



# Reluctant Hosts

The Impact of the Lord's Resistance Army on  
Communities in Western Equatoria State,  
Southern Sudan



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# Contents



<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2. Methodology</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3. Background</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 History of the LRA in Uganda and Southern Sudan	19
3.2 Nature and Activities of the LRA in Western Equatoria	22
3.3 Peace Negotiations	25
<b>4. Findings</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Impact	29
4.1.1 Individual Level	29
4.1.2 Community Level	33
4.2 Response	40
4.2.1 Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms	40
4.2.2 Protection Provisions	42
4.3 Other Security Issues in Western Equatoria	48
4.4 Need for Reconciliation	49
<b>5. General Recommendations</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>59</b>



## List of Acronyms

<b>CAR</b>	Central African Republic
<b>CERF</b>	Central Emergency Response Fund
<b>CPA</b>	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
<b>DFAIT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FM</b>	Frequency modulation
<b>GoS</b>	Government of Sudan
<b>GoSS</b>	Government of South Sudan
<b>HSM</b>	Holy Spirit Movement
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>JIU</b>	Joint Integrated Unit
<b>LRA</b>	Lord's Resistance Army
<b>MONUC</b>	United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NRA/M</b>	National Resistance Army/Movement
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SAF</b>	Sudanese Armed Forces
<b>SPLM/A</b>	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army
<b>SSRRC</b>	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNMIS</b>	United Nations Mission in Sudan
<b>UPDA</b>	Ugandan People's Democratic Army
<b>UPDF</b>	Ugandan People's Defence Force
<b>WVSS</b>	World Vision Southern Sudan

# Acknowledgements

The following report is the result of two months of intense primary and secondary research by a small, dedicated team. Primary research for this report was drawn from an information-gathering mission to Juba in which the team met with representatives of UN, NGOs and GoSS institutions in Juba and then numerous weeks spent researching in local communities in Western Equatoria State in southern Sudan. The team included representatives from World Vision offices in Sudan and Canada. The research process was led by Sophie Gordon (research consultant). Her dedication to conducting all research activities within an extremely short time frame is deeply appreciated. Furthermore, the technical guidance and insights into the complexities of the LRA issue in southern Sudan provided by Carrie Vandewint were invaluable. Additional support was given by Emmanuel Manza and Stefan Lehmeier, both with World Vision Southern Sudan.

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## Executive Summary

**A**fter 21 years of civil war that ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the people of Western Equatoria State and other parts of southern Sudan have a great desire to live in peace. However, since late 2005, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – a Ugandan dissident group – has plagued communities in Western Equatoria with sporadic but devastating incidents of looting, abduction, rape, and murder. Despite numerous reports outlining the humanitarian situation and the security challenges posed by the LRA in Sudan, little is known about its actual impact on the communities it has targeted. Recently, attention has focused on the high-profile efforts by the Government of South Sudan to mediate peace negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. This report highlights the need to expand the international community's perspective to include the grievances felt by Southern Sudanese communities who have suffered at the hands of the LRA. Based on the results of a community-based research project, this report outlines the destabilizing impact of the LRA on local communities and provides recommendations for collaborative approaches to mitigate the impact of the LRA in South Sudan. The protection and livelihoods of insecure communities of Western Equatoria State must be improved in order for them to realize the benefits of peace and cultivate the long-term stability so desperately needed in this war-ravaged region.

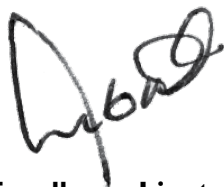
## Foreword

Following the suspension of the Juba peace talks the LRA attacks in Western Equatoria State created a lot of insecurity for our people. The LRA decided to move from the assembly points through our state towards Central African Republic, as a result, the citizens of Western Equatorial State paid the price for the collapse of the peace talks. As a country we have just come out of over 22 years of war, which affected all of our people. Following the signing of the CPA all efforts are being put into rebuilding Southern Sudan in order that the country and its citizens can reach their full potential. The disruption of the LRA has pushed back this progress in Western Equatoria State creating fear and apprehension amongst us.

The direct result of these attacks was injuries to civilians, the kidnapping of men, women and children to carry goods, the looting of property and the raping of women. The long term implications of these attacks were to prevent people from cultivation and in some areas has prevented children from going to school. IDPs are reluctant to come back home, especially from Khartoum, and investors are also scared to come to the state, resulting in a stalling of our development initiatives.

We are pleased now that the LRA have moved back to the Congo and the assembly points and we hope the peace talks will succeed. However we as the people who have been most affected by these LRA are not represented in these talks. We are not being given the space to talk of what has happened to our people and participate in these talks in Juba.

I am grateful to World Vision for raising these issues that have affected our community. We are calling on the international community to help create a stable home for our people with development as the focus for our area.



**His Excellency Lieutenant,  
General Samuel Abu John Kabashi**  
The Governor





# Summary of Recommendations

## To the Government of Western Equatoria State

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- **Physical protection**

More national law enforcement and security forces well-trained in the protection of civilians should be deployed throughout the state in consultation with local and community leaders. Special consideration must be given to the particular vulnerability of remote communities outside (peri-) urban centers and off the main roads.

Greater effectiveness of the law enforcement/security system requires capacity building at all levels and better communication between its various elements (police, SPLA, JIU). Better communication would require more effective procedures for information exchange and joint planning on the one hand and modern communication technology for all deployed units on the other hand.

Due to the existing tension following the tribal conflict in November 2005, the government should be sensitive to the ethnic composition of the JIU/SPLA deployed in Western Equatoria so that the security forces are seen to be neutral.

The clearing of bushes and undergrowth along the main roads linking centers in the region should be placed as a priority government-led activity in the next few months so that LRA fighters are denied coverage as they approach roads and towns. This would instill confidence among traders and communities and thus promote movement.

Increased presence of security forces (e.g. through frequent patrols) on trade routes in and out of Western Equatoria could also help to improve the local economy by facilitating safe-passage.

The rehabilitation of airstrips in strategic locations such as Ezo (bordering CAR and DRC) should be prioritized in order to facilitate access for security forces and aid workers.

- **Public information**

The Government of Western Equatoria should lead efforts to organize public information campaigns, including civic education and the mandates of police and armed forces, and making key documents such as the CPA and the Interim Constitution available in local languages.





The government should consider erecting radio masts and starting locally-run radio stations. One option would be to support efforts by the Episcopal Church of Sudan in Ezo, which has been planning to establish a radio station.

- **Disarmament**

If the government succeeds in providing effective physical protection to its citizens, the foundation will be laid for disarmament of the civilian population. Security sector reform combined with disarmament are urgently needed to prevent a further militarization as local communities take matters into their own hands to fill an actual or perceived security vacuum.

## To UNMIS

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- **Support to government efforts for improved physical protection**

UNMIS protection officers and CivPol personnel should immediately scale up training courses focusing on civilian protection for law enforcement and security forces in Western Equatoria.

UNMIS should interpret its mandate as flexibly as possible in order to provide tangible assistance to the Government of Western Equatoria. Its Civilian Police component should give stronger support to capacity building activities for law enforcement units.

With regard to the use of its force protection component, it should be kept in mind that Security Council Resolution 1663 (passed in March 2006) instructed UNMIS to “make full use of its current mandate and capabilities” regarding the LRA. How this instruction can be put into practice should be determined in close consultation with security forces in Western Equatoria State.

- **Support a widespread public information campaign**

Radio Miraya FM has been successful in disseminating information about political developments in Sudan, civic education etc. to the local population in its range. Unfortunately, it is not being broadcasted in Western Equatoria. UNMIS needs to look into expanding the reach of its radio station to include the territory of Western Equatoria.

## To the UNCT and humanitarian agencies

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- **Reintegration**

Provide increased psychological support to abductees and other victims of violence. The reintegration of abductees and returning IDPs should be promoted through social



events and awareness-raising. External agencies should work with local youth and women's groups to strengthen community structures that could be empowered to lead these activities and therefore increase their sustainability.

Increase support for technical capacity-building efforts targeting local and state government departments focused on reintegration needs, especially in terms of on-the-job mentoring and training.

Greater technical capacity-building efforts for local and state government departments focused on reintegration needs to be supported, especially regarding on the job mentoring and training.

- **Material assistance**

Scale up current efforts to provide humanitarian assistance (mainly through basic services).

Improve the targeting, coordination and impact measurement by strengthening the role played by OCHA and state-level SSRRC.

Actively mainstream protection approaches within international agency interventions to ensure that services are being provided and located in ways that best contribute to the physical protection of the most vulnerable.

- **Protection**

Improve current efforts to build capacity in state and local government departments focused on protection of the most vulnerable most notably through on-the-job training and mentoring by protection experts.

## **To the international donor community**

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- **Direct support to operational agencies**

Support more long-term studies of the security and political situation in South Sudan in order to better inform peace-building, reconciliation, and protection interventions;

Provide more support for humanitarian assistance and transitional programming in insecure areas in Western Equatoria.

Support predictable and dependable multi-year recovery programming in Western Equatoria, which integrates emergency relief activities with longer-term support to service delivery, livelihood support, and protection initiatives.

- **Support to Security Sector Reform**

Support increased and effective capacity-building for all levels of security and law enforcement institutions in southern Sudan including the provision of and training on communication equipment.

Increase support for more security sector reform in southern Sudan, especially focused on training for police and military on protection, human rights, civil-military relations, etc.

- **Peace negotiations**

The return of abductees is essential and all efforts should be made to encourage the LRA to free those taken captive.

Community perspectives should be used to inform further negotiations with the LRA.





# I Introduction



Multiple reports analyzing the political ramifications of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in South Sudan and providing recommendations on addressing the challenges it poses to the region have been released. A number of these reports have raised the need for further investigation and analysis into how communities have been affected by the attacks that have been attributed to the LRA in the region.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, despite the reports and variety of media articles, very little is known about the presence of the LRA in southern Sudan and its impact on communities there. Notably, since the LRA crossed the Nile in 2005 and began plaguing a much wider range of communities in South Sudan, there have been several rapid inter-agency assessments in the region to assess the needs of affected communities, but sustained community-based analysis has been minimal.

Community-based analysis, like the one upon which this report is based, is crucial for understanding the capacity of the LRA to destabilize community livelihoods in its expanding target zones. Such analysis should be used in designing approaches to mitigate the impact and create initiatives for building peace and reconciliation in areas affected by the LRA. Thus, in light of this need for in-depth field research and building on its relationships with local communities, World Vision Southern Sudan (WVS) conducted a grassroots participatory analysis of the impact of the LRA in communities in Western Equatoria State in January/February 2007.

WVSS has a long history of implementing projects in Western Equatoria State, both independently and in partnership with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies. While it was a WVSS-led venture, this research is indebted to the work of other agencies in the field. One such study was conducted in September 2006, following repeated LRA attacks in the southern-most counties of Western Equatoria State. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) facilitated an inter-agency assessment report on LRA-affected populations in Maridi, Ibba and Yambio counties.<sup>2</sup> The aim was to establish the immediate recovery and humanitarian needs in the area. Some of the immediate humanitarian needs that were recommended in that report have been addressed by NGOs and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC). However, over one year after the first attacks, the majority of humanitarian and especially recovery needs have not been met, as emphasized by many interviewees throughout the research.

