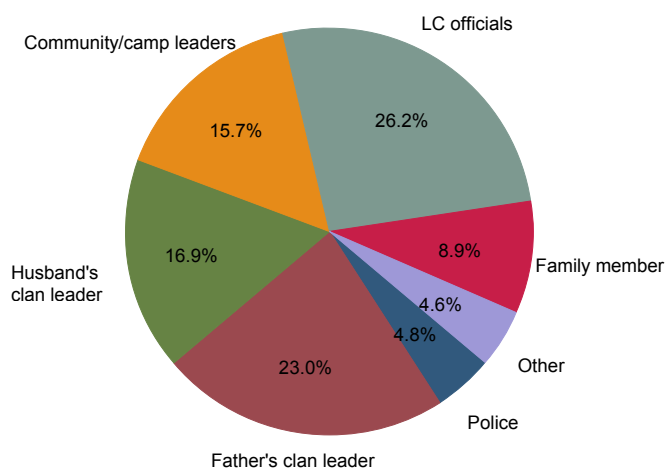
Within families, younger females are much more likely to have received a beating or been assaulted than older females. For example, a 15-year old is five times more likely to be beaten or assaulted than a 25-year-old. This suggests that female children under the age of 18 are at the greatest risk for physical abuse in the form of beatings or assault. These female children are most often beaten or assaulted by their family members. Older females, however, are most often beaten or assaulted by their husbands.

Seeking assistance when threatened or beaten

We asked female youth who they trusted and hence who they would turn to if they found themselves physically threatened (Figure 8.1). Approximately a quarter of female youth said they would turn to an LC official, while another quarter say they would turn to the leader of their father's clan. Other top-ranking choices included their husband's clan leader (17 percent) or a camp leader (16 percent).

Interestingly, less than ten percent said they would ask family members to assist them. Notably, less than one percent said they would turn to an NGO or health care worker, or a member of the Ugandan army. These findings are similar for both non-abducted and formerly-abducted females, including forced wives and forced mothers.

Figure 8.1 Responses of Female Respondents Asked Whom They Trusted When Physically Threatened



We spoke with female youth about who they would turn to for help in the case of their husband or domestic partner physically abusing them (Table 8.1). Nearly 40 percent say they would go to their husband's clan leader, a quarter would go to an LC official, followed by their father's clan leader and community or camp leaders. Only five percent would go to the police²⁷ and none said they would seek the help of a religious leader. Indeed, Amnesty International (2007) has found that lack of access to police and medical examination, as well as discrimination in the court system, has resulted in many unreported cases of violence against women.

²⁷ Since the study was conducted police services have greatly expanded in northern Uganda and hence may represent an alternative channel that we did not necessarily capture.

Table 8.1 Female Youth Seeking Assistance for Domestic Violence

Who in the community do women trust if beaten by husband/domestic partner?	Percentage
Husband’s clan leader	37.8%
LC officials	24.9%
Father’s clan leader	16.2%
Community/camp leaders	9.5%
Police	5.4%
Other	4.9%
No one	0.9%
Army/LDU soldiers	0.3%
Religious leaders	0.0%

The systems of law and order and the judicial system in northern Uganda are extremely weak. Hence, we should be careful not to misinterpret female youth’s reliance on clan leaders and LC officials as one of choice, versus one of lack of choice. Other studies have found that many Acholi clan leaders and LC officials tend to hold very patriarchal assumptions about the ‘acceptable’ behavior for Acholi females and that they will seek to enforce their viewpoints in cases of domestic and sexual violence, often to the detriment of females attempting to exercise their rights.

Many clan leaders and LC officials interviewed condone and even justify the beating of women. Some beatings are justified by explanation of women’s ‘poor work ethic’. Perceived transgressions can include the failure to cook food on time, do laundry, fetch water, collect firewood, garden, or discipline children properly, leaving the house without the husband’s permission, coming home late, sleeping in the daytime or being drunk. Clan leaders and LC officials say beatings are also justified when a woman’s behavior toward her husband is offensive. Women confirmed that men felt the aforementioned actions justified beating them. In addition, women reported being beaten for refusing to have sex (see Carlson and Mazurana, 2006).

Clan leaders, in particular, advocate for women to adhere to strict codes of behavior based on traditional, patriarchal values and practices. Women violating these codes within their households are seen as threatening to the patriarchal and traditional power relations within a clan and the larger “Acholi culture” as a whole. The assertion by clan leaders that unruly women are a threat to cultural norms is more than a desire to control female behavior in the household. Clan leaders are relatively marginalized within camps, and are resigned to focus primarily on preserving cultural norms and to serve as advisors and advocates for traditional Acholi custom. They are threatened by outside influences, in particular by the Ugandan government and international organizations that challenge the foundations of patriarchal authority and power at the clan level. As one clan leader described the reasons for women’s “un-Acholi behavior”:

[The government] is coming in and telling women they have rights, and that they can do what they want and not do things when their men tell them to be done.

Marriages of formerly-abducted females

We had hypothesized that formerly-abducted females might experience more problems of emotional abuse in their marriages than their non-abducted counterparts. However, remarried abducted females report husbands

that do not engage in emotional abuse²⁸ with any more or less frequently as wives who were never abducted. Thus, the marriages of former abductees are seemingly not marred by emotional abuse.

Attitudes towards male violence

Female youth do not believe that clan leaders or their husbands have a right to beat them, with more than 70 percent saying this behavior was unacceptable. In addition, female youth overwhelmingly (over 80 percent) reject the idea that their husbands have a right to sex on demand. This finding is in keeping with other studies in Kitgum that found female youth reject the idea that physical abuse against them is acceptable or warranted, particularly when it is tied to an attempt by men to enforce patriarchal rule over them (see Stites, Mazurana and Carlson, 2006).

A history of abduction does not seem to have an effect on females' acceptance of domestic and community violence against women, including the right of clan leaders and husbands to beat their wives and the right of husbands to demand sex.

The extent to which females find beatings by husbands or clan elders acceptable generally increases with the age of respondents. This is particularly the case when we consider teenage females, who have much lower acceptance rates. Beginning around age 18, we see an increase in females' belief that violence against women and girls is more acceptable. However, an acceptance of violence never increases beyond 25 percent of the population.

It is difficult to determine why we see the differences beginning around age 18. We had hypothesized that perhaps as females reach sexual maturity and marry they may be more subjected to the control of their husbands and come to think of violent behavior towards them as acceptable. However, marriage does not seem to be a significant factor. Nor is there a difference between mothers' and non-mothers' attitudes towards beatings by husbands or clan elders. Nor does a history of abduction seem to have any impact on females' attitude towards domestic and community violence. Perhaps the answer lies with the younger females, with more exposure to rights discourse or increased exposure to education.

²⁸ We sought to understand levels of trust by asking questions regarding husbands making accusations of faithlessness, limiting contacts with relatives, insisting on knowing where the female is at all times, and not trusting the female with money.



An urban marketplace, northern Uganda. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

IX. Targeting

The analysis presented in this report so far has identified two broad classes of needs among women and girls. First, we have observed broad-based needs affecting a majority (or large minority) of young females, including domestic violence, the transition to secondary school, and access to capital, skills and networks for developing better livelihoods.

Second, we have identified a number of acute needs suffered by a minority of young women, including war injuries, chronic illness, symptoms of debilitating emotional distress, and adult illiteracy.

We have also seen in previous sections that, in both classes of need, that abduction, violence, and forced marriage and motherhood have taken a toll. Forced mothers and other long term abductees have suffered educational losses, and the abducted are more likely to exhibit several of the acute needs, such as war injuries and emotional distress.

Categories like “abducted” and “forced mother” have been used to target NGO and government assistance in Uganda. In fact, as the analysis in this section shows, these categories are the primary correlates of having received any aid in our sample of young females.

Nevertheless, these classic categories of need—abduction, forced motherhood, orphaning—are crude and poor predictors of vulnerability. As we have seen in the previous sections, most abducted youth, including young mothers, are not rejected by their family and exhibit little evidence of emotional distress. Resilience is the norm. Rejection and psychological trauma are the exceptions.

Aid, however, has reached the abducted, not (necessarily) the vulnerable. In fact, having a severe and acute need is actually negatively associated with having received assistance in our sample. Females from poor households, unemployed women and females with high levels of distress have a lower probability of receiving aid than the average female. The evidence thus suggests that aid agencies have been targeting crude categories rather than real needs.

Our survey included questions on six different types of aid ever received (Table 9.1). In particular, female respondents were asked whether they have ever received assistance in the form of food, household items, cash, medicines, counselling or training (and in all cases, if so, in which form, and how often).