This report on the impact of the LRA in Western Equatoria State falls within broader World Vision efforts to support research that highlights the often forgotten situation of vulnerable groups in Sudan and Uganda. For instance, World Vision has recently published "Pawns

- 1 See for example International Crisis Group reports "Peace in Northern Uganda?" (13<sup>th</sup> September 2006) and "Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead" (31<sup>st</sup> March 2006).
- 2 UNOCHA, *Inter-Agency Assessment Report of the LRA Affected Population in Maridi, Ibba & Yambio Counties; Western Equatoria State*, 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September 2006.



of Politics: Children, Conflict, and Peace in Northern Uganda” (2005), and “Their Future in our hands: Children displaced by conflicts in Africa’s Great Lakes region” (December 2006). Additionally, in the near future, a study by Boston University in partnership with World Vision and War Child Holland, on the psychosocial impact of the LRA in Northern Uganda and the effectiveness of psychosocial programming, will be released. These studies have been designed to inform programmatic approaches to the immense needs in this region, but they are also intended to inform international foreign policy and assistance strategies. World Vision seeks to give voice to marginalized communities and vulnerable groups, empowering them to shape the national and international responses required to address their immense needs.



Homes deep in the bush



Western Equatoria State is located along Sudan's border with the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is in the green, high-agricultural potential belt of southern Sudan, where about 75% of the residents are farmers. Yambio, the state capital, is one of the most populated semi-urban areas in South Sudan behind such others as Juba, Malakal, Yei, and Wau.

The Azande tribe constitutes the majority of the population in the state while the remaining numbers are comprised of closely related tribes such as the Balanda, Baka, Mundu, Avukaya, and Moru. In addition, there are small groups of refugees from tribes native to the DRC and CAR and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Dinka tribe. For over 10 years prior to the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Western Equatoria was the stronghold of Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Large numbers of IDPs, mainly from Bahr El Ghazal region, fled there during raids by Murahleen militia in the 1980s and 1990s. The state is now home to hundreds of thousands of relatively new returnees who have come back to their home areas with the formal ending of the civil war. In late 2005 however, simmering tensions between the resident community and pastoralist IDPs over grazing lands erupted into violent clashes between Zande and Dinka groups. Despite such concerns, the area continues to receive vast numbers of returnees from neighboring countries as well as IDPs returning from Khartoum every year.

The insecurity related to the inter-ethnic tensions has been compounded by the LRA presence and activities in Western Equatoria since late 2005. For a number of reasons, this part of South Sudan has been an attractive place for the LRA. The dense vegetation of Western Equatoria shields mobile LRA camps and units from easy detection. The communities of Western Equatoria are good targets for the LRA in terms of supplies, as the population, living on highly fertile land and being good farmers, are generally considered to be food secure. River water is also relatively abundant in this region, and the occasional boreholes complement access to natural water points. During the research phase, the team found that the communities most disadvantaged by the LRA-related insecurity were those hidden deep in the bush. These communities have been living in these remote areas for a number of years, mostly due to the years of insecurity during the civil war when people fled to remote areas for protection.

In the communities that were targeted by the attacks, belongings were looted, properties were destroyed, and men, women and children were tortured, abducted, raped and/or killed. The livelihoods of the members of these communities have been severely disrupted. As this report will show, a large amount of humanitarian and protection support needs to be invested in Western Equatoria before its inhabitants will be able to feel secure and comfortable<sup>3</sup> once again in their surroundings.

Recently, the international community's focus has been on the high-profile efforts by the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) to facilitate the Juba peace talks between the LRA and the Government of Uganda, rather than the affected communities of northern Uganda and South Sudan. While it is beyond the scope of this report to comment on the peace

<sup>3</sup> The word 'comfortable' has been chosen over safe as, during interviews, it transpired that comfort in the local languages used in Western Equatoria corresponds better to the English word 'safe'; safe referring to health if directly translated.



negotiation process, the research condensed within this report aims to shift some of the focus back to those communities primarily affected by the LRA – to expand the international community’s perspective to include the feelings and grievances of the affected host communities as well as the interests of stakeholders at higher levels. The feelings and grievances of people on the ground, including the local leaders, clearly show the importance of addressing or responding to the impact of the LRA on host communities. This research has been particularly interesting due to the diversity of ethnic groups and communities that participated. Spanning two counties, the research team was able to interact with people from the Azande, Baka, Mundu, Avukaya and Moru tribes — giving the team an insight into the various cultural perceptions on security and the opportunities for reconciliation in this very diverse part of South Sudan.



## 2 Methodology



The research, funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), was conducted by WVSS Peacebuilding and Protection sector. The research process began with a review of literature on the LRA and its activities in South Sudan. Subsequently, primary research was gathered by the team through interviews with various stakeholders in Juba, where information was collected on the nature of the LRA in southern Sudan, its presence in the region and humanitarian responses to past incidences of insecurity attributed to the LRA. This one-week interview process was followed by a five-week field study (January-February 2007) in Yambio and Maridi Counties of Western Equatoria State in which research interviews and focus-group discussions were conducted in LRA-affected communities. Yambio and Maridi Counties were chosen in light of the multiple attacks incurred by the LRA in 2005-2006. In addition, many of the bomas<sup>4</sup> in Maridi County that were affected by the LRA had not been covered by the rapid inter-agency assessment conducted in September 2006. As a result, the WVSS assessment was the first of its kind in some of the LRA-affected areas.

Ten research assistants/translators were employed for this project in order to cover as much ground as possible – the geographical coverage for this project was expansive. 508 people were interviewed; 347 in Yambio County and 161 in Maridi County.<sup>5</sup> These figures are in no way indicative of the impact of the LRA in these counties, but rather of the time available as well as access to roads and the number of research assistants. One challenge not foreseen was the resumption of LRA activities in Western Equatoria at the beginning of the research period; the coinciding insecurity had a direct impact on the research team's freedom of movement in and around Yambio County. It may also have had an impact on the kind of response received from people participating in the research process, as the ongoing events may have brought back memories of potentially traumatizing incidents in the recent past.

Interviews with affected communities in Western Equatoria were structured around a questionnaire developed by the WVSS research team. The same questionnaire was used for all interviews, although, some flexibility was permitted in its usage depending on the nature of the interview. For instance, when it was felt unnecessary to pose all the questions to a given participant, some were omitted. In some interviews, questions were asked that went beyond the scope of the questionnaire if it was felt that the informant had useful background or additional information on the subject at hand. Interviews were carried out on an individual basis as well as focus group discussions. Both were effective in different ways. With the former, the research team was able to go into detail about the effect on one person; in the latter the group was able to verify findings by coming to a consensus on answers. On the whole, people were chosen at random within communities known to

4 In Southern Sudan, administrative units are defined according to state, county, payam, boma, and village.

5 These figures do not include workshop participants. When included, figures change to 436 for Yambio County and 252 for Maridi County.



have been targeted by the LRA, as the team—due to its high membership level of local researchers—had a clear idea of which areas had been affected. The team also went to some villages that were not directly affected by the LRA, because it was known that these communities were hosting people who had fled from the rebel group and were therefore impacted by the insecurity. In some cases, it should be noted that random sampling was not followed; rather, prominent members of the community were selected for interviews based on their knowledge of, or role within, the community. Occasionally, a person was chosen to be interviewed because the team had heard of his or her extraordinary ordeal in the course of other interviews.

The questionnaire was divided into five sub-headings:

- General Security — to assess individual or group feelings of safety or insecurity in the community;
- General Awareness — to assess the level of individual or group understanding of political, social, economic and security developments in their surroundings;
- Specific Insecurity — to assess the physical, social, mental and economic impact of the LRA at individual and community levels;
- Security Mechanisms — to ascertain individual and community responses to threats and the responses of external actors to insecurity;
- Reconciliation — to gauge the community's sentiments towards peace, reconciliation and forgiveness of LRA combatants and captives, as well as to learn of potentially relevant traditional practices to foster forgiveness.

Simultaneous to the research interviews, WVSS conducted four Community Protection Training Workshops—two in Maridi County and two in Yambio County—to raise awareness about threats to protection, reinforce community-based protection mechanisms, and discuss with participants the role of various indigenous and external institutions with respect to community protection. Relevant information generated during these two-day workshops is also included in this report.

The report is a summary of the findings from six weeks of primary research, together with observations and current affairs that have helped to contextualize and further inform these findings. At the time of writing, Western Equatoria is still being affected by LRA presence and activities. While the findings presented can be considered relevant and accurate at the time the research was conducted, it is highly possible that the security situation could quickly change and significantly alter the relationship of the communities there to the LRA. It must be understood therefore that these findings and conclusions are most relevant for the period in which the study was completed.

Due to the sensitivity of the LRA issue in Sudan, and also due to the renewed attacks in the area, this report does not include names of informants. To a great extent, names of places that have given rise to any location-specific information or concerns and quantitative data collected during the research phase of the project have also been kept to a minimum to minimize any potential threat to the communities that participated in the research.

## 3 Background



### 3.1 History of the LRA in Uganda and Southern Sudan

The LRA was formed in northern Ugandan villages in 1987 and has led a campaign of violent opposition to the Ugandan government since that time. In order to pursue the insurgency, the LRA has assumed techniques of mass abductions of children, guerrilla warfare, looting and pillaging that have victimized the population in northern Uganda for decades. This instability has displaced close to 1.7 million Ugandans<sup>6</sup> who now live in IDP camps. It is estimated that over 36,000<sup>7</sup> children have been abducted and forced into rebellion by the rebels, and in 2005, it was recorded that about 90% of the Acholi people were internally displaced as a result of this war.<sup>8</sup> Children abducted by the LRA undergo traumatizing experiences, including torture, murder and rape, and are often forced to commit atrocities in their own villages including abducting additional innocents. The psychological damage inflicted on those kidnapped and the grievances created in communities against these LRA fighters have created enormous reconciliation and reintegration challenges for former LRA members and their abductees if and when they return to their communities in northern Uganda.

Even though for decades the LRA has predominantly inflicted massive devastation and suffering on the people of Uganda, this insurgency and the challenges it poses must be seen as a regional problem and addressed as such. The LRA has been active in southern Sudan (with alleged support from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF))<sup>9</sup> since the early 1990s. However, in September 2005, the LRA increased its activity and widened its presence by crossing the Nile and moving into Western Equatoria and the DRC – a strategy it had never undertaken before. The LRA is now a very scattered but highly mobile entity, operating from, and targeting communities in, three different countries in the region.

There are many theories regarding the root causes of the creation of the LRA in 1987. The history of post-colonial Uganda has been one of increasing militarization of society,<sup>10</sup> of violent coups and numerous armed insurrections. The use of violence to gain power and assert control was an over-riding theme of successive governments in Uganda, from the colonial regime to those of Idi Amin to Milton Obote I and II. Civil unrest, gross human rights violations, torture, displacement, and disappearances were perpetrated with impunity and created vicious cycles of hate, fear, anger, and mistrust and divided Ugandans among regional and ethnic lines. This divide was exacerbated by the perceived economic and

6 Reuters, "Sudan welcomes LRA, but only for talks", 4<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

7 Estimates by UNICEF.

8 Finnstrom, S., "Wars of the Past and War in the Present: The Lord's Resistance Movement/Army in Uganda", *Africa* 76 (2), 2006, p.203.

9 In his speech on the celebration of the second anniversary of the signing of the CPA on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007, Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Government of Southern Sudan, publicly accused the SAF of continuing their support to the LRA.

10 Van Acker, F., "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered", *African Affairs* 103/412, 2004, p. 338.



political north-south divide;<sup>11</sup> the south of Uganda is considerably more prosperous than the north and the population there has a much greater access to services and opportunities than in the north, thereby creating a supposedly marginalized and poorly educated social minority in the north of the country. Other factors include the proliferation of small arms from neighboring countries in conflict and the erosion of traditional cultures and authority, as well as the influence of Western religions and military control structures.

There have been fourteen insurgencies since President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) came to power in January 1986. The civil war waged between the LRA and the Government of Uganda is the most protracted of these rebellions. When Museveni captured power from General Tito Okello Lutwa in 1986, a popular revolt was initiated by Okello's ousted army troops and their many civilian supporters, who formed the Ugandan People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Remnants of the UPDA and other dissidents united to form the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), led by Alice Aumu "Lakwena". Their motivations to take up arms in rebellion arose from fear of retribution and national marginalization by a government they perceived to be dominated by western and southern Ugandans, as well as resentment against perceived atrocities and large-scale cattle raids promoted by the NRM. For nearly one year, Alice Lakwena led the HSM rebellion, coming within 80km of Kampala before being defeated and fleeing into exile.<sup>12</sup>

Following this defeat in 1987, Joseph Kony, first cousin to Alice Lakwena, reorganized remaining elements of the UPDA in an attempt to continue the efforts to usurp power. Kony's forces later became known as the Lord's Resistance Army. Although Kony's initial purposes were assumed to be similar to those of Lakwena, the LRA has never really articulated a clear political agenda over the course of its two-decade long violent campaign.<sup>13</sup>

It is important, however, to recognize the spiritual aspects to this conflict. When Alice Auma Lakwena formed the Holy Spirit Movement, she announced that she had been granted powers by the spirit 'Lakwena' (meaning "messenger" in Acholi) to cleanse and purify the Acholi people of their 'sins',<sup>14</sup> including human rights abuses committed by the Acholi government soldiers in the war against the rebel NRA.<sup>15</sup> When Joseph Kony gathered the remnant forces together in 1987, he claimed to have inherited the spiritual powers of Lakwena from his first cousin, Alice. The early names of his movement—first, the Lord's Salvation Army, later the United Salvation Christian Army, and finally the Lord's Resistance Army—also strongly demonstrate his belief in the spiritual aspects of his crusade.

11 UN, "Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Resolutions 1653 (2006) and 1663 (2006)", *Insight Sudan*, Nov. 2006 Issue, pp.26-31.

12 Anderson, R.E., F. Sewankambo, and K. Vandergrift, *Pawns of Politics: Children, Conflict and Peace in Northern Uganda*, World Vision International, 2004. p.11.

13 Contrary to this widely agreed upon statement, The Monitor claims that "[t]he LRA is now by implication a mainstream political organization and could even register as a political party if it so desired" (Daily Monitor "Moving the Juba Peace Talks to Kampala", 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007) and Refugees International claim that the LRA is for the first time putting forward a political agenda, but one that risks stalling negotiations due to its unreasonable demands (Refugees International Bulletin, *Northern Uganda: Political Process Must be Bolstered to Bring Peace to the Region*, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006).

14 Van Acker, F., "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered", *African Affairs* 103/412, 2004, p.346.

15 Anderson, R.E., F. Sewankambo, and K. Vandergrift, *Pawns of Politics: Children, Conflict and Peace in Northern Uganda*, World Vision International, 2004. p.11.



Thus, the LRA under Joseph Kony's leadership emanated from a rebellion movement, but over the period of a few years, it evolved into an entity that came to terrorize its own people. The LRA came to rely on the power of fear, manipulated spiritualism and a campaign of violence and abduction in order to exist. Kony's LRA, very much influenced by the military experiences of Otti, Latek and Tabuley,<sup>16</sup> chose to use guerrilla terror tactics over Holy Spirit tactics.<sup>17</sup> Kony sees himself as a liberating force for the Acholi, but when he began to lose support and consequently recruits, he and the LRA began a harrowing campaign of child abduction to fill out its ranks. These children, boys and girls, are psychologically and physically manipulated by the LRA into becoming weapons of terror against their own parents and community. Fear, indoctrination and terror are intended to prevent the escape of abductees and to stimulate regional despair and resentment against the Ugandan government.

Even though for decades the LRA has predominantly inflicted massive devastation and suffering on the people of Uganda, the LRA has for many years benefited from larger regional rivalries and power struggles. The LRA has received support from the Government of Sudan (GoS) and has been active in southern Sudan since the mid-1990s.<sup>18</sup> The GoS supported the LRA with the alleged intention of destabilizing the north of Uganda as a form of retaliation against the Government of Uganda's alleged support of their rivals, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA),<sup>19</sup> who, from 1983 to 2005, waged a civil war against the GoS.<sup>20</sup> While it is difficult to establish facts and distinguish rumors from reality in a research like this, among the communities interviewed, there are still grave concerns that external support to LRA is continuing.<sup>21</sup>

16 All leaders of the LRA rebel group.

17 Van Acker, F., "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered", *African Affairs* 103/412, 2004, p.348.

18 International Crisis Group, "Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead", 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, p.14.

19 Edmondson, L., "Marketing Trauma and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda", *Theatre Journal* 57, 2004, p.463.

20 International Crisis Group, "Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead", 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, p.14.

21 In February 2006, Refugees International interviewed formerly abducted children in northern Uganda, who claimed that the LRA had new guns with Arabic inscriptions and that Kony was being escorted by Arabs, Refugees International Bulletin, "Sudan: Expand UNMIS Mandate to Protect Civilians from LRA Violence", 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006. During interviews in Western Equatoria State, informants spoke of hearing the LRA speaking in Arabic.

Additionally, while the research team was interviewing in one location (which shall remain unnamed) and overheard the sound of Antonovs flying overhead, informants told us that they suspected that it was the GoS (or simply 'Bashir' as people interviewed put it) supplying the LRA with weapons. While these speculations cannot be confirmed, they remain important to highlight the fear in the region and the way people reason through fear.



## 3.2 Nature and Activities of the LRA in Western Equatoria

From the mid-1990s up to late 2005, the LRA's presence in southern Sudan was limited to Eastern Equatoria, from where its fighters could carry out operations to destabilize northern Uganda and counter Kampala's support to the SPLA.<sup>22</sup> However, in September 2005, the LRA widened its presence by crossing the Nile and moving into Western Equatoria and the DRC. In Western Equatoria, the LRA used similar tactics as in northern Uganda and Eastern Equatoria, targeting towns and villages in order to loot, abduct, and kill. These operations have stretched as far as Yambio and even Tambura<sup>23</sup> in Western Equatoria State. While the initial LRA presence in southern Sudan was acknowledged and received some international attention in the early stages of the incursion, recent LRA activities in the area (including the spread of LRA forces into Western Equatoria and DRC)<sup>24</sup> appear to have gone largely unnoticed by the international community.

There is no concrete and conclusive record of the communities that have been targeted by the LRA in Western Equatoria, nor is there a list of the numbers killed, abducted, and still missing. To provide some context though, the following chart contains a small sampling however of the numbers killed and still missing from villages in Yambio County, Western Equatoria state:

County	Payam	Village	Missing	Killed	
Yambio	Gangura	Masumbu	1 girl (13 yrs)		
		Gangura centre	1 girl		
		Karika 2	2 girls	3 men (incl. 1 SPLA soldier)	
		Nabiapai		1 man	
	Bangasu	Naangere	2 girls (< 13 yrs)		
		Ukuo	1 girl (< 15 yrs)		
		Kasia		1 man (due to snake bite whilst hiding in bush)	
	Yambio		Nyaka	2 girls	
			Kuria		1 man
			Hai Napere	1 boy (13 yrs)	

**Table 1:** The figures presented in this table have been gathered from a relatively small area in Western Equatoria (three different payams in Western Equatoria State). Since no comprehensive survey on the number of abductions and killings during LRA attacks has been conducted, these figures cannot be considered as statistically representative.

22 International Crisis Group, "Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead", 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, p.14.

23 While Yambio became a centre of attack as early as February 2006, Tambura has experienced the LRA for the first time in March 2007.

24 It was mentioned in one interview that the LRA move into Garamba Park, DRC, is almost a welcome change compared with previous warlords in the area. The LRA are not looting in DRC as they have done in southern Sudan; there has instead been confirmation that the LRA is cultivating in Garamba Park. World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007.



At the time the research was carried out, at least 10 children (9 girls and 1 boy) from Yambio County alone were still missing. It should be emphasized that by early 2007, all counties of Western Equatoria have been affected by LRA attacks, which means that the total figure of children and adults missing must be significantly higher than what could be ascertained by the World Vision research team. The same applies to the 6 confirmed killings among the communities visited in the same county.

Community members have not been the only victims of the LRA in South Sudan. In recent years, the LRA has increasingly targeted humanitarian aid workers. In early November 2005, two staff members of an international mine clearance agency were killed south of Juba.<sup>25</sup> In February 2006, a compound of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Yambio was attacked. In the following month, UN compounds in Yambio and Yei were attacked; two UN staff were killed in the Yei incident.<sup>26</sup> While the LRA had targeted humanitarians in the past, these incidents marked a significant increase in attacks targeting foreign personnel.<sup>27</sup> The rise of attacks in southern Sudan has led to communities being harmed on two levels: their own communities have been pillaged and terrorized and their access to international aid and relief has been greatly hindered.

When peace talks between the LRA and the Government of Uganda began in July 2006, the frequency of LRA attacks in Western Equatoria was greatly reduced. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed by both parties in August 2006 required the LRA to assemble in two designated areas, Owiny Ki-Bul (Eastern Equatoria) and Ri-Kwangba (Western Equatoria).<sup>28</sup> Following a statement made by Sudanese President Omar al Bashir which threatened to evict the LRA from Sudan, the LRA refused to return to Juba and allegedly left the assembly areas. Some sources suggested that the LRA, fearing increasing operations and presence by the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and SPLA in Western Equatoria, might have moved towards the Central African Republic.<sup>29</sup>

In early February 2007, Yambio County became, once again, the target of LRA activities in a new wave of incidents, less than one month before the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was due to expire.<sup>30</sup> The revival of LRA-induced fear and the shattering of the fragile but previously growing sense of safety and security were evident to the research team who was present to witness the impact of this renewed hostility. The LRA denied reports that they were resuming operations in the area, claiming instead that their movements were "reconnaissance patrols near the DRC border".<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, local communities reacted in widespread panic when they were notified of approaching LRA units. Many families, particularly those badly affected by the LRA in 2006, fled to the bush for many nights, returning to their compounds every day at dawn.

25 jfdinfo Google group, "Uganda's LRA attacks hinder South Sudan aid operations", 28<sup>th</sup> November 2005.

26 Refugees International Bulletin, "Sudan: Expand UNMIS Mandate to Protect Civilians from LRA Violence", 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

27 Ibid.

28 Reuters, "LRA rebels will be attacked if peace fails – Ugandan army", 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

29 Safer Access, "Security Alert: South Sudan – Uganda", 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

30 It should be noted that since the cessation of hostilities agreement expired on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007, northern Uganda has remained peaceful. All LRA activities have been conducted in South Sudan.