Table 9.1: Percentage of Female Respondents Ever Receiving Assistance from an Aid Agency

Any aid	90.4%
Non-Food items ²⁹	80.4%
Services (Non-Food, Non HH Items)	39.8%
Food	85.2%
Household Items	74.0%
Medicines ³⁰	27.9%
Counselling ³¹	19.0%
Schooling	4.1%
Cash ³²	1.0%

We can relate the receipt of each type of aid with two sets of characteristics:

1. measures of critical needs and vulnerabilities (including high symptoms of emotional distress, severe injuries, illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty)
2. a collection of categories of ‘neediness’ (such as having been abducted, abducted for more than nine months, forcibly married, forcibly bearing children, or orphaned before the age of 15).

The correlations between these needs, categories, and the receipt of aid are informative, although (for reasons discussed below) far from conclusive. The

²⁹ The 465 women in our sample who received non-food household items got different combinations of items, most commonly soap, jerry cans, pots, seeds, and tools for agriculture. Also blankets, buckets, and mosquito nets are common. While a few only got soap, the combinations look overall balanced. Only 1.56% got items regularly, while 77.24% got them a few times and 21.20% only once. Since those may have received more items at once, we leave the variable as it is (no recoding).

³⁰ The most common form of medicine received are anti-malarials. We have no information on the number of times women received medicines.

³¹ More than half of those reporting counseling received HIV/AIDS counseling. Of the remainder, also common were various marriage, child-rearing and other life-skills training, as well as counseling for reintegration.

³² 11 women received cash once, none more than once. Five of the nine who specified reason and amount received the cash as part of an amnesty package (about USH250,000). Amounts received range from USH7,000 to USH14 million (the latter for a brick-laying group project).

results suggest, however, that categories rather than needs have been targeted, and that the most vulnerable are not being reached.

Using a multivariate regression, we find that being a former abductee is associated with an increase in:

- the probability of receiving any kind of aid by four times (or by 7.2 percentage points)
- an increase in the probability of receiving cash by eight times
- an increase in the chance of receiving services (medical, counselling, cash or training) by 16.3 percentage points versus a level close to zero for non-abducted youth.

Furthermore, being a long term abductee is associated with an increase in the probability of receiving psycho-social counselling, trauma-related counselling, reintegration advice or life skills training by 10.8 percentage points from a baseline level of 4.9 percent.

At the same time, exhibiting symptoms of serious emotional distress³³ is associated with a significantly lower probability (1.8 percentage points) of ever receiving such counselling. Seven percent of long term abductees with high levels of distress receive counselling, compared to 35 percent of long term abductees with low levels of distress.

Other specific indicators of need turn out to be weak determinants of receiving aid. A prevailing pattern is that females from poor households, unemployed women and females with high levels of distress receive less aid than the average female, holding all else constant.

- For instance, belonging to the lowest quartile of the asset distribution³⁴ lowers the probability of receiving services (medical, counselling, cash or training) from an aid organization by 17.6 percentage points.
- With regard to HIV/AIDS counselling and testing, the only significant determinants apart from age are: being seriously injured (-13.2 percent); coming from the poorest 25 percent of households (-10.5 percent); and being unemployed and not in school (-9.5 percent).³⁵
- Females from poor households are three times less likely to have received medicines from an aid organization than an average female (-16.3 percent).
- Having a severe injury does not significantly affect the probability of receiving medicines from an aid organization.
- Females who are unemployed and not in school have a 22.6 percent lower probability of receiving household items from an aid organization than an average female.

One conclusion that could be drawn from the above results is that aid has been targeted at categories of youth and not the most vulnerable. The problem with this conclusion is that we are measuring need and aid both after the fact. We do not have information on the respondent's status before receiving the aid, and we do not know how they were selected.

Accordingly, another explanation is possible: if the disadvantaged and vulnerable were successfully identified and received the aid and 'recovered' as a result, we would not expect need and assistance to be correlated. Any

³³ Defined as being among the 25 percent of respondents with the highest levels of emotional distress.

³⁴ That is, belonging to the poorest 25 percent of households.

³⁵ All effects reported in this section are statistically significant at (at least) the 5% level.

post-program cross-sectional survey (such as this one) will systematically underestimate the effectiveness of such targeting.

Even so, we feel that this second scenario is unlikely. NGO assistance can be easily observed to be targeted at the abducted: “abduction” and “child mother” are common (almost ubiquitous) tick boxes on NGO assessment forms. More importantly, the most important interventions—medical services, counselling, and cash—have been received by very few, making the kind of bias discussed in the second scenario implausible. For instance, 3.3 percent of abductees with high levels of distress receive psycho-social, war trauma, reintegration counselling or life skill training, but not one of the non-abducted youth with high distress report receiving such services. This may be in part due to the services provided at the reception centers, which are specifically targeted toward the abducted.

To reach the most vulnerable, we conclude that the Ugandan government and NGOs should abandon crude targeting categories such as abduction, motherhood status, and orphans. Assistance that is targeted to observable measurable needs—illiteracy, chronic unemployment, family estrangement, emotional distress, serious injury and illness—promise to be much more effective mechanisms. To the extent that formerly-abducted youth (or some other category) is indeed more disadvantaged, then the needs-based approach should disproportionately capture them.



A community group organized to support females and males returning to family and community life, Gulu district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

X. Reintegration

This section brings together new analysis with material from previous sections to assess the special impacts of abduction and the implications for reintegration services for current and future returnees. The main findings are that:

- Past and present programming for youth formerly-abducted by the LRA is insufficient to meet their needs.
- For the majority of formerly-abducted youth, education, and livelihoods support are the most pressing needs.
- Health services and psychosocial support for the most severely affected youth are grossly inadequate, leaving a core group of highly-affected youth without the attention they require.
- Large numbers of youth report difficulties with their families and communities when they first return home from abduction, yet for most these problems lessen over time.

- Formerly-abducted youth do not exhibit higher tendencies for violent behavior than their non-abducted counterparts. They are, in fact, actually more likely to be active and productive citizens and leaders.
- All youth are struggling and suffering due to war and displacement. Neither abduction itself nor specific abduction experiences are good predictors of vulnerability or types of need.

These results suggest that specialized and exclusive assistance for former abductees may be counter-productive, except in a few cases. Specific policy, programming, and targeting recommendations are included in this section.

Past and present programming for youth formerly associated with the LRA

Assistance to formerly-abducted youth in northern Uganda has taken two main forms: reinsertion assistance, and longer-term reintegration and development services. The primary instruments of reinsertion have been interim care (reception centers), amnesty, and reinsertion packages—all targeted directly at returnees who report to a reception center or to the Amnesty Commission.

The primary focus of the interim care and reception process has included: (i) access to basic health services; (ii) basic counseling (mostly of an informational and advice-giving nature, sometimes with spiritual support); (iii) family tracing and reunification; and (iv) broad-based, community sensitization measures. Reception centers have offered very limited follow-up care, with incomplete investigation of cases, and small and only occasional assistance for welcoming and forgiveness ceremonies, education, health, vocational training, food, or shelter.

Since 2006, the Amnesty Commission has retroactively paid out reinsertion packages to holders of an Amnesty Certificate.³⁶ The package includes household items, agricultural tools, seeds and an unconditional cash payment. To date, there is no national reintegration program for returnees to enter into, so within the reinsertion package, there is no assistance with managing the money given, opening bank accounts, or small business training.

The national amnesty program has not been followed or bolstered by a national reintegration program. Extensive government and NGO assistance, however, have been targeted directly or indirectly at self-reported formerly-abducted persons. The bulk of assistance for returnees comes from government programs (e.g., the World Bank-supported Northern Uganda Social Action Fund—NUSAF³⁷—or NGO programs directed at displaced and vulnerable persons in general (and sometimes at abducted youth specifically). Common interventions include vocational training, cash and assistance in starting small enterprises, and psychosocial care. These programs are not necessarily directed at returnees alone, but formerly-abducted persons are disproportionately targeted by aid agencies.

Previous work on attitudes about social reconstruction in northern Uganda has suggested that the main priorities for the population are health care, peace, education, and livelihood concerns (Pham, Vinck, Stover et al., 2007). The largest and most prevalent impact of abduction appears to have been upon education—abducted youth miss out on schooling, largely due to their time away. The impact is largest among long-term abductees, male and female, who attain one to two fewer grades on average than non-abducted youth and (especially among males) are more than twice as likely to be illiterate. The education of women who return from the LRA

³⁶ Eligibility criteria for an Amnesty Certificate include: (a) Ugandan citizenship; (b) age of 12 years or older at time of return; (c) have fought against the Government of Uganda.

³⁷ www.nusaf.go.ug

with children is even more severely affected. Unlike other returnees these young mothers almost never go back to school upon return, in large part because of child care responsibilities.

Assistance for those who are the least educated and illiterate is quite modest, unfortunately. Much of the government and NGO focus has been upon the primary school system and vocational training programs.³⁸ Best practices programs—secondary school scholarships, accelerated adult education, child care (including feeding) for the children of students—are extremely rare and serve only a small fraction of the under-educated population, including former abductees.