31 Reuters, "Uganda's LRA denies attacks in Sudan's Western Equatoria", 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



In light of recent LRA movements, there is growing fear surrounding the alleged movement of two LRA groups heading north-west towards the CAR, passing through areas such as Yangiri (Ezo County) and Source Yibo (Tambura County) which had not been affected by LRA attacks before. Adding to the increasing fear, two civilians were reportedly killed on 1<sup>st</sup> March in Source Yibo.<sup>32</sup> However, it is believed that there is one small LRA group of men and women staying close to the border in DRC, and another larger group of men, women and children moving in Sudan.<sup>33</sup> Speculation is circulating, at all levels, surrounding the motive behind this mass-migration of LRA troops towards the CAR. On the ground, the research team noted fear among the Western Equatorians due to the apparent LRA progress along the same route as the Ambororo pastoralists a few months earlier. Many Western Equatorians are afraid that the two armed groups may eventually join forces in order to attack the southern Sudanese.

Understanding the composition of the LRA in southern Sudan is crucial to informing approaches to increase protection, reconciliation, and stability among communities in southern Sudan and northern Ugandan, as well as between communities in these regions. To facilitate peace and reconciliation, it is vital that clarity is achieved as to who are the perpetrators of violence. If local tribes are involved in the LRA it is vital that they can be identified so that the correct traditional approaches to reconciliation are used.

In order to understand the impact of the LRA in Western Equatoria, it was necessary for the research team to ascertain generally what inhabitants there believe about this rebel group, including its composition, movements, and motives. During the interview sessions, it became clear that the predominant theories on the ground about the nature and motives of the LRA are based on assumptions or hearsay that has been repeated from one community member to another. As the majority of the population in Western Equatoria does not have access to mass media, rumors play a pivotal role in daily beliefs, perceptions and movements.<sup>34</sup> Much of the following information collected during the research phase must be considered to be heavily informed by rumor. However, such rumors are a reality that informs the emotions, perceptions of security, and actions of the vast majority of Western Equatorian inhabitants. Therefore, ascertaining and recording these rumors need to a part of any study attempting to understand the impact and response of communities to insecurity.

Reports that there are Sudanese combatants among the LRA have been circulating for quite some time. While there is a possibility that the LRA groups in Eastern Equatoria are comprised of some Sudanese Acholi, either by force or choice, according to informed

32 Sudan Tribune, "Ugandan rebels kill 2 in fresh attacks in Sudan", 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007.

33 World Vision interview, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

34 The population of Western Equatoria is largely illiterate and does not have access to the newspapers. Radio programmes can only be captured by long-wave radios, which are beyond the economic means of most people or have been looted or damaged in LRA raids. Most importantly, it is the lack of up-to-date information and the inability to know what is actually happening that is perceived as the greatest threat by the people of Western Equatoria. Many of those interviewed were unaware of the Juba peace talks, the allocated assembly areas on Sudanese turf, or the retreat of the LRA from their neighbourhood (many believed the LRA was still lurking about). Consequently, when the LRA rampaged through Western Equatoria in late 2005/early 2006, the response of the population was based largely on rumours that the LRA was nearby. People were permanently fearful of further unknown.





sources, the LRA is not becoming “Sudanized.”<sup>35</sup> While this research did not attempt to establish or refute the assertion, it is interesting to note that among those interviewed, some Sudanese from Western Equatoria suggested that if there were any Sudanese fighters among the LRA factions operating in Western Equatoria, they were most likely escaped criminals with no option but to join the rebel group for protection and food. Although there is no proof, others felt that there must be Sudanese among the LRA, as this would explain the success of LRA raids on, and knowledge of, remote areas.<sup>36</sup> A small fraction of people interviewed in this study said that returned captives had recognized Sudanese among the LRA. However, of all the released captives interviewed by the research team, none were able to confirm this statement.

It is interesting to note that the uncertain composition of the LRA operating in Western Equatoria is a potential source of ethnic conflict, as accusations of supporting the LRA are being made across tribal lines. When queried about the tribal composition of the LRA in interviews, some participants were very quick to accuse other Sudanese tribes, while denying their own tribe’s involvement.<sup>37</sup> Informants described having heard the LRA speaking Acholi, Kiswahili, Kinubi and local (Juba) Arabic. Hearing local Arabic spoken by the LRA is confirmation, to some of the people interviewed, that there are Sudanese among them.

### 3.3 Peace Negotiations

In July 2006, peace negotiations began in Juba between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. The talks were hosted by the GoSS and mediated by Dr. Riek Machar, Vice President of the GoSS. On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2006, the negotiations culminated in the signing of a truce between the LRA and the UPDF; the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement later renewed in December 2006. Unfortunately, talks came to a standstill and did not resume after the Christmas recess as planned, due to negative remarks about the LRA in prominent public addresses. President Bashir of Sudan delivered a speech on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007, vowing to “rid Sudan of the LRA”. Salva Kiir, President of South Sudan, during the same CPA anniversary celebrations, expressed his government’s impatience at the delay in the peace talks and encouraged the people of southern Sudan to join hands with the armed forces to ‘hunt [the LRA] down’. In response, the LRA questioned their safety in Sudan and accused both leaders of inciting violence.

The August 2006 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement stipulated that the LRA should leave Uganda and assemble in two allocated areas in southern Sudan; Ri-Kwangba in Western Equatoria and Owiny Ki-Bul in Eastern Equatoria. It also stipulated that the LRA would no longer orchestrate attacks, ending the raids on innocent southern Sudanese. Finally,

35 World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007. It was suggested that this is because the LRA would never want a Sudanese to be climbing the ranks in the army; it is therefore a likely policy to keep the LRA (Ugandan) Acholi.

36 World Vision interview, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

37 For example, an Azande told me of Baka and Mundu tribesmen in the LRA. This was confirmed, so the interviewed person told the research team, by captives who had been released by the LRA. It was stipulated, however, that there were no Azande among the LRA, World Vision interview, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



it also asserted that the GoSS would guarantee the safety of the LRA while inside the Sudanese border. In return for the LRA's compliance to the principals of the truce, the GoSS would provide LRA fighters, and their dependents, outposts with water points, food and clothing. The agreement that the LRA would remain in these allocated camps was never fully met.<sup>38</sup> Significant numbers of LRA rebels assembled close to the assembly areas in both locations for significant periods during the time that the Juba talks were taking place, but they did not, for the most part, inhabit the specific areas set out in the agreement. Sudanese living in areas around these assembly points were understandably distressed and upset about these tactics. Ultimately, during the month of January 2007, the vast majority of the LRA moved into Garamba Park in the DRC, where it is believed that Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti, prominent LRA leaders, are presently hiding. Apart from a clash with units of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006, in which eight peacekeepers were killed,<sup>39</sup> the LRA appears to be avoiding actively targeting communities there. There are reports that the LRA are even cultivating for themselves in their hideouts in the Park.<sup>40</sup>

The need for the LRA to retreat to a hideout in the Garamba Park is undoubtedly linked to the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment against the rebel leaders. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004, the Ugandan government referred the situation caused by the LRA to the ICC. Following lengthy investigations, arrest warrants were issued on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005, for the five most senior members of the LRA,<sup>41</sup> for war crimes including murder, sexual enslavement, rape and enlisting child soldiers.

The response to the ICC's investigations and warrants for high-ranking LRA commanders has been mixed due to its impact on the peace process. Some members of the international community feel that it was the ICC's indictments that most likely encouraged Kony's LRA to participate in the peace negotiations,<sup>42</sup> whereas others feel that the ICC's involvement is hindering the peace process.<sup>43</sup> Since the warrants were issued against the LRA leaders, the Ugandan government has sought to convince the ICC to drop the indictments,<sup>44</sup> believing they are now an obstacle to peace. Moreover, Uganda's traditional, religious and civil society leaders have argued that the ICC indictments place the Ugandan children who are currently with the LRA at greater risk.<sup>45</sup> They perceive the ICC indictment against the top four LRA leaders as posing one of the greatest impediments to peace in the area.<sup>46</sup> People are urging for the indictments to be dropped *in order* to achieve peace. The ICC has refused such an option, claiming that granting amnesty to Kony and his fellow-leaders

38 The LRA blamed the lack of services in Ri-Kwangba and the UPDF attacks near Owiny Ki-Bul for not assembling in the allocated areas, Refugees International Bulletin, "Northern Uganda: Political Process Must be Bolstered to Bring Peace to the Region", 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

39 US Department of State – Humanitarian Information Unit, *LRA Incidents VISTA*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

40 World Visions interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

41 Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odiambo, Raska Lukwiya and Dominic Ongwen.

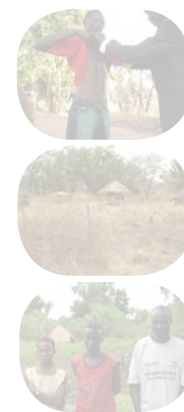
42 Refugees International Bulletin, "Northern Uganda: Political Process Must be Bolstered to Bring Peace to the Region", 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

43 World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

44 Agence France Presse, "ICC May Drop Warrants for LRA", 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

45 Liu Institute for Global Issues, *Roco Wat I Acoli*, September 2005, p.ii.

46 The indictment was initially against five LRA leaders, but Raska Lukwiya died in combat on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2006. Dominic Ongwen was believed to have died in 2005, but later DNA tests disproved that.



goes against the principles of the Rome Statute.<sup>47</sup> As a result of the indictments against them, some feel the LRA leaders fear attending the Juba peace talks. Kony and his men will not surface from the bush as long as they face trial at The Hague.<sup>48</sup> Kony has even gone as far as to send his 14-year old son to negotiate on his behalf, in addition to the members of the Acholi diaspora.

The feeling that the ICC indictments are preventing peace in the region is also felt among the communities in which research was conducted.<sup>49</sup> For countless generations, the southern Sudanese lived within a restorative justice system based on customary laws that provide for the reconciliation and the reintegration of criminals into society. According to those interviewed, the ICC's formal justice approach does not coincide with Western Equatorians' approach to justice. Some of those interviewed suggested that, as long as Kony and his men agreed to disarm and compensate the Sudanese for what they have lost – according to customary norms – the Sudanese would even be prepared to grant the LRA amnesty in Sudan.<sup>50</sup> The most important pre-requisite to peace is that all abducted women and children are returned and reparations are made, after which, the disbanded LRA could potentially live in their midst. Considering the statements collected in Western Equatoria, it is clear that the ICC indictments and its imposition of retributive justice – prison terms instead of traditional compensation – could be perceived as a barrier to peace in the region by local communities.

On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the former-Mozambican President, Joachim Chissano, was appointed UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Region by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, in a bid to bring a comprehensive political solution<sup>51</sup> to the conflict in LRA-affected areas. Chissano has been highly instrumental in recent attempts to bolster the peace talks, partaking in several high-level meetings with the LRA commanders and the Presidents of Sudan and Uganda.<sup>52</sup>

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2007, the LRA turned their backs on the Juba peace talks, vowing that the “chapter is totally closed. It will not reopen”.<sup>53</sup> Following this move, the LRA recommenced its operations in Western Equatoria, wreaking havoc along their way prior to the end of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The pressure from the Acholi diaspora, the international community and others on the LRA to resume the Juba peace talks has never been so great. From 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007, around 110 political, religious and cultural leaders, and representatives of civil society organizations, from both Northern Uganda and the

47 The Rome Statute allows for the ICC to have jurisdiction over cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

48 See New Vision, “Uganda: Kony Attempts to Salvage Talks”, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007, Kampala.

49 Obviously, this matter was only discussed with people who said they were aware of the warrants against Kony and the other rebel leaders.

50 Informants said that this had been the case in the past with South Sudan acting as refuge for Congolese exiles, World Vision interview, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

51 ‘Joachim Chissano Appointed UN Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Region’, <http://www.ugandacan.org/item/1846>, sourced 20<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

52 Since the beginning of March alone, SESG Chissano has met with the LRA leadership three times; 1<sup>st</sup> March, 9<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2007. In addition, he met with President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007, and with the ICC Prosecutor in The Hague on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007.

53 LRA spokesman, Obonyo Olweny, in Sudan Tribune, “Ugandan Rebels Reject Invitation To Peace Talks in Sudan”, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2007.



diaspora,<sup>54</sup> met in Juba for the Acholi Peace Conference,<sup>55</sup> to form a consensus among the Acholi in charting a way forward in the peace process and to make recommendations on how the parties could be brought back to the negotiating table.<sup>56</sup> Despite the GoSS and the Government of Uganda endorsement of the Acholi conference and continued support for the peace negotiations, the LRA did not immediately agree to return to the peace talks.

The pivotal moment in a resumption of the peace negotiations appears to have been a high-level meeting between the UN Special Envoy Joaquim Chissano and the LRA High Command, as well as Dr. Riek Machar (head of the mediation team), members of the Ugandan government delegation led by Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, the Acholi Paramount chief Rwot David Achana, other political and religious leaders from northern Uganda, as well as representatives from Mozambique, DRC, Tanzania and South Africa. Following this meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March in Ri-Kwangba (Ibba County, Western Equatoria),<sup>57</sup> the LRA agreed to return to the negotiating table. Indeed, Joseph Kony recently called the former-Mozambican President “a savior”, claiming that Chissano’s interventions, guarantees and assurances have convinced Kony to resume peace negotiations.<sup>58</sup>

According to press reports, representatives from Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique have agreed to join the team of mediators when the talks resume on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2007.<sup>59</sup> No formal agreement appears to exist on the LRA’s demand for better security for their negotiators in Juba and their fighters scattered in southern Sudan.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the LRA lawyer at the high-level meeting presented a document containing eighteen additional conditions, which the Ugandan government and the team of mediators would have to meet before talks could restart.<sup>61</sup> At the time of writing, the LRA had agreed to resume negotiations within two weeks of the Ri-Kwangba meeting.

54 “LRA Acholi Meeting in Juba”, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007, posted on Gurtong.org

55 Organised by the Acholi Paramount Chief, Rwot David Onen Achana, Uganda Monitor, “Ugandan Acholi Leaders Head to Juba to Save LRA Peace Talks”, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007, posted on Gurtong.org

56 jfdinfo Google group, “Acholi Peace Conference Closes: Confirms Juba as Venue and GOSS as Mediators”, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

57 IRIN News, “Government, rebels to resume talks soon – minister”, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

58 Gyezaho, E., and S.O. Egadu, “Uganda: LRA Agree to Return to Juba Talks”, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2007, The Monitor.

59 The Monitor, “South Africa, Kenya Join Uganda peace talks in South Sudan”, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007.

60 Reuters, “Ugandan rebels say will restart talks in South Sudan”, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

61 Daily Monitor, “LRA rebel leader sets new terms for peace talks”, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007. These conditions include lifting of ICC indictments, free passage to be provided to its fighters to the east of the River Nile an official apology from the Presidents of GoS and GoSS regarding the comments they both made in January in which they vowed to rid Sudan of the LRA, the deployment of 1,000 peacekeeping troops to areas where the rebels are to assemble, withdrawal of Ugandan soldiers (UPDF) from southern Sudan, greater security for LRA representatives at the talks in Juba, involvement of the Khartoum government in the negotiations and an increased allowance (of \$70) for those participating in the talks.

## 4 Findings



### 4.1 Impact

The research summarized in this report is contemporary and timely, given that it reflects very recent experiences of insecurity related to the LRA in Western Equatoria. The incidents examined include those that took place in 2005 as well as those that occurred over the first few months of 2006. The direct effects of the most recent incidents in early 2007 have not been included in the field research because the communities affected during that period (in Ezo, Source Yibo, Tambura areas) could not be reached by the research team due to insecurity. Due to a variety of factors – including different cultural interpretations of time, complications in translation, and feelings of fear that keep memories very fresh – it is highly possible that stories of older incidents of insecurity were re-interpreted and included in accounts of more contemporary incidents. However, every effort possible was made to ensure the accuracy of the information and descriptions. The following information is therefore based on the 2005 and 2006 LRA attacks but should also be considered to be infused with past and present fears.

#### 4.1.1 Individual Level

Southern Sudan is a tightly knit communal society in which it is difficult to distinguish individual impact from collective impact. However, some of the insecurity-related experiences were quite personal.<sup>62</sup> As much as possible, it is important to examine individual and collective impact separately in order to understand the full implication of the LRA-related insecurity on the overall population.

Indeed, on the whole, there is a great desire among inhabitants of Western Equatoria to have others understand how their communities have been affected by the LRA. There was a great willingness on the part of most community members approached to share their individual and collective stories. Of all those asked to participate in interviews or focus group discussions, only one person declined to participate.<sup>63</sup>

The majority of people interviewed had been taken hostage by the LRA for various lengths of time (ranging anywhere from three hours to one month). As it appears that one of the LRA's main intentions while operating within southern Sudan was to acquire resources, most individuals who were abducted were captured by the LRA on their homesteads and then used to transport the looted goods for them to safer areas. The vast majority of those abducted from Western Equatoria by the LRA were released. This is a crucial difference between LRA operations in this region versus LRA operations in northern Uganda.

62 Individual interviews were favored over group interviews in some cases, e.g. it was believed that women might be less willing to discuss matters such as acts of sexual violence in the presence of men.

63 Only one man refused to be interviewed, claiming that he had been interviewed already for various assessments and he had seen no change in his situation. It would therefore be a waste of his time to be interviewed again.



A Protection Monitor with World Vision stands beside his children who had been abducted by the LRA and released.

Those interviewed described the seizure of captives as an extremely brutal experience, however. Women and children were dragged out of their beds by gunpoint at night.<sup>64</sup> Men and women were forced at gunpoint to lead the rebel fighters to their grain stores and livestock. In most situations, household goods were collected in the centres of the various compounds raided before the LRA decided what would be taken and what would be damaged and left behind.<sup>65</sup>

According to various descriptions, those captured were normally loaded with looted goods, tied to one another, and made to walk in convoys to the DRC through the compounds of other residents in order to loot more goods and take more hostages.<sup>66</sup> Goats were tied with ropes to the captives' waists and chickens attached to their arms. Captives were forced to carry bags of groundnuts, cassava flour, maize and jerricans of oil. Often, the goods weighed more than the abducted person was able to carry. Many captives buckled under the strain but were beaten with a stick, a *panga*<sup>67</sup> or the barrel of a gun if they slowed down or fell. Children as young as eight years of age were reported to have been captured and used to carry looted goods. Female captives were often required to perform tasks such as grinding groundnuts before being allowed to rest.<sup>68</sup> Captives always remained tied to each other with the exception of during the night when they were untied to sleep. At all times, however, the captives remained under constant supervision of LRA fighters.

64 World Vision interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

65 What was not looted was, more often than not, destroyed maliciously, e.g. mattresses cut, saucepans punctured, crops uprooted, clothes cut – leaving the community baffled.

66 When asked if there were any hard feelings among the communities affected about the role these captives played in the lootings of neighbour's homes, participants unanimously answered negatively; they argued that these people were forced to do these things by their hostages and could therefore not be blamed for the consequences. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the cleansing rituals described in section 4.4 were to cleanse the person of the very acts that they may have been forced to commit against their own community whilst with the LRA.

67 A large machete-like local knife.

68 World Vision interview, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



Adding further distress and disgrace to the experience, some captives were stripped of their clothes when they arrived at the LRA camps,<sup>69</sup> although some were at least subsequently supplied with 'replacement' clothes and shoes of much poorer quality. Those who were held hostage by the LRA for a period of time also complained of the extremely poor living conditions during their captivity. Some explained that they were only given six groundnuts to eat per day,<sup>70</sup> while others noted that they had only one cup of water to share between five captives per day.

The LRA is widely known to sexually assault girls and women in the Ugandan villages they attack and to abduct girls and women to become their wives in the bush. It was notably difficult however to gather information in Western Equatoria on the issue of rape occurring during the LRA-related insecurity.<sup>71</sup> For cultural reasons, women of Western Equatoria remain very reserved about providing information on such incidents due to reluctance to disclose this information to foreigners and out of fear of their reputation in the community being tarnished. It is nonetheless highly likely that cases of sexual assault did occur in Western Equatoria that can be attributed to the LRA. Some of the Western Equatoria inhabitants who were taken captive by the LRA and then released confirmed witnessing women being raped whilst in LRA custody. However, the research team was not able to meet with any of these women, presumably because victims feared stigmatization.

The majority of interviews suggested that between 2006 and the latest LRA incidents in March 2007, there was a growing sentiment of increased security and safety, as LRA activities and rumors of their presence in Western Equatoria had virtually ceased during this period. For many people, the feeling of improved safety was explained by the allocation of an assembly area for the LRA in Ri-Kwangba.<sup>72</sup> It was felt, on the whole, that providing supplies for the LRA in this camp was a positive step towards curbing LRA activities in Western Equatoria; however, it was clearly noted by community members that providing this haven and assistance to the LRA should be a temporary way to assemble the LRA, not settle them.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, there were some notable reservations about these assembly areas. Many felt that this special treatment legitimized their gathering in some way and provided them too easy an opportunity to potentially plan their next offensive on the Sudanese people. In addition to these provisions to provide for the LRA's basic needs

69 Some informants were stripped as soon as they were taken hostage.

70 World Vision interview, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007. It must be indicated at this point that certain cultural values are attached to certain foods. In one interview it transpired, after the informant had said that the captives were starved for a week, that they were fed on groundnuts and boiled termites. Another informant said she was deprived of food for 3 days although she noted she was given cassava flour to eat (World Vision interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007). Groundnuts, termites, and cassava flour are not considered 'food' by many of the people of Western Equatoria, despite their having eaten, and lived off, such foods for sometimes up to a week.

71 Embarrassment and shame among participants was a large challenge to researching the aspect of sexual assault inflicted during LRA attacks and abductions. Due to such sensitivities, girls and women were reluctant to talk openly about rape and/or sex with LRA members; when asked about the possibility of such things, they often laughed and shied away. The research team foresaw this challenge and endeavoured to mitigate it by hiring both male and female assistants/translators in order to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible during discussions. Rape was more easily discussed in public arenas such as workshops and focus group discussions, but none of the women who had allegedly been raped were present in the workshops and focus group discussions organized by World Vision Sudan within the research period. It is therefore very hard to ascertain whether the violent sexual activities of the LRA experienced by the women and girls of northern Uganda have been mirrored in South Sudan.

72 Although we must not ignore the voice of the minority, that expressed strong anger towards the GoSS for its provisions aimed at people who have caused the Sudanese to suffer.

73 World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



at assembly points, people generally felt safer due to an increased Joint Integrated Unit<sup>74</sup> (JIU) and SPLA presence in their areas.

From the perspective of the targeted communities themselves, the individuals most affected by the LRA-induced insecurity were the women, children, and widows, as well as the old and frail, the blind, the disabled, and those living in remote areas. It is also clear that those who felt great fear of the LRA – whether from past experience with insecurity or due to their own vulnerability – were also most affected by the LRA-attributed activities.