We also see a substantial economic gap, especially between male returnees and their non-abducted peers. As a consequence of lost education and work experience, male abductees are also less than half as likely to be engaged in a skilled trade or a business as their non-abducted male peers, and hence earn about a third lower wages. We do not see a similar gap with women, however, in part because the economic opportunities available to women are more limited and seem to require fewer skills.

Health services and psychosocial support

As explained in section VII on health, at least five percent of female and nine percent of male returnees report serious war injuries that prevent them from performing basic tasks such as walking and running, working in their fields, or even standing up with ease. Chest and back injuries from carrying heavy loads are most common, followed by shrapnel in the body—for instance, two percent of males reported metal or bullets still in their torso or limbs. Unfortunately, few (if any) programs for war injuries exist outside of reception centers and programs for land mine victims.

The figures above suggest that thousands of returnees have not received adequate medical care, and are in urgent need of specialized assistance. Moreover, those abducted longer than one year report more than double the rate of injuries—a rate that we might expect to be mirrored in those yet to return from the bush.

As discussed in section VI on psychosocial wellbeing, a small percentage of youth are also experiencing frequent nightmares, lack of concentration, insomnia, irritation, and isolation. These symptoms are often related to their traumatic past, current daily stressors, and family relationships. For this small percentage whose symptoms impact their daily functioning, targeted mental health services (other than spiritual and traditional ceremonies) have not been available.

Family and community problems

As detailed in section VI on psychosocial wellbeing, relatively few youth report conflicts within families and communities today, although for these youth such conflicts are extremely important and painful. Such conflicts may have been mitigated but not solved by blanket and broad-based sensitization programs. Like severe injuries, estrangement from one's family is painful and pressing, and few targeted services are available for these youth.

Relatively few (three percent of males and seven percent of females) report any current problems of acceptance by their families. Communities appear to have come to accept the majority of former abductees. Less than ten percent of males and females report still having some problem with neighbors or community members.

³⁸ Vocational training programs are of surprisingly unproven value given the amount of funding they receive. To better understand the effectiveness of vocational training, members of the SWAY team are presently working with the Ugandan government to experimentally evaluate a vocational training program for 9,000 youth across 15 northern districts.

Such acceptance was not immediate, however. For instance, 39 percent of females reported that they were called names by their community when they returned, 35 percent said they felt the community was afraid of them, and five percent report that their own family was physically aggressive with them. Current reports by females of such experiences were dramatically lower, however—seven percent for insults, one percent for community fear, and 0.4 percent reporting family aggression.

Women and girls who returned from the LRA with children were most likely to report problems with their families and communities upon return, although the vast majority now say they are accepted into their families. An important minority of these young women do seem to have more persistent problems with family and community members than other female returnees, however.

For instance, 14 percent of these females report that their families sometimes say hurtful things to them—far more than that reported by other long-term abductees. The reasons for such challenges seem to vary from case to case, however, suggesting that targeted conflict resolution or mediation may be the most appropriate intervention. These findings support existing evidence that young mothers and their children often face judgement and stigmatization from their communities, as well as social distancing, upon return from the LRA. In a previous survey of young mothers, many girls expressed distress based on a feeling that they were not valued or supported by their communities (McKay, Robinson, Gonsalves, & Worthen, 2006).

Where youth do report problems with families and communities, these problems often relate to specific conflicts with particular neighbors or family members, rather than difficulties with the entire family or community. Of course, these conflicts are no less painful to these youth simply because they are with just a few, rather than all, community members. The important point is that such specific conflicts are not easily addressed by the majority of community sensitization interventions, which typically take a blanket, one-size-fits-all approach. Moreover, our study finds that conflict resolution, psychological support, and family counseling services are seldom targeted at the most severely affected.

Behavior

A common rationale for targeting aid to former combatants is the need to build peace by breaking the link between the armed group and the individual and thus discouraging the return to violence. Yet the evidence in northern Uganda suggests that the risk of these youth returning to violence is very low.

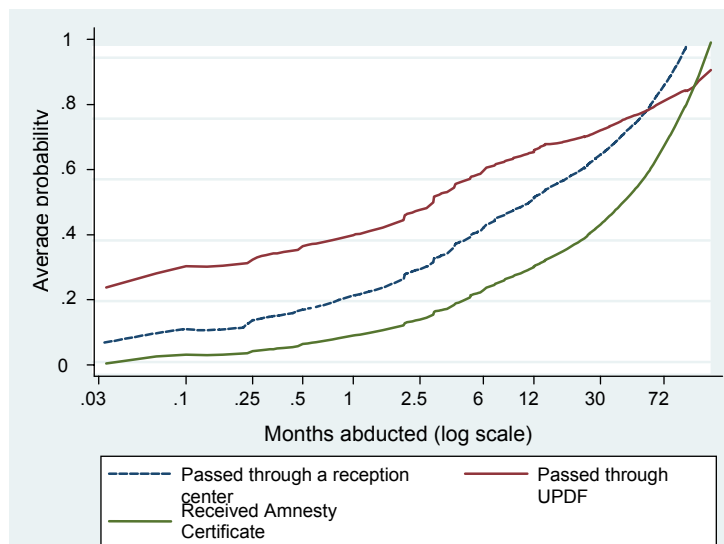
The likelihood that a Ugandan abductee will return to the bush is, in our opinion, very small. For instance, while half of those abducted three months or more (both male and female) report having felt allegiance to Kony and the LRA at some time, virtually none currently do. The youth commonly reported in interviews that they reached a point where, having previously been convinced by propaganda and fear, they now realize that the fight is either misdirected or futile. Furthermore, to our knowledge, virtually no abductees have ever returned voluntarily to the bush and the LRA following an escape. The absence of any past recidivism may be explained by the automatic separation of abductees from their leaders when they escape or are rescued. In any group return process it will be crucial to separate returned abductees from their commanders and captors as soon as possible.

Returned Ugandan youth show no greater propensity for violence than never-abducted youth. Former abductees (even long-abducted ones who committed the most violence) are no more likely to be in fights or altercations, and do not report more hostile or aggressive attitudes.

Indeed, formerly-abducted youth (particularly males) show a greater propensity towards engaged citizenry, including voting at higher rates and being more involved with community leadership than their non-abducted

counterparts. Formerly-abducted females also show higher rates of pro-social behavior than their non-abducted counterparts.

Figure 10.1 Percentage of Youth Passing through a Formal Reception Process (by Abduction Length)

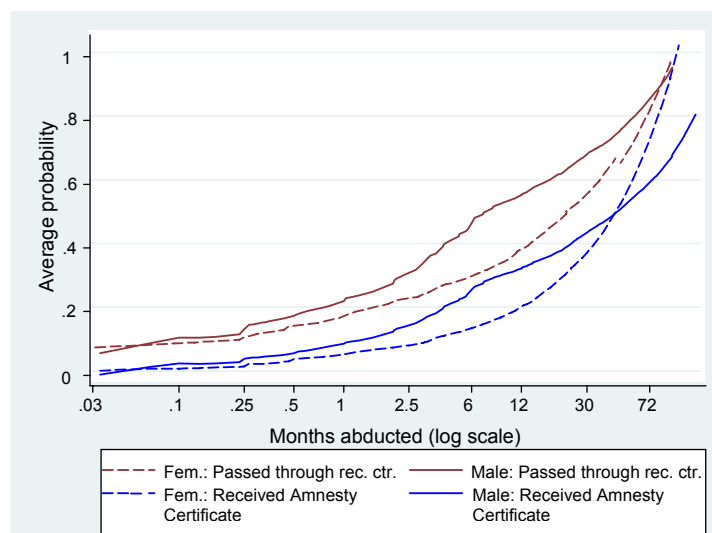


Formal reception and reinsertion services

The majority of abductees did not pass through a reception center and overall only a third of eligible youth have reported to the Amnesty Commission (Figures 10.1 and 10.2).

In the eight Acholi sub-counties we surveyed, only one in three abducted youth passed through a reception center. If we only consider those who were abducted three months or longer, still only two thirds of males and just half of females passed through a reception center (Figure 10.3). These figures suggest that the estimated number of abductees based on off reception center records drastically understates the true scale of abduction.³⁹

Figure 10.2 Percentage of Youth Passing Through a Formal Reception Process (by Abduction Age and Sex)



The receipt of reinsertion packages (and legal immunity for any crimes) is tied to reporting for and receiving an Amnesty Certificate. As of early 2006, however, only one third of eligible reporters said that they received a certificate. Likewise, as of early 2007, only a third of eligible females had applied, even though they had recently witnessed the handout of sizeable cash payments as part of the reinsertion package.⁴⁰ (Figure 10.4)

These low application rates may indicate that receipt of a certificate is seen as not worthwhile, is too difficult, or is to be avoided due to stigmatization. Of course, if these explanations are untrue, it may

³⁹ In the SWAY Phase I report, we estimate more than 66,000 abductions of any length, after accounting for those who died, have not yet returned, and who did not pass through a reception center. A Berkeley-Tulane team extrapolating from reception center records estimate a similarly high figure—over 80,000 (Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2007).

⁴⁰ The proportions do not change appreciably if we use alternative lengths of abduction, such as a minimum of four months abducted. See footnote 3 for an overview of eligibility criteria.

indicate that tens of thousands of youth still desire a certificate, and may come to see themselves as entitled to the same reinsertion package as their peers.

The evidence also suggests that the amnesty application process is poorly understood. To illustrate, a third of eligible females without a certificate stated that they either did not know about the program or where to go to get a certificate. Another third of eligible females reported (erroneously) that they were not eligible because they returned too early, or because they did not pass through a reception center. This fact suggests that, if understanding of the program improves over time, more youth may come forward to request amnesty and a reinsertion package.

Figure 10.3 Percentage of Youth Passing through a Reception Center, by Year of Return and Abduction Length

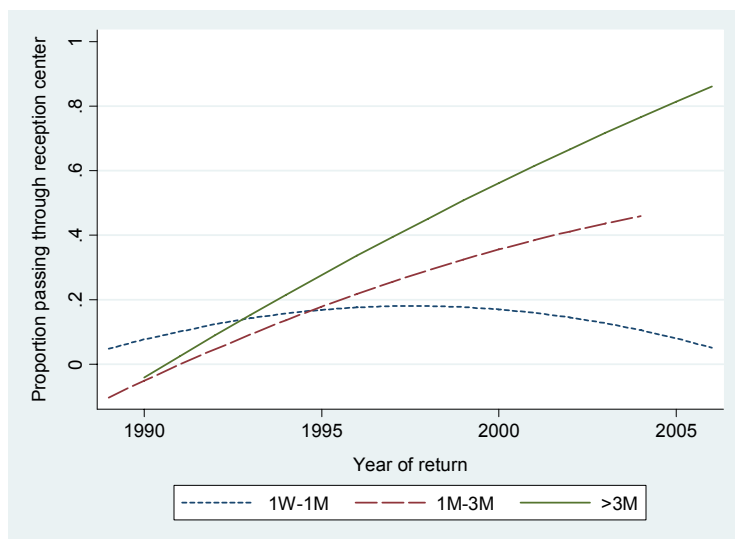
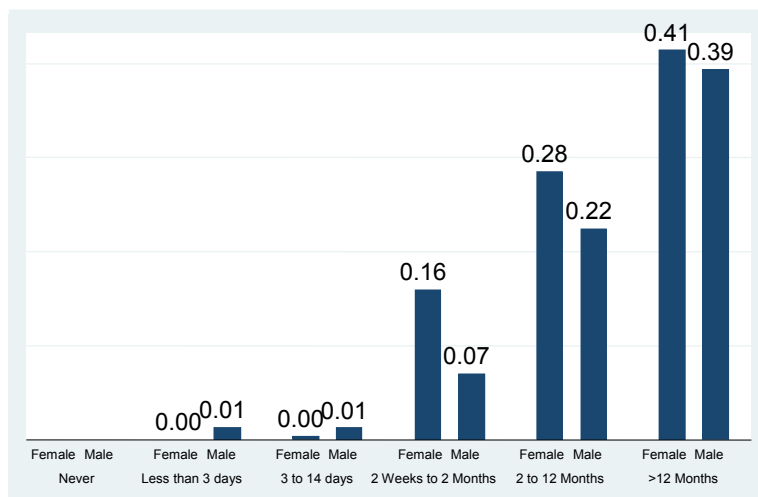


Figure 10.4 Proportion of Youth Receiving an Amnesty Certificate (by Sex and Abduction Length)



Measuring need

The criteria for reinsertion packages and other forms of NGO assistance likely serve important political, development, and reintegration functions. Nevertheless, we should be conscious that these packages do not typically target the most vulnerable and underprivileged youth. Moreover, targeting based primarily on abduction runs the risk of stigmatization.

While the impacts of abduction are real and cannot be ignored, a number of the reintegration gaps are small in comparison to the overall impacts of war on all youth. One reason is that Ugandan youth and their families have proven tremendously resilient. For instance, many abducted youth, especially young men, currently report relatively low numbers and frequency of distress symptoms, in spite of the tremendous amounts of violence most experienced. Looking at those who were abducted more than three months, 64 percent of males and 40 percent of females who returned before the age of 21 went back to school (usually primary). The majority of returnees, even long-term ones, report no insults, fear or hostility upon return. But it is worth noting, as we do above, that it is only a slim majority—for the substantial numbers who do return to insults or aggression, acceptance comes, but only with time.

Another reason that the gaps between abducted and non-abducted youth are not large is that *all* youth have been adversely affected by the war, and the levels of health, education, income and employment for all youth in the war-affected north are terrible. This much is clear from the analysis in the sections presented above. All youth face tremendous difficulties reaching secondary school. Many young adults—abducted or not—are illiterate because they never had a chance to attend primary school. Employment levels for all young men and women are abysmally low (most work just one week per month) and yield meager incomes (on average about 50 to 75 cents a day). These gaps are reflective of problems faced by all youth in the war-affected region.

Abduction is also an inconsistent predictor of need because, among abducted youth, there is tremendous variation in war experiences and capabilities, generating equal variation in outcomes. Many, perhaps the majority, of formerly-abducted youth are functioning at least as well as their non-abducted peers. Certain experiences are indeed associated with big reintegration gaps—extremely long abductions, or returning with children to support, for instance—but even these experiences do not consistently predict poor well-being or identify specific vulnerabilities.

As a consequence, having been through a reception center or being eligible for an Amnesty Certificate is too coarse a targeting mechanism to: (1) identify the most severely affected returnees and never-abducted youth, and (2) address what these youth need. Importantly, many non-abducted youth have experienced great losses and significant violence, as have those abducted less than the three months.⁴¹

Observation suggests that the targeting of abductees for aid is highly resented by other war-affected groups. If true, such aid runs the risk of increasing resentment and stigmatization rather than promoting reintegration. Our field work uncovered evidence of stigmatization associated with amnesty reinsertion packets. To illustrate, in 2006, during announcement of return packet recipients over the radio, focus groups were almost impossible to conduct due to village resentment over the packet payments. One group of informants even voiced an interest in burning down an Amnesty Commission office should one be opened locally.

⁴¹ Due to the increase in numbers abducted during the Iron Fist military operations, people were told to come forward to the Amnesty Commission only if they had been abducted for three months or longer. However, within the Amnesty Act itself, there is no time restriction on length of abduction.



Children dance on top of brick wall in Kitgum district. (Photograph by Khristopher Carlson)

Recommendations

At the time of writing it is clear that two mechanisms are set to largely fund and frame national policy and programs for specific war-affected populations in northern Uganda, including but not limited to former abductees and members of the LRA. The first is the Peace, Development and Recovery Plan (PDRP) for Northern Uganda which was launched by the Government of Uganda in September 2007.⁴² The second, and as yet much more limited in scope, is the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) agreement signed by the Government of Uganda and the LRA in February 2008 as part of the ongoing peace process being brokered in the southern Sudanese capita, Juba.⁴³

We frame our findings, analyses, and recommendations with reference to these two mechanisms.

⁴² <http://www.refugeelawproject.org/resources/papers/others/PRDP.pdf>

⁴³ http://northernuganda.usvpp.gov/uploads/images/6_tVf6UzytW442YkYx5xBQ/ddrsigned292.pdf

Livelihoods

Economic self-reliance will depend on broad-based increases in agricultural production and efficiency and access to markets and capital.

Most households have able-bodied members with the basic skills and experience to farm or to operate a small enterprise. Where employment or economic activity is low, it is generally because of a lack of access to land (typically because of displacement distance), a lack of capital, and perhaps also a lack of markets and access to agricultural technology and inputs. Moreover, we have seen that, where small amounts of capital have been available, households have been able to apply vast amounts of labor to produce output and cash for the family.

In spite of this fact, Ugandan government and NGO programs appear to have focused primarily on skills provision, such as education and vocational training. Programs of agricultural extension services, livestock restocking, capital provision (such as micro-finance of small grants), and agricultural market development have so far been the exception rather than the rule.

However, agriculture and enterprise development should be at the center, not the periphery, of assistance. The primary economic activity for youth has been and will continue to be agriculture and herding. We have seen that, even when youth have learned a vocation or started an enterprise, this business or vocation is almost always an income supplement rather than a replacement for agriculture.

The focus of service provision is changing, with many donors and NGOs beginning projects to provide agricultural and livestock extension services. These NGO projects are often small-scale and directed at the most vulnerable. While such programs are important, and the targeting of the vulnerable crucial, they do not constitute a broad-based recovery and development strategy for the north.

The PRDP rightly emphasizes agricultural development and production in the north. At the same time, the country's main agricultural extension service has been suspended and the primary agency that is restocking livestock—the NUSAF program—is closing down. District level capacity for large-scale agricultural extension, market development, and livestock restocking appears very limited. Solving these challenges and providing such services on an extremely large scale should be the primary focus of any northern development strategy, especially the implementation of the PRDP.