The impact of the LRA on individuals has been manifested through the widespread displacement of people and their families. It is difficult to ascertain the numbers, but it is likely that thousands of people fled their homes and many of them have not yet returned. The interviews revealed story upon story of desperate individuals and families who fled their entire households, friends and extended families due to their fear of the LRA. In many instances, people fled from remote areas to more crowded urban centers. This has had an economic impact at both the individual and communal level, as discussed below. Individuals, especially male heads of households, expressed their sadness at not being able to provide material help for the vulnerable people within their families and within the community at large.

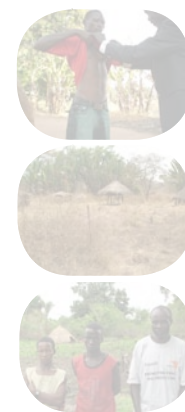


Deserted home in the bush

It may be summarized that at the individual level, the impact of activities attributed to the LRA is of great concern. During many interviews, the word ‘hate’ continually recurred when community members were describing their sentiments towards the LRA. This hatred is fuelled by personal experiences. Some people interviewed have lost family members and

<sup>74</sup> The JIU is an armed force formed following the signing of the CPA. The JIU is a separate force from the SPLA or the SAF, but is comprised of elements of both.





friends in the LRA cross-fire; others still have family members missing and presumed dead. Within the traditional customs and social interaction of the ethnic groups in southern Sudan, the word 'hate' is a very strong term to use in reference to another individual or group. Normally, under Sudanese customary law, there are usually commonly accepted norms and methods for paying compensation for a crime or infraction against an individual or the community. Once that debt is paid, the infraction or crime is typically absolved, and little long-term grievances or hatred persist. Such traditional norms and laws therefore have a very positive role to play in terms of cultivating reconciliation and peace between individuals and between communities. However, resentment and hatred are building within individuals in Western Equatoria against the LRA because their commonly accepted understandings of justice are not being realized in the crimes that took place. Whatever hatred is felt at the individual level will likely manifest itself at a higher, more communal level if it is not addressed. Clearly, some attempts need to be made by government actors to achieve what the community feels is just in terms of the crimes that have been committed in order to safely avoid communities' attempting to take justice into their own hands. Any such attempts to deal with the grievances of those in Western Equatoria against the LRA will have to involve a careful examination of their customary laws for such crimes and undoubtedly attempt to provide compensation to those affected.

#### 4.1.2 Community Level

As mentioned above, in the highly communal nature of southern Sudanese society, it is a challenging task to distinguish individual concerns and impact from those of the larger community. However, it is interesting to note that one important impact of the LRA on the overall society is the way this insecurity has caused community members to become more insular and individualistic, noticeably weakening the social fabric. Efforts need to be made to reinforce the sense of community in southern Sudan, but this can only be achieved while simultaneously supporting recovery and livelihood activities. Overall, at the community level, the impact of the LRA presence can be grouped into three main areas: humanitarian, economic, and social aspects.

##### Humanitarian impact

For many people interviewed, drawing a line between the direct impacts of the LRA and the social impacts of chronic poverty is very difficult. However, the insecurity created by the LRA has actually hindered access by community members to the few existing services and infrastructure available, making the communities' situation even more difficult. For instance, during the 2006 LRA attacks, part of the LRA settled in a certain village in Western Equatoria that was only served by two boreholes. During their stay in the community, the LRA controlled all access to clean water for the community. While the LRA was stationed there, two women in the village gave birth, but both babies died as a result of lack of access to clean water.<sup>75</sup>

The process of absorbing and reintegrating thousands of returnees flowing back into their home areas from areas such as the DRC, CAR, and northern Sudan has also been hampered

<sup>75</sup> World Vision workshop, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



by the economic toll inflicted by the insecurity. In the areas of Western Equatoria hardest-hit by LRA-related insecurity, the traditional practice of helping settle newcomers to the community has been critically strained because returnees and newcomers are entering communities that have been looted of many of their assets. As much as residents want to reaccept returnees and newcomers to their communities, it was suggested that they are posing an additional economic and emotional strain on the community that is difficult for inhabitants to bear.

During the renewed period of LRA insecurity in 2007, the research team discovered that communities not directly targeted by the LRA attacks were also experiencing considerable economic strain caused by their attempts to host extended family members who were fleeing the insecurity. Cultural obligations to provide for guests were taking their toll on household food security as these IDPs were without plots of land to cultivate.<sup>76</sup> The normal household harvest and livelihoods in these more stable areas have had to support an increased number of members. Any emergency and recovery activities for Western Equatoria should take into account this secondary humanitarian impact.

### Economic impact

Although Western Equatoria is still considered the breadbasket of southern Sudan, the activities of the LRA have had a devastating impact on its economy. When asked during interviews and focus group discussions if their lives had changed as a result of the LRA attacks, most people said that they felt more impoverished than before the attacks. The reasons given for their perception of greater financial impoverishment were manifold. The property of all the individuals interviewed who had directly experienced insecurity caused by the LRA had been looted or damaged. The types of property stolen or damaged were numerous, including pots and pans, mosquito nets, blankets, clothes, sleeping mats, plates and cups, food, livestock, money, radios, automatic rifles, bicycles, drums, crops etc. In many cases, those interviewed had lost all their most valuable possessions. The communities, on the most part, have not been able to recover from these losses, with the vast majority being unable to replace the items they lost to the LRA. In addition to damaging the current livelihoods and households of residents, the money stolen during these raids has damaged plans for future economic and livelihood investment on the part of residents. For example, many of those interviewed complained that the theft of their money had prevented them from developing their homes as they had initially planned.

In the rural villages affected by the LRA, the majority of residents are farmers. Informants explained that due to fear of the LRA, they felt unable to cultivate their plots that are sometimes located in areas distant from their homes. The same feelings about fear of the LRA inhibiting daily economic activities was made in urban areas where residents' plots of land are generally much further from their homes. Those interviewed said that, as a result of not properly engaging in cultivation since the LRA attacks in 2006, their household food security situation was very fragile. At the time of research, Western Equatoria was

<sup>76</sup> One group interviewed expressed dismay at the GoSS, saying that they were refugees in their own country yet the government was not treating them as such, World Vision interview, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



having its second harvest of the agricultural year, yet informants expressed that their crops were just going to waste in the ground as they were afraid to harvest them.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, due to the fact that in some villages and towns, the LRA had looted almost all household food supplies, many informants had been forced to eat the next year's seeds. In many cases reviewed by the team, people in the most remote locations were consuming wild potatoes from the forest as their main staple due to their inability to properly cultivate and harvest.

For those who cultivate beyond just the subsistence level, produce is normally taken to markets that are usually located in the centre of towns and villages. Those interviewed who usually took their surplus to market also felt the economic impact of the insecurity and fear caused by the LRA. Many markets in rural areas have been completely abandoned as a result of the LRA because most marketable goods were looted and in some areas too little is now being harvested to be sold. In addition to agricultural produce, Western Equatoria is renowned for its honey, which is collected from deep within the forest. LRA-related insecurity has meant that more people are reluctant to go into the forest in certain areas to collect the honey. This has resulted in less honey being available on the market and a loss in income for a number of households.

For people in urban centers that were not directly affected by the LRA, the economic cost is also being felt through the considerable rise in market prices of agricultural produce.<sup>78</sup> While it was related during the research that some people in rural areas were cultivating despite fears of being taken captive while in the fields, it was noted that many rural people were reluctant to take their produce to market. Thus, even though some farmers were brave enough to cultivate their fields, even fewer were not willing to risk the long distances to travel to the markets to sell their goods. The result in Western Equatoria has been that rural inhabitants are losing valuable income, and urban residents are being forced to pay extra for market goods.



Hai-Masi market in Yambio

<sup>77</sup> World Vision interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

<sup>78</sup> World Vision interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.



In addition to produce not getting to market, some people who rely on the market to purchase food told the research team that they were too afraid to go to the market and were therefore trying to cope with the little food they could produce themselves. The outlook is however not altogether bleak, and it is important to note the exceptions. For instance, in one location, the team was encouraged to learn of the gradual re-opening of a market that had been closed since attacks in 2006.<sup>79</sup> Finally, it was related during the research process that in light of the LRA insecurity, vendors had begun taking their wares home with them at the end of each day rather than leaving them in the market stalls over night, when they might be looted by the LRA.<sup>80</sup>

Another very important repercussion of the LRA-related insecurity in Western Equatoria has been the erosion of economic entrepreneurialism. Some individuals interviewed said that they felt unmotivated to work, knowing that the LRA could simply come and loot their hard-earned food again.<sup>81</sup> Rather than working hard, while knowing all the while that their produce could be taken by the LRA, some people have ceased cultivating, thereby increasing their household's likelihood of food insecurity and possible malnourishment and sickness.

In rural areas where there are no shops, young men often operate small road-side stalls selling cigarettes, sweets and biscuits. Since last year's LRA attacks, many informants abandoned these small businesses. They related that they had stopped these activities because they did not want to leave their families unattended, fearing that the LRA may come and abduct the family while they were attending to their businesses.<sup>82</sup> In addition to these male-dominated professions that have been devastated in some areas due to the insecurity, some female-dominated livelihood opportunities have also been adversely affected. It was related that women who brewed alcohol or made bread to sell on the side of the road had stopped these activities.<sup>83</sup> Other women who are part of business collectives that need to travel to Uganda regularly in order to source goods to sell on the markets in Western Equatoria have been forced to give up these income-generating activities in light of the fears of the LRA.<sup>84</sup> At the time of writing, trade links between Sudan and Uganda are still disrupted due to LRA-induced insecurity.

It should be noted that there is a theory that some actors with significant business interests in the markets in South Sudan are said to be taking advantage of the LRA-related insecurity for economic benefit.<sup>85</sup> It is postulated that certain business actors are paying individuals and groups in South Sudan to use violence to create insecurity that cuts off or at least hinders the trade routes from northern Uganda to South Sudan in order to drive up the prices of goods marketed by these business actors in urban areas in South Sudan. Such incidents and insecurity are subsequently attributed to the LRA but are actually not directly linked to that group's activities. However, this theory has, to this point, primarily been used to explain and describe insecurity in Eastern Equatoria state, not Western

79 World Vision interview, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

80 World Vision interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.

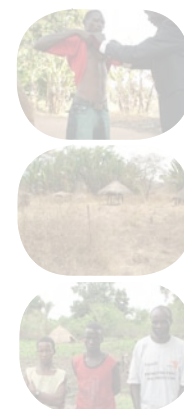
81 World Vision interview, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

82 World Vision interview, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

83 World Vision interview, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

84 World Vision interview, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

85 World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007.



Equatoria. Nevertheless, it is important that Sudanese authorities take the greatest efforts possible to carefully investigate all incidents of insecurity in order to ensure that the LRA is not being used as an excuse for an increase in indigenous crime and violence and that appropriate mitigation strategies can be developed.

Despite all the negative economic ramifications, the creativity and resilience of the people of Western Equatoria is still apparent. One notable example of this will to survive is the practice adopted by some inhabitants of maintaining two homes – one in the village and another hidden in the bush where they kept their food reserves lest the LRA show up unexpectedly in the village.<sup>86</sup> However, it should be noted that very few households in Western Equatoria have the resources to undertake such an approach.