Targeted extension and finance services are likely to be a powerful intervention for the most vulnerable.

From evidence collected and discussions with NGO program managers, it appears vulnerable young women, especially those with children or orphans to care for, are in most need of livelihoods assistance. These include a significant number of single young mothers. Even modest amounts of start-up capital and training can help young women develop new and better livelihoods, especially alternatives to alcohol brewing and distilling, principally by helping them jump from low-skill/capital activities to higher skill/capital enterprises. Such access to capital can come from multiple possible sources, including cash-for-work programs, business start-up grants, micro-credit programs, and encouragement of savings groups.

Targeted assistance for agricultural livelihoods—agriculture and livestock extension services, providing access to land, inputs, technology and markets—are also likely to be a tool for helping the able-bodied vulnerable.

Nonetheless, the evidence base for the above recommendations is very thin. In fact, it is not clear which interventions—micro-finance, small grants, livestock restocking and/or agricultural services—work best and for whom. Hence proper monitoring and evaluation of alternative interventions is recommended.

Education

Broad-based secondary school support should be a strategic priority for the Government of Uganda and its donors.

Supporting young women in the transition to secondary school will be a crucial challenge in the coming years, for all war-affected girls. We observe 93 percent enrolment among 14-year-old females, with the majority in grades five (38 percent), six (27 percent) and seven (17 percent). Only 36 percent of young women aged 18, on the other hand, are currently enrolled in secondary school.⁴⁴ If these older women are any guide, it seems unlikely that more than a third to half of adolescent girls will make the transition to secondary school (grades eight and beyond) in the absence of broad-based interventions.

Inability to pay secondary school fees is the most common reason given for the drop out of young women from seventh grade. Accordingly, the elimination of secondary school fees—i.e. introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) or large regional bursary and scholarship programs—are likely to be a necessary condition for broad-based advancement of young women into secondary education.

Bursaries and scholarships in particular are likely to be easier and quicker to implement than USE, and could be targeted to most vulnerable and disadvantaged as well as on merit and performance. Vouchers for both private and public education could be offered in order to build the capacity of both. Such programs could be run on varying scales by the government partnering with NGOs. Such bursary programs would provide much-needed funds to a secondary school system in need of rebuilding and retraining, and may ease the transition to and completion of USE.

While perhaps necessary, the provision of fees is unlikely to be a sufficient for broad-based advancement in female education. Obviously there are “supply-side” constraints, in that schools must be rebuilt, and additional teachers and administrators trained and attracted to the region (or from other professions). Any government effort to work towards USE is likely to strain the capacity of existing schools and potentially degrade the average quality of secondary education.

Any education initiative should be tailored to meet the special needs of females, including the education gap and child care needs.

As seen above, young women have been less likely to remain in school than young men, with higher primary drop-out rates and fewer transitions to secondary school. The near-equality of enrolment and educational attainment among the youngest males and females in our survey suggests that some of this education gap is historic, and in the absence of any special attention the gap will become less acute. Nevertheless, several measures can be taken to promote equitable access to schooling.

The education gap should be closely monitored. Recording and reporting of female dropout rates by government or an NGO would be a valuable service. To the extent that an education gap persists, government and NGOs should strongly consider the disproportionate allocation of scholarships and bursaries to young women. There is also a need to address another obstacle to schooling faced by young mothers. Child care (potentially including meals) for the children of students should be included to enable young mothers the opportunity to participate in educational interventions. Time should be provided for nursing infants. Young mothers, families, schools, and local leaders should be sensitized to prevent these women being discouraged to attend school.

⁴⁴ An additional ten percent of 18-year old women are enrolled in primary, however.

Where vocational training opportunities are offered, they should be offered alongside the option of secondary schooling and livelihoods support so as to provide choice.

The overwhelming emphasis on tailoring training among women appears ill-chosen, especially since so few are currently practicing their trade. Vocational training will continue to be an important alternative or supplement to secondary school for young women. Government and NGO programs that offer such training to women should be careful to expand the choice of vocations available to young women. More importantly, vocational training opportunities should be offered alongside alternatives, including secondary schooling and livelihoods support. Such training opportunities may even be offered in combination with secondary schooling, at complementary times.

Accelerated and age-appropriate adult education opportunities should be expanded.

Alternative education should be accelerated and age-appropriate, offered in afternoons or evenings, with opportunities for child care for young mothers. Where such programs exist, they are seldom accelerated, often based on primary (rather than adult) curricula, and serve a very small number of people.

While the number of illiterate young adults is high, especially among women, the level of demand for such programs is currently not known. NGOs could make an important contribution by designing and offering appropriate adult education programs and monitoring take-up levels and patterns, so as to understand the level of demand for such services.

The demand for such services among young adult women is unknown, however. Appropriate program design will maximize interest and participation. Important aspects of design likely include: availability of child-care services; linkages to skills training (especially agriculture and livestock-related skills, such as crop production and sales, animal husbandry, etc.); and options for part-time participation (allowing women to maintain their economic activities and chores).

Educational support for formerly-abducted youth should be integrated with broad-based programs for youth more generally, but with attention given to certain special needs.

Abduction or forced motherhood is a poor indicator of educational gaps and acute needs. Programs that target based on identifiable needs, or provide broad-based services (such as bursaries) to the entire population are more likely to be successful and less stigmatizing than specialized support or funds for the formerly-abducted.

A minority of returnees, including forced wives and mothers, do indeed experience problems with emotional distress, community stigmatization, or family conflicts. Some non-abducted youth also suffer from similar challenges and schools ought to be equipped to deal with them.

Several NGOs are attempting to cater to women who returned from long abductions by the LRA (often with children) by providing education and training combined with child care (e.g., local grassroots organizations such as Christian Counselling Fellowship in Pader and Food for the Hungry in Kitgum). These programs appear to be very positive for the individual women and their children.

Such programs are limited, however, in their collaboration with the families and communities where the women experienced problems (and where they will return following the programs). These education programs should be continued, replicated, and expanded, but with more community links, and conflict mediation and resolution. Those women who have returned from the bush with children will, like all young mothers, require child care in order to return to school.

The provision of these specialized services, including training and sensitization of teachers, is an important role that could be provided by NGOs that is complementary to broad-based government support for primary and secondary education.

Forced marriage and motherhood

Appropriate learning opportunities for young mothers will, if designed properly, serve formerly abducted women and forced mothers.

Women returning from the abduction with children were less likely to return to school, much like young mothers more generally. Programs that aim to provide age-appropriate and accelerated learning opportunities to young mothers more generally will by default disproportionately benefit long term formerly abductees, while at the same time promote their reintegration through integrated, non-stigmatizing programs.

The experiences of forced wives go beyond 'sex slave'; programming must that address the nature of their experiences.

The narrow classification of 'sex slave' perpetuates common misunderstandings about forced wives' roles and experiences while in captivity. These misunderstandings can lead to inappropriate responses in addressing their needs, particularly regarding mental health and stigma issues, as they resettle. Additionally, accountability mechanisms to address the multitude of rights violations committed against these females will require close inspection of the widespread and systematic nature of perpetrated crimes.

Assistance for those returning from current LRA captivity

Upon return, forced wives and their children need reinsertion and reintegration assistance that targets their specific needs as survivors of sexual violence.

Women returning from captivity do have special reinsertion and reintegration needs in order to integrate more quickly and successfully into the community. In the past, cleansing ceremonies have been helpful for some, but nevertheless have fallen short of addressing forced wives' expressed needs and concerns upon return. Traditional practices cannot address the widespread nature of crimes committed within the context of forced marriage. Therefore, assistance should be made available to females who have experienced sexual abuse including rape, and within such programs have people who are familiar with and trained to address the number of crimes suffered by forced wives.

Such support needs to be provided outside of the traditional leadership of communities where females feel safe and are free to access such assistance at any time. Such programs should take into consideration the needs of mothers and provide family-oriented assistance to these females, as many forced wives have children and or have started new families outside of captivity.

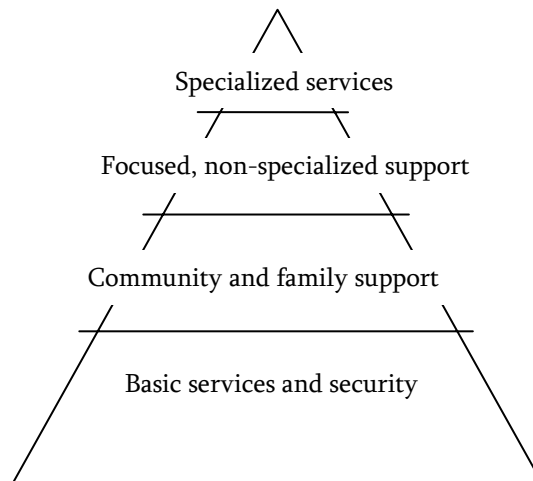
It should also be anticipated that some forced wives—and perhaps the bulk—will want to separate from their captor husbands, increasing the need for empowerment strategies and opportunities for separation immediately upon their return. Offering viable economic alternatives will be essential for these women, particularly those with children, to feel they are not dependent on their captor husbands. It is imperative that the rights of the forced wives and their children be protected including matters of child custody, and the right to maintenance and compensation.

Psychosocial well-being and mental health

Psychosocial and mental health programming is needed to specifically target the minority whose distress symptoms are interfering with their daily functioning.

To date, there has been a lot of investment by NGOs in northern Uganda to train lay persons with skills to visit and listen to those with problems—in essence, to provide social support. These programs seem to have been generally positive. However, there is need for an appropriate referral system and adequate services for those with severe psychological or social problems. In Kitgum and Pader Districts there are a small number of trained counselors who can provide more in-depth individual or family counseling for those highly affected along with a handful of psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists in the region.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (2007) outline the importance of a multilayered system of supports that address the psychosocial needs at different levels. The intervention pyramid portrays the different layers of support with the bottom layer representing services needed for an entire population and the upper levels representing responses needed for smaller numbers of people (the top layer representing the smallest percentage).



IASC (2007), p. 12

Clear systems of referral between layers are needed, especially for the focused support and specialized services for those with high levels of psychological distress or mental illness. Capacity building for specialized services is needed. Further, trained psychosocial agents could be used to enhance follow up and provide sensitization for those who are severely affected to help increase support at family and community level.

As described, symptoms of distress are related not only to past violence but also to current stressors, some of which can be addressed. Stressors include the family conflicts, lower household assets, having a serious physical injury, and the frequency of one's husband's intoxication. For the majority of youth with symptoms, targeting these stressors—for example, helping to improve family relations and increasing access to livelihoods—can help to reduce distress.

Family based interventions are needed for those with family problems.

Family support in northern Uganda is key for both psychosocial and economic well-being. Efforts should focus on fostering local conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms that can be targeted to those experiencing

family and community conflicts, whether the youth were abducted or not. Some refugee programs have emphasized family strengths and resources, forming groups of families to support each other (Weine et al., 2003). While this may be difficult to replicate in northern Uganda, a revised model of family intervention may help struggling families.

Because the majority of formerly-abducted youth—both males and females—are eventually accepted back into their families on return, those who have problems could be identified, the conflicts explored and supportive family interventions conducted. We observed that most conflicts among families and communities reduced over time among those who have already returned. Therefore, more targeted conflict resolution programs could likely speed and smooth that painful transition, and help resolve the most persistent cases. This does not need to be separate from family-based programs for non-abducted youth with family discord. Interventions could include problem solving and mediating around core issues, such as resource sharing and alcohol abuse.

Health

War surgeons and more specialized care are needed.

There is a need for several war surgeons, or small team of such professionals, to remove metal and bullets from the bodies of youth (primarily, but not solely, formerly-abducted males). Perhaps one to two thousand such cases exist.

Treatment for serious back and chest injuries (from carrying heavy loads) should also be investigated, given its prevalence in both male and female youth.

Sexual and domestic violence

Build the capacity of community institutions and local law enforcement to justly handle sexual and domestic violence.

Several community institutions—including LC1s, LC3s, camp commandants, local police, clan elders, women leaders, and community volunteer counselors—have a responsibility to prevent and respond to aggression, insults, and other conflict. Unfortunately, they often lack women- and victim-friendly processes, including rules detailing that forms must be filled out by survivors of rape and domestic violence before the woman may go to the health post. Many survivors feel these systems re-victimize them. The capacity and accountability of these community institutions should be significantly strengthened. At the same time, we should recognize that high levels of domestic violence have persisted under (and potentially been reinforced by) government and clan leaders, and so strengthening of these institutions should go hand in hand with efforts to promote the rights of women and reduce the acceptability of gender-based violence.

Reinsertion

For the special but important case of youth still within the LRA, a three-stage program of return assistance would be consistent with the guiding priorities suggested by SWAY evidence.

- A first stage would be to identify the specific needs for each returnee, including the key aspects of education, health, livelihoods, and family mediation. Such assistance would include more and better medical treatment than has been given to those who previously passed through reintegration centers or the amnesty program, including the presence of war surgeons and assistance for reproductive health. It would also include more extensive family reintegration services, in particular follow-up of problem

cases and mediation assistance to these families. These services could be funded by and provided within DDR mechanisms.

- A second stage would provide a reinsertion package that provides key items and goods, or the means to purchase these items or goods through cash instalments. Again, this assistance would likely be a part of DDR mechanisms. The evidence from SWAY does not weigh directly on the merits and risks of in-kind versus cash assistance, of the conditionality or support best provided along with any cash payments, or of the provision of reinsertion packages. However, our observations from the field suggest that caution should be taken with such programs, especially in the case of children, and we suggest below a number of potential steps that could mitigate some of the most acute risks. We also suggest that careful monitoring and evaluation of the impact of such programs is imperative given the evident uncertainty of the program.
- A third stage would be assistance based on specific unmet needs and would be provided by services based within the larger community (and targeted by need, not abduction status). Our evidence is most applicable to the design and targeting of this broader reintegration and developmental assistance (and is the focus of the following section). Such services would be based within the larger PDRP.

Reinsertion packages should be crafted with care, particularly in regards to cash payments.

A disbursement package to newly returning members of the LRA (containing some combination of goods, services, and cash) appears highly likely. Unconditional cash payments have a chequered history, and imply many risks. If cash payments cannot be avoided, we recommend increasing the focus on maximizing their effectiveness, minimizing the risks, and evaluating what works, why, and for whom.

- Currently, reinsertion packages from the Amnesty Commission include a cash payment that is designed to be used for consumption needs (e.g. food and household goods) upon return. Officially, the payment is intended to be a basis for reinsertion, not full reintegration.
- There appear to be risks associated with these transfers that (to our knowledge) have not been addressed. Poor decision-making is only one of the concerns. Our field team also observed examples of female cash recipients losing decision-making power over funds to husbands, brothers and fathers. Our field team further encountered angry and threatening reactions to the payment of Amnesty packages in 2006, mostly among non-abducted community members. These experiences raise concerns regarding misuse, misdirection, and stigmatization. The uncertainty of such impacts should put the minimization of such risks at the forefront of discussion of reinsertion program design and implementation.
- Our evidence also suggests that two-thirds of formerly-abducted youth have not applied for amnesty or packages. The data show that the Amnesty Commission's requirement that an eligible recipient must have been subjected to abduction by the LRA for a minimum of three months is not based on needs (as short term abductees can exhibit serious difficulties in health, well being, education and livelihood opportunities) but rather more on the political landscape that saw an upsurge in abduction with the military offensive Operation Iron Fist.⁴⁵ If Amnesty packages are to continue to be offered to newly returning youth, the already returned youth (up to twice the number of current amnesty recipients) may also come forward to request assistance. This consideration should be taken into account in implementation and communication of any future reinsertion programs.
- Finally, the emphasis on the consumption of unconditional transfers may represent a missed opportunity. In the absence of a comprehensive and large-scale reintegration program, cash payments made within reinsertion packages may represent a returnee's largest source of cash for some time to

⁴⁵ See footnote 7 for the legality of such a time restriction.

come. Our field interviews with recipients and non-recipients suggest that the package is commonly perceived as support for livelihoods and social reintegration. This perception is probably well-founded. Evidence in the SWAY Phase I report, as well as the current SWAY report, show that access to cash is one of the most crucial but rare inputs for new income-generating activities (and hence for economic reintegration). Even the modest amounts of cash associated with the reinsertion package are more than sufficient for generating livelihood opportunities. In this context, even small interventions—facilitation, business skills training, or self-help group formation—could have significant impacts on the effectiveness of these funds.

Reintegration

Programs should be targeted to youth with the most serious educational, economic, psychosocial, and health challenges. Beyond basic reinsertion support, abduction status should not be a special category, determinant, or precondition of aid.

An abduction experience or amnesty eligibility is a coarse measure of needs and vulnerability given the heterogeneity of impacts of abduction. The amnesty criterion is especially problematic, given that most eligible abductees do not appear to have applied for this status and that some aspects of the eligibility criteria reflect more political priorities than needs of returnees. For the same reasons, a one-size-fits-all approach to services does little to meet the actual needs of returnees. Moreover, a near exclusive focus on returnees leaves out many thousands of never abducted who have suffered terrible impacts due to the war.

Programs that target based on specific and identifiable needs—literacy, secondary or adult education, child care and feeding during school hours, serious war wounds treatment, conflict mediation with neighbors, family reunification, severe emotional distress analysis and counsel, and livelihood development—are likely to be less stigmatizing as well as more inclusive, self-selecting, and effective than targeting based on categories such as ‘formerly-abducted’ or ‘orphans’.