### Social impact

According to the customs of the various ethnic groups inhabiting Western Equatoria, during times of distress for any given community member, it would be expected that other community members would assist such an individual, be it through financial, material, or emotional means. One of the most serious impacts to be observed by the research team was the widespread erosion of community capacities to help their most vulnerable. Communities were affected very suddenly and indiscriminately by the LRA, leaving many people with no provision (financial and material) and no hope (therefore no emotional support) to help the most desperate among them. Such widespread erosion in community coping capacities appears to be slowly contributing to the weakening of communal social ties and obligations. A number of individuals interviewed expressed sadness at not being able to offer their fellow community-members help when they needed it. Others mentioned that they avoided going to certain places where they knew giving something would be expected (funerals, for example). It might be concluded therefore that people have become somewhat more insular and potentially more individualistic due to the losses inflicted by the LRA. In the general post-civil war context but also in the midst of the LRA-related insecurity in Western Equatoria, it is clear that efforts need to be made to reinforce the sense of community cohesion throughout southern Sudan. Rebuilding the social fabric can only be supported however alongside simultaneous efforts to improve the livelihoods of community members such that they are able to once again hold, and participate in, communal activities.



School in Western Equatoria

<sup>86</sup> World Vision interview, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



For many interviewees, the most immediate social impact of the LRA insecurity was fear – fear of being abducted by the LRA, of their family members being abducted, and of their few possessions being stolen. Examples were cited of this fear resulting in children skipping school to avoid abduction. In some instances, schools had even temporarily closed following the LRA activities in the area, as teachers were afraid to work.

Fear, as an overwhelming factor shaping people's behavior in LRA affected areas, was also reflected in comments made to the research team about why people were reluctant to travel from their homes, even only to their cultivation plots. One of the most prominent explanations given for this reluctance was that individuals said they would rather be killed by the LRA at home if they were to raid. At home, they felt they would be more certain of receiving a proper burial, rather than if they were killed by the LRA in the bush, where their body may never be found.<sup>87</sup> Burial practices in this part of Sudan are one of the building blocks upon which the society is founded, and the thought of not having a proper funeral, instead being left to rot in the forest, fills some people interviewed with so much fear that they are unable to work away from home.

A particular mental strain was placed on the most vulnerable such as female-headed households. For instance, in Yambio County during the recent 2007 attacks, entire families, especially those headed by women, escaped to hide in the bush each night while rumors circulated about the proximity of the LRA to the town. The women interviewed told the research team that they were very afraid in both environments. They desperately feared being in town when the LRA attacked these centers, as they may be capture or raped. They also feared being in the bush with their babies should their cries denounce them. For these women, no place was very safe for them from the threat of the LRA, so they had in the end to choose the least terrifying option.

Fear among Western Equatorians has also been experienced due to the high number of strangers being accommodated in villages throughout the state due to the insecurity. During the research, one community expressed heightened insecurity among their members due to the influx of IDPs caused by the LRA. People were not always aware of who these newcomers were or of their backgrounds. It was explained that the presence of new people in these communities made people feel more uneasy. Another anxiety expressed during the interview process was the arrival of people from other communities bringing in new practices and ideas that did not accord with those of the host community. One example given was the recent arrival of those who practiced witchcraft from DRC; this is perceived by one community as threatening because the community knows no antidote to this particular form of witchcraft.<sup>88</sup>

The reduction of information flow and communication is another social impact of the LRA-induced insecurity. While it was noted that the movement of people to urban centers enabled people to hear the latest news in the area, the general result was an overall disintegration of communication channels. As many people from rural areas have stopped

<sup>87</sup> World Vision interview, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

<sup>88</sup> World Vision workshop, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



Zande Graves

going to market, so their lifeline to social interaction and therefore general access to news, has been severed. The economic impact of the LRA—the reduction in market activities—appears to be having a negative social impact on communities, causing households to become more isolated and even more uninformed of what is going on around them.

The daily social routines of many residents of Western Equatoria have been disrupted due to LRA-induced insecurity. It was related during the research process that in the past, most villages were safe even for women to walk around alone at night. However, since the 2006 and 2007 LRA attacks, people have stopped their evening outings to their neighbors or to the video halls in towns. Once again, this is another example of a way in which the LRA's presence and activities in southern Sudan are contributing to social isolation within communities.

Finally, one of the deepest social impacts of the LRA-induced insecurity is grief. Some of the families among the Azande community whose daughters had been held captive by the LRA for such a long time caused these families to presume their loved ones dead. A woman interviewed in one of the affected communities escaped from the LRA and returned home to find her family preparing for her funeral.<sup>89</sup> For those families who have had to perform

<sup>89</sup> In this woman's words, her family thought she had "already been slaughtered", World Vision interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.



funeral rites, they have had to do so without proof of a dead body to bury; these 'symbolic' funerals have therefore not been performed in the usual way. People in the community have had to accept death without a body as evidence.

## 4.2 Response

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the situation of communities in Western Equatoria related to the insecurity caused by the LRA, it was understood that the study would examine the various capacities and gaps in communities to respond to the incidents and fears attributed to the LRA's presence and activities in the area.

### 4.2.1 Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms

Mitigating the negative impact of the LRA's activities in Western Equatoria has been severely inhibited by effective early warning mechanisms within Sudanese communities. Early warning capacity is directly contingent on the ability of communities to receive accurate information and rapidly spread it through the community in order to create effective advance responses to insecurity.

As discussed before, many Western Equatorians feel that their inability to access current news is a serious impediment to their security. Many of those interviewed who had been affected by the LRA attacks indicated that if they had received some warning that the LRA was coming, they would have been better able to protect themselves by taking refuge further into the bush and even potentially hiding their belongings. Many expressed great desire to have access to a frequency-modulation (FM) radio in order to be better informed of the political and security situation in southern Sudan. Interviews suggested that for those living in remote communities news of current affairs is generally passed by word of mouth. Community members who travel to more urban areas bring back the news to their home areas and disseminate it upon their return; however, this method of circulating news is unreliable. By the time the news reaches these remote communities, it is generally distorted and outdated. In some communities, a few individuals may have radios able to pick up some signal, but by the time this information is relayed throughout the community, it also is likely to have been distorted by having been retold several times. Many informants also felt that available sources of information were insufficient and inadequate, especially since what news people actually have access to (through the few newspapers and radio programs received in the area) are often not in a language that the people in the area understand.

Over the generations of their existence, the various tribes of Western Equatoria have developed and often used traditional warning systems to alert their communities in times of insecurity. Many communities beat drums (known as *gugu* among the Azande) according to a certain rhythm or pattern that community members know signals approaching danger.<sup>90</sup> This drumming was at first used by certain communities when they became aware the LRA was invading nearby communities and looting. However, the traditional drums were not used much after the initial attacks of the LRA in Western Equatoria, as some

<sup>90</sup> These drums sound a language which is understood to all around. For instance, the drum can be heard saying 'Danger danger!', 'War, war, war' or 'Run to the bush!', World Vision interview, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007.





communities were warned by the LRA that they would all be killed if they used this warning method. In the absence of the use of drums, people tried to alert their neighbors by word of mouth, but such methods were not quick, systematic, or widespread enough to reach all community members. Consequently, in subsequent attacks, many communities were caught by complete surprise, and some families during the attacks were at times totally unaware of the presence of the LRA in a nearby household or compound.

It is also interesting to note that some communities did not recall any traditional warning mechanisms that had been used by their people in the past. It seems that in these communities, traditions and customs have been eroded to the extent that these practices are now lost. In the absence of traditional methods and any modern warning systems, these communities had no specific mechanisms in place for alerting people when the LRA were attacking. Thus, in most of the attacks, inhabitants were only alerted to the activities of the LRA when they saw community members running for cover in the bush. Some of those interviewed during the research commented on how they felt they were back in conditions similar to the worst years of the civil war; they felt their daily movements were once again being founded on rumors rather than on the basis of concrete information.<sup>91</sup>

In the aftermath of the LRA attacks, some communities have gathered within themselves to discuss alert mechanisms. Despite the threats expressed by LRA fighters against those who would warn their neighbors, some communities decided that they should revert to their traditional ways and beat the drum, whereas others have decided to use rhino horns to sound danger signals. Other systems set up have been the ringing of the church bells outside of normal bell-ringing hours or the rapid passage of the chief's guards through the community to warn people of approaching danger (although it was recognized that the latter may not always be practical in immediate danger). The research team was not able to get information on whether these ideas have been put into practice and how successful they have been.

Community members also raised the challenges of communicating clearly and quickly with county officials about insecurity in order to solicit a response from the government security organs. In addition, some county officials in remote parts of Western Equatoria expressed dissatisfaction with the way they have been informed of insecurity in their areas.

Clearly, in stable societies, the police are the primary law-enforcing and protection authority and therefore normally respond to insecurity. However, given the limited capacity of the police in southern Sudan, it appears to be generally accepted by communities that the armed forces should continue to assume such a role in the interim.<sup>92</sup> However, some community members feel that the SPLA and JIU have not responded to insecurity in a timely way in some communities in Western Equatoria even when the notifications of insecurity are relayed quickly. For instance, in early 2006, the county authorities in a research location were notified of the insecurity almost immediately, yet by the time the SPLA or JIU came to investigate, the LRA had already left.<sup>93</sup> In another very remote village raided three times by the LRA, the community waited two days for SPLA and UNMIS to arrive on the scene.<sup>94</sup>

91 World Vision interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

92 World Vision interview, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

93 World Vision interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.

94 World Vision interview, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



Given these challenges in communication and response, many community members in Western Equatoria are beginning to believe that asking for help is futile and are preferring instead to mobilize themselves to fight in the eventuality of another LRA onslaught.<sup>95</sup> In addition, some armed community members have in past incidents joined up with the SPLA to pursue the LRA after they had attacked in a bid to rid their land of the rebels. Not all the community-initiated responses to the LRA are necessarily aggressive, though. For instance, a number of communities have selected one individual to act as the authority figure for mobilizing women and children to the bush for refuge and men to the front line to fight the LRA if they should attack.

## 4.2.2 Protection Provisions

There are four different formal institutions with the mandate to contribute to physical protection in southern Sudan: police, SPLA, JIU, and UNMIS. In practice, the various security actors in Western Equatoria – due to a number of factors including mandate and weak capacity – have not effectively defended or protected communities in Western Equatoria from the LRA.

### Police

According to the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, the duties of the police include ensuring “the safety and security of the people of southern Sudan and their properties”. Unfortunately, the police service in Western Equatoria does not have the human and material resources to fulfill this mandate. They are generally too few and too ill-equipped to present any challenge to determined attackers, and they are only really present in urban areas such as Yambio and Maridi towns. The numbers deployed in these geographically large areas are telling. In Maridi County,<sup>96</sup> there are about 100 police men and officers.



Three policemen in Yambio

95 Echoed in the Sudan Tribune, ‘Ugandan rebels continue to destabilize Sudan’s Western Equatoria’, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

96 World Vision interview, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.



Approximately 40 of them have been on duty even before the signing of the CPA; 42 others are former SPLA soldiers who need training to get the necessary skills and knowledge. Only a further 18 policemen for Maridi County are based in outside posts in different payams. Out of Maridi County's approximately 100 police, only 15 are armed, and these armed individuals are always stationed in Maridi town. Finally, even though 7 policemen are on the beat every day, 5 of these armed police are bodyguards to the police commissioner and other VIPs. In Yambio County,<sup>97</sup> there are about 450 policemen (on the payroll – many more could be working without being paid). Roughly a third are armed (with AK47, but do not necessarily have ammunition).

### SPLA and JIU

Other than the police, the SPLA and the JIU are the only other state-sanctioned security organs in Western Equatoria. When the LRA first launched attacks in Western Equatoria, it is understandable that these entities were likely caught by surprise and therefore unable to mount any defense against these attacks. However, it is unclear why the SPLA and JIU are currently unable to fully defend the vulnerable villages and towns of Western Equatoria. The research team did learn that greater numbers of SPLA, for instance, have been deployed to major urban areas in Western Equatoria in recent months to bolster internal capacity for response. At the end of March 2007, the SPLA officially announced that they had redeployed troops in anticipation of further LRA attacks.<sup>98</sup> According to the report, the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was being deployed to Western Equatoria State after training near Owiny Ki-Bul. SPLA officers argued that in previous attacks in early 2007, the LRA had taken advantage of the fact that SPLA forces were absent while on training. Unfortunately, despite the growing SPLA presence in 2006 and 2007 in Western Equatoria, the attacks have continued unabated. Even after the official statement, the LRA looted a village 10 miles south of Maridi town on 25<sup>th</sup> March; the most notable reported response by the SPLA was to pursue the looters. Some potential factors contributing to the apparent inability of Sudanese security forces to repel the LRA could include the vast territory and border to defend, equipment and capacity needs within the SPLA, and communication challenges to respond effectively and in a timely fashion.

The JIU forces that have been deployed to Western Equatoria are facing the same challenges. The main function of the JIUs seems to be mainly symbolic. They are supposed to consist of equal numbers from the SAF and the SPLA and “constitute a nucleus of a post referendum army of Sudan, should the result of the referendum confirm unity.”<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan states that “[after] the redeployment of surplus units of the [SAF] outside Southern Sudan, the [SPLA] and the [JIU] shall constitute the National Armed Forces in Southern Sudan during the Interim Period.” Their shared mission is “to defend the sovereignty of the country and the constitutional order, respect the rule of law, the civilian government, democracy, basic human rights and the will of the people.”<sup>100</sup> Even the Joint/Integrated Units Bill 2005, i.e. the legal basis for the JIUs, does not shed light on the desired division of labor between the JIUs and the SPLA. It states that the main

97 World Vision interview, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

98 Juba Post, “South Sudan army redeploys to fight Ugandan rebels”, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

99 *Agreement on Security Arrangements During the Interim Period*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003, paragraph 4.

100 *Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2005, article 151.



function of the JIUs is “to secure the safety of the territories and boundaries of the Sudan, in the areas where they are deployed and participate in their development, side by side with the SAF and SPLA.”<sup>101</sup>

In practice, the lack of clarity regarding the JIUs’ role within the security sector of Southern Sudan is probably less acute than the delays in the formation of the units. According to the UN Secretary-General, these delays are partly due to “a lack of logistical support for moving troops, a shortage of working and living accommodations and irregular and insufficient budgetary assistance. Efforts by the Joint Defence Board to agree to a single doctrine and training programme have foundered, partly over cultural and religious differences. In several areas, poorly disciplined Joint Integrated Unit elements were responsible for deteriorating security.”<sup>102</sup>

In recent months there have been multiple clashes between JIUs and LRA fighters in Western Equatoria. In one incident in Source Yibo in early March 2007, armed LRA elements with twice the strength of the JIU forces based there managed to briefly overrun the town, kill two civilians and loot shops before escaping. The Government of Western Equatoria State apparently interpreted this incident as an indication of the insufficient capacities of the JIU units, because its Minister of Information appealed to the GoSS to deploy more troops in the state.<sup>103</sup>

## UNMIS

The mandate of UNMIS does not only include the protection of UN personnel and humanitarian workers, but also – “without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Sudan” – the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.<sup>104</sup> After the first series of attacks by the LRA against civilians, aid workers and UN personnel in southern Sudan in late 2005/early 2006, the UN Security Council “strongly condemn[ed] the activities of [...] the LRA [...] and urge[d] in this regard UNMIS to make full use of its current mandate and capabilities”.<sup>105</sup> It requested the Secretary-General to make proposals on how UNMIS and other UN agencies could more effectively address the problem of the LRA.

In his response, the Secretary-General made clear that UNMIS is operating “with the usual Chapter VI force composition and configuration and has very few robust assets at its disposal. The military component is structured to provide support and security for monitoring and verification of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, rather than to conduct operations which may require an offensive capability. [...] The present configuration of UNMIS allows the Mission to undertake regular patrolling by military observers, in known LRA areas. These patrols are escorted by small protection elements which, due to their size, scope and mandate, are limited to carrying out a minimum defensive capability. [...] Any robust

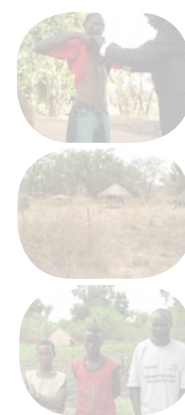
101 *The Joint/Integrated Units (JIU) Bill*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2006, paragraph 7.

102 Report of the UN Secretary-General, S/2007/42, paragraph 9.

103 Sudan Tribune, *Ugandan rebels kill 2 in fresh attack in Sudan’s Western Equatoria*, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007.

104 UN Security Council Resolution 1590 (2005), paragraph 16.

105 UN Security Council Resolution 1663 (2006), paragraph 7.



operation against LRA [...] would require an expanded mandate, but also an enhanced configuration of forces and more robust assets, specialized equipment and real-time intelligence.”<sup>106</sup> The Secretary-General also emphasized that the main responsibility for the protection of civilians should be with the armed forces in the region: “The combined strength of the SAF, SPLA and UPDF military presence in the Equatoria region is estimated at 50,000 personnel. By comparison, UNMIS has around 700 troops and a small reserve capacity.”<sup>107</sup> He observed that “[the] countries of the region have an overwhelming capacity to address the LRA threat. If the Governments in the region find a mutually agreeable way to strengthen cooperation on the ground among their security forces, it could create a solid basis to deal more effectively with the lingering threat from LRA.”<sup>108</sup>

The World Vision research team met with UNMIS units in Yambio and Maridi and found that the few armed soldiers based there are in fact interpreting their mandate very narrowly. In case of an attack on one of these two towns, UNMIS would prioritize protecting UN Military Observers, other UN personnel, aid workers and Sudanese government representatives.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, while not being able and prepared to protect the civilian population, the reaction of armed UN soldiers to insecurity unrelated to the LRA (such as a bank robbery in Yambio town in early May 2006) has even escalated community fears and insecurity.<sup>110</sup>

### The grassroots perspective

Communities in Western Equatoria are indeed aware that there is a gap in terms of response to situations of insecurity, but they are for the most part not informed enough to know what actor could or should be filling such a gap. For instance, in communities where they are present, opinion on the efforts of UNMIS and JIU to improve community protection was divided. Some were positive about the efforts of these actors to provide protection, while others expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with their performance. Respondents said these forces were ‘not going to the level that the community wants.’<sup>111</sup> Given the military mandate of the JIU and the predominantly monitoring mandate of UNMIS, it is evident that there is an inadequate level of understanding within communities of the role of various security institutions in their areas. For instance, many community members expressed the opinion that UNMIS was mandated to use military force to help the JIU/SPLA evict the LRA from Sudan. During the Protection Training Workshops conducted by World Vision alongside this research, it became clear that communities did not properly understand the – ideally separate but compatible – roles of the police, the military, and UN peacekeepers.<sup>112</sup> Clearly, the expectations of community members regarding the role of protection actors is out of synch with their mandated role or the capacity they have

106 Report of the UN Secretary-General, S/2006/478, paragraphs 19-21.

107 Ibid., paragraph 23.

108 Ibid. paragraph 54.

109 World Vision interview, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

110 UNMIS peacekeepers mistook shooting that occurred during one night in early May 2006 related to an attempted bank robbery as an LRA attack and responded with heavy gunfire for hours. Such a response caused many villagers to believe an LRA attack was indeed underway; consequently, half of the town fled their homes that night.

111 World Vision interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.

112 As part of the training, WVSS asked for assistance from the County Police Commissioner, so that he could provide details of the role of the police in the community. For many people, this was the first time that the people and the police had had the chance to meet and discuss what each thought was the role and duty of the other. Although WVSS was only able to borrow the County Police Commissioner’s time for two out of the four workshops, participants who did benefit from these workshops expressed great satisfaction with this learning opportunity.



currently in southern Sudan to fulfill their ideal role in community protection.<sup>113</sup> Such unmet expectations are causing residents to become dissatisfied with official responses to the insecurity.

However, it is not just unreasonable expectations based on lack of information that is causing communities to raise grievances with the lack of protection responses. Many of the areas researched simply do not have a permanent presence of any formal security forces (i.e. police, JIU, SPLA). Those communities are aware that any security problem requiring the intervention of the police or military would likely require at least half a day to alert these forces and even longer for them to respond. These remote communities felt that such slow response was inadequate.

Finally, there is the capacity issue. There is also some debate in Western Equatoria about whether the SPLA and the JIU are capable of militarily confronting and defeating the LRA in Western Equatoria. Some interviews supported the opinion that the SPLA lacks the capacity<sup>114</sup> to deal with a force as well-armed and determined as the LRA. Others, however, were more optimistic, especially given that the local communities appear committed to fighting alongside the forces that would try to confront and oust the LRA from southern Sudan.

In the end, it is evident that residents in Western Equatoria generally feel there is a security/protection vacuum in their areas, and there are various opinions in terms of the responses required. While some people interviewed were still hoping that the government would make efforts to deploy more troops, most interviewees expressed strong dissatisfaction with the authorities for not doing more to protect the community. Many interviewed are clearly aware that they are not able to defend themselves and their communities effectively against threats such as the well-armed LRA. They know they need protection from some entity, and they are looking to their authorities to provide such a force.



Yambio Airstrip

113 In addition to our observations, one workshop group put forward the complaint that there is currently a very poor relationship between the various branches of the armed forces, between the police and the community, between the police and the army, as well as between the police and the government. The community requested greater communication between the various community protection units, World Vision workshop, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

114 World Vision interview, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007. Other sources suggest that the SPLA is unwilling to deal with such forces, Refugees International Bulletin, *Sudan: Expand UNMIS Mandate to Protect Civilians from LRA Violence*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006.



Thus, communities in Western Equatoria repeatedly stated that increased military and police presence in their areas was needed to improve security. However, women in Western Equatoria did express concern about the increased presence of security forces, given adverse past experiences with such actors. In the early 1990s, Western Equatoria was an area of great conflict during the North-South civil war, and SPLA forces (dominated in large part by members of the Dinka ethnic group) were prevalent throughout Western Equatoria during this period. In the years before and after 1993 when a number of key towns in Western Equatoria were conquered by the SPLA from the northern forces, the SPLA was known to have lived off, and at times abused, the local population. When exploring physical protection concerns and mechanisms during the current research, some women spoke of their memories of SPLA soldiers mistreating the civilian population during the days of the civil war. The women alleged that many SPLA soldiers during that period behaved in a brutal manner they described as similar to current LRA behavior.<sup>115</sup> While many women expressed the need for more SPLA troops in their areas, some spoke with great concern about such a prospect.

In the absence of strong security forces or increased action by authorities amidst the threat of the LRA, communities are beginning to develop their own means for protecting themselves and their property. For instance, some communities have raised the idea of arming chiefs' guards as a viable option for increasing community security in the absence of police or soldiers.<sup>116</sup>

In addition, in the absence of SPLA and JIU units stationed within the affected areas, the community has used – and is prepared to continue to use – its own weapons against the LRA. This is a potentially