Furthermore, such programs are less likely to create resentment or stigmatization as the provision of literacy for the illiterate and surgery for those with war wounds targets specific needs and encourages self-selection. Moreover, based on our findings, we anticipate that those formerly-abducted are likely to have a greater propensity towards having the needs identified above and as such will self-select into such programs at a higher proportion than the non-abducted.

Helping families and communities cope with the death of their children.

When the peace process is completed, many parents who have been hoping that their children will return will realize their children are dead, and may exhibit and act upon strong feelings of resentment toward those who do return.⁴⁶ Some current community conflicts with formerly abducted youth observed in our study had just such a source. Community-based mechanisms of helping these parents cope with their grief and loss will thus be important. Little is known about how to structure such focused support and balance the needs of former abductees with other war-affected youth. For this reason, the careful evaluation of alternative interventions is crucial.

⁴⁶ We estimate that 15 to 20 percent of male abductees and four/five percent of female abductees have died due to circumstances surrounding their abduction and presence within the LRA.

Policies and programs coming out of the PRDP and the Juba DDR process, and implemented by national agencies, donor governments, and national and international NGOs must be conscious of addressing women's and girls' needs and rights.

Females have a history of being underserved by DDR and development programs alike. The above evidence suggests that, in most respects, the challenges faced by women and girls in northern Uganda are at least as great as that of males. Moreover, in certain areas—such as literacy, the secondary school transition, the psychosocial impacts of violence, the incidence of domestic violence, and family conflicts upon return—women and girls are clearly more likely to experience difficulties.

As a result, we should expect a truly needs-based targeting strategy to result in at least equal and in several categories a disproportionately greater level of assistance to women and girls. Failure to observe such a pattern will be a first indication that females are not being adequately served.

Consequently, a fund or specific programming that includes a focus on the needs and vulnerabilities particular to women and girls could serve a necessary step in achieving the objective of equitable needs-based targeting and assistance.

Conclusions

The evidence in this report suggests that, in most respects, the challenges faced by women and girls in northern Uganda are at least as great as those of males. Women and girls are more likely to be non-literate and less likely to make the transition to secondary school. Moreover, while most returned abductees report few long-lasting difficulties reintegrating into their families and communities, females do tend to report more persistent challenges than males.

While girls and women fall behind men in most indicators of well-being, there are signs that the gap may be closing. Adolescent girls have more education and express less tolerance for domestic violence than women in their late twenties—a hopeful indicator in a region that has suffered so much.

As people move out of displacement camps and closer to their land, it will become more challenging to target the most vulnerable women and girls—those who are unable to reach services in towns or trading centers. Young women in rural areas will also have fewer chances to interact outside their families with other women, groups, and institutions—limiting opportunities for social change and empowerment.

Employment and incomes have been severely depressed by displacement and war. Abject poverty and inactivity are not only ills unto themselves, but aggravate health problems, schooling interruptions, social cleavages and gender-based violence. Young women are the most economically constrained, especially (it appears) in the occupational options open to them. Economic recovery should be at the heart of future programming, and its focus should be overwhelmingly on agriculture and livestock. Only these traditional occupations hold any hope for generating employment and incomes for millions that need both.

Past experiences in other areas affected by conflict inform us that gender mainstreaming and gender equality in policies and programs require strategic planning (as detailed in our recommendations) to meet the particular needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls and to overcome gendered obstacles in education, livelihoods, health, relationships and access to justice. These challenges will not be appropriately addressed through programs which are designed for pre-defined categories of women and girls and by interventions simply based on assumptions of what they need.

For the majority of youth, accelerated education, secondary school support, and agricultural livelihoods assistance are what they most need, but cannot obtain. Government and NGO programs must be greatly scaled up. Education gaps are particularly serious for young women. Great care should be taken to ensure that women are adequately and appropriately served by new programs. Child care and afternoon classes for females must be available. More needs to be done to understand potential cultural obstacles inhibiting young mothers from pursuing their education. The significant minority of females with war injuries, disabling distress, and extreme family conflict need access to medical treatment, mental health care, and conflict mediation services. Few such specialized services are available today.

Lessons applicable in Northern Uganda and elsewhere

Changing the program focus from war participants to war-affected youth

The evidence in Uganda does not support an expansion of programs targeted specifically towards youth formerly associated with the armed group. Rather, the evidence supports the opposing view: targeting of youth formerly with armed groups is likely to be unsuccessful in addressing needs and in improving long-term reintegration. The principal reason is that armed group experiences are crude and unreliable predictors of need. Moreover, targeting based on war and combat experiences also carries the risk of stigmatization.

This shift in focus from ex-combatants and other youth associated with armed groups to war-affected youth and communities more generally is likely to be relevant outside the northern Ugandan context. Ultimately, our evidence points to an expansion of programs that are targeted to youth with the most serious vulnerabilities. Our evidence also suggests that such targeted programs will reach a disproportionate share of youth associated with armed groups by default.

Age-appropriate programming

The focus on children by both donors and international agencies unintentionally excludes vulnerable persons from needed services and provide inappropriate programming to those over 18 years of age. In most armed conflicts, even those taken as ‘child soldiers’ are young adults when they return home.

The findings in this report reinforce many aspects of the existing child protection framework, including supporting family and community capacity, developing systems of monitoring and evaluating, and providing basic health and social services for children.⁴⁷ However, the evidence also suggests the need for *age-appropriate* programming for young adults, not ones that are merely extensions of children’s programs. This includes both the type of programming provided, such as functional literacy and livelihood interventions, as well as *how* this programming is delivered. The goals must be to maximize choice and promote self-sufficiency.

From “best practice” to evidence-based practice

While there are numerous innovative programs taking place in conflict-affected areas, there are few rigorous program evaluations of their effectiveness. Often program indicators quantify the number of trainings and attendees but offer no in-depth assessment of what works best and for whom.

Evaluations in these contexts are imperative for several reasons:

- First is the principle of doing no harm. Many programs may have unintended consequences (e.g., the risk of increased domestic violence as a result of microfinance programs). In these instances we have a responsibility to identify and avoid any potentially harmful effects.
- There is a great need to understand how to best invest limited resources. Having further evidence on the programs that have the greatest impact will help agencies, governments, and beneficiaries make better decisions about how to use limited funding.
- Finally, evaluations can make existing interventions more effective by asking whether, for example, a micro-enterprise program is better served by increasing the amount of training, the amount of capital, or access to business networks and markets?

⁴⁷ Landgren, K. (2005). The protective environment: Development support for child protection. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27, 214-248.

Humanitarian agencies must commit themselves to evaluation, performance management, and learning. Every agency should, as a minimum standard, commit to evaluating each program's outcomes through before-and-after comparison. A further commitment to rigorously evaluating innovative programs—by incorporating thorough impact evaluations from the beginning of the program design—will help ensure that the best programs are being delivered and the least harm is being done.

Focusing on the “R” in DDR

All too often, reintegration programs negotiated during peace processes provide for a limited number of services—such as vocational training—exclusively open to ex-combatants. Whether such programs achieve their direct objectives—such as generating employment and re-establishing ties—is in doubt. It is expedient during peace negotiations to offer such interventions, but they are not necessarily optimal. More flexible entitlement programs that give options—such as vouchers that can be redeemed to access secondary schooling, vocational training, economic assistance, agricultural implements, and seeds or housing materials—ought to be explored and discussed further. Moreover, such entitlements can be offered to a wider range of people—not just ex-combatants—in order to facilitate reintegration and overall recovery.

The emphasis on agricultural recovery

Like ex-combatant reintegration programs, post-conflict economic recovery programs often emphasize vocational training and small enterprise development. Such non-agricultural livelihoods help households diversify their economic activities (raising incomes and spreading out risk) but are unavoidably limited. We suggest, however, that one cannot build a service economy in the absence of any broad-based production, namely agriculture and livestock.

The recovery of the farm sector poses a challenge to governments and NGOs. Land that has lain fallow for years requires extra effort to clear and plow. Shortages of tools and oxen limit the amount of land that can be tilled. Basic techniques of growing crops and raising animals may be remembered, and are usually understood even by youth and children, but the specialized knowledge to increase productivity and profitability, especially cash cropping, is often absent. Government and private sector agricultural extension services are usually broken down, if they ever existed, and specialists have fled the conflict region. Specialized inputs—such as specialized seed varieties and fertilizer—are difficult to obtain, and most war affected households will not have the savings to purchase them in advance. Markets and marketing channels have decayed, as have the roads that connect rural farmers to them.

Tackling each of these challenges needs to be a primary focus of government and NGO programs after war. Farm production promises food security and incomes on a broad scale, and should be a strategic priority. Such programs sometimes receive more lip service than actual funding.

In order to improve production and markets on a broad scale in a short space of time, government and NGOs should consider partnering with large private enterprises that can provide inputs, extension, and a market, all while engaging in the slow rebuilding of the public sector agricultural extension and research services.

Ongoing data collection

This study provides important information on youth affected by armed conflict, comparing abducted and non-abducted youth, males, and females. Our findings question central assumptions made about these groups—assumptions that have driven programs and policy priorities for years.

Such a study, however, offers only a snapshot of the population. We require ongoing data collection in northern Uganda and other areas affected by armed conflict to determine key risk and protective factors for youth and communities. The needs of humanitarian and government agencies will not be served by specialized, one-off surveys, especially where the samples are based on convenience rather than engagement with the population.

Better policy and programs will be advanced by observing four pillars of better data collection: proper, representative samples; tracking and follow-up of the same households over time; comprehensive questionnaires covering the demographic, social, and material aspects of life; and in-depth qualitative work to complement quantitative data collection.

Basic systems of data collection at the local government level helps monitor key protection issues—from domestic violence to debilitating war injuries. Data can be used to advocate for specific interventions such as provision of war surgery. In recent years, there has been much improvement in mapping and data collection by international agencies to monitor migration and available services. A key future challenge is to involve local government in data collection, advocacy, and long-term strategic planning of both private and public services that respond to community needs.

Data collection on grave violations to enhance protection

Our study strongly points to the need for a much improved system of data collection around key protection issues in situations of armed conflict. SWAY and the Berkeley-Tulane research efforts have identified a major discrepancy between calculations of the number of youth who have been abducted: at their most conservative, our data show three times the numbers routinely reported by the leading United Nations and international NGO protection agencies working in northern Uganda (Annan, Blattman, & Horton, 2006; Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2007).

We suspect such incorrect estimations are a global phenomenon. Governments and agencies that fail to accurately collect data on, and monitor what is happening to, youth on the ground cannot put together policies or programs that respond to real needs. Our study also clearly shows the need to take gender into account, from study design, to data collection, analysis, and program implementation. It is also important to appreciate that the age of youth matters and girls and boys experience conflict and its affects differently.

This study also has implications for monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are mandated within Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005), which itself is part of efforts to help the Security Council improve compliance with international standards regarding children's human rights.⁴⁸ SCR 1612 names six grave rights violations against children during armed conflict that UN agencies are required to monitor and report on to the Security Council:

1. Killing or maiming of children
2. Recruiting or using child soldiers
3. Attacks against schools or hospital
4. Rape or other grave sexual violence against children (which has been found to include sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, enforced prostitution, and sexual exploitation)

⁴⁸ Monitoring and reporting on all six violations are to be applied to all parties to the conflict, including Government, insurgency groups, and international peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel. See text of SCR 1612 at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/439/59/PDF/N0543959.pdf?OpenElement>

5. Abduction of children
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children.⁴⁹

Independent expert reviews of monitoring and reporting on SCR 1612 have found that the data collected on the six violations are incomplete, representing only a fraction of actual violations that are occurring. In particular, rape and other grave sexual violations are often widespread, but go largely unreported.⁵⁰ Additionally, there are no common methodologies, tools or procedures for collecting, managing, storing, verifying or analyzing data on the six grave violations.⁵¹ Common terminologies and minimum requirements for data sets are necessary. Without standardization there is a risk of incomparable data both within and among affected countries. As these common approaches and tools are developed it will be important to strengthen the collection, analyses, and reporting of sex- and age-disaggregated data on the six grave violations.⁵² Such data and analyses are necessary to better identify and understand trends in the six grave violations and their affects on male and female youth, and to inform local, national, and international responses.

The only SCR 1612 violation on which there is consistent reporting and monitoring is the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Indeed, the only offending parties currently listed in the annexes of the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the six violations are those engaged in child recruitment.⁵³ This cannot be justified and must cease. There is no legitimisation of hierarchical ranking within international humanitarian and human rights law,⁵⁴ Security Council resolutions devoted to children and armed conflict⁵⁵ or the Secretary-General's Report (S/2005/72). Cases of all six violations should be recognized as equally important and should be recorded and tackled with equal vigor.

⁴⁹ The six grave rights violations addressed in SCR 1612 are grave violations named in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols, as well as named within the Elements of Crimes against humanity and or war crimes within the Rome Statue for the International Criminal Court (1998).

⁵⁰ *Note to the Secretary-General Report of the Office of Oversight Services: Independent Review of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)*, November 8, 2006. UN Doc 06-863.

⁵¹ At UNICEF headquarters efforts are currently underway to develop guidance on verification of data. These should be finalized within the coming months.

⁵² Key entities to receive these analyses and or the resulting reports are identified in the Secretary-General's recommended "destinations for action," which include national governments, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations human rights regime, including the Human Rights Council, UNHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, regional and subregional organizations, and non-governmental and civil society organizations, UN doc. A/59/695 S/2005/72, paras. 107-137. A flow chart for monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict is also included in the Secretary General's Annual report UN doc. A/59/695 S/2005/72, page 29.

⁵³ In SCR 1379 the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General attach to his report a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, in situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter, which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

⁵⁴ See the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000); the Elements of Crimes of crimes against humanity and or war crimes within the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (1998); the International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (1999); and the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their two Additional Protocols.

⁵⁵ See Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2001), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

Our study shows that youth are subjected to and experience a number of grave violations during armed conflict, and that one should not make assumptions about vulnerabilities and needs which are simply based on a youth having been forcibly conscripted into an armed force or group. Our research demonstrates that many youth experience profound physical and psychosocial impacts during armed conflict, and it is a mistake to focus on or prioritise a particular category over others.

Rethinking how to deal with forced marriages

In Africa, females return to rural communities controlled in large part by patriarchal clan organizations or culturally-biased local administrations. We need to recognise that this patriarchy makes it hard for females to manoeuvre within returnee communities to gain spiritual, mental, or material support.

Our research suggests that females forced into marriage are much less likely to be rejected by family and community than is popularly believed. Even so, this reintegration success should be grounds for complacency. These women still face a number of challenges in supporting themselves and their children born from captive relationships. In particular, when females leave captivity and return to civilian communities many have limited or no support systems in place to regularly provide basic necessities such as food, cooking fuel or materials for home construction or garden maintenance.

Females returning from these relationships indicate several areas in which they find it hard to obtain needed support. These include education (for themselves and their children), training opportunities so they can learn practical skills applicable to rural or urban living environments; employment prospects so that they can generate income, and access to land for food production. Formerly-forced wives are vulnerable to exploitation and physical harm until they are able to root themselves in productive livelihoods and establish healthy family and community relationships. Indeed, our findings suggest that returning wives and mothers face few difficulties *today*, but many more faced difficulties *at the time of return*. Intelligent programming can help speed and smooth their recovery and reintegration.

Government and NGO agencies should also keep in mind that returnee females usually do not wish to be identified as former forced wives or abductees due to the stigma associated with such experiences. Females who have experiences as forced wives may not openly seek out, or know where to access, physical or mental support programs and services to assist them with war-related injuries or traumas. Therefore, effort needs to be made to assess the extent to which returnee females receive adequate physical rehabilitation and treatment and mental counselling within communities.

This can only be accomplished by speaking with the females themselves. In many areas it has been shown that they take the initiative to create their own coping and support groups within communities, often outside traditional or state- and agency-sponsored programming. That these females create their own support groups suggests that there are openings for creative and non-obtrusive ways to gain access to them and strengthen their existing support networks.

Females who have experienced forced marriage want, and are entitled, to appropriate forms of justice and reparation, which should include an element of justice for those who perpetrated the crimes. Many vaunt the supposed advantages of 'traditional' forms of reconciliation. They have value but it is difficult to see how traditional clan-based systems of accountability and reconciliation can—on their own—adequately address forced marriages. There is simply no precedent for these systems to deal with crimes committed on such a wide scale and over such a large area. Hence, there must be increased efforts for gender-just justice and accountability at both the formal and traditional levels.

Regional protection efforts for youth

In showing how all youth are affected by armed conflict, our study points to the need for more intense regional child and youth protection plans. Our findings also show the need for more thoughtful and more focused efforts on behalf of those youth who are really struggling—rather than following the current course to develop and hone categories of vulnerable children and youth.

There were some surprises in our study that could help inform larger regional youth protection plans. For example, we found that younger children were, in a number of areas, doing better than their older cohorts. In several of these areas, it was older youth, particularly females, who were facing the greatest challenges with the fewest resources.

Another lesson is that we need to be much more cautious about how we understand and promote traditional ceremonies and methods of ‘reintegrating,’ ‘cleansing,’ and ‘healing’ youth. This is particularly the case where we see that certain genders and age groups are refusing to participate or say that the ceremonies are unwelcome and unhelpful.

Finally, a message that youth are very clearly articulating is the need for justice and accountability for crimes and violations committed against them. While this was not a main focus of our study, the force of these views indicate the need for more comprehensive, regional protection efforts strongly linked with efforts for justice and accountability. Doing this would entail not only understanding and recognising violations, but taking into account and trying to remove the barriers youth face in seeking remedy and redress, including—but not limited to—constraints related to gender, age, education, linguistic abilities, and financial and social resources.

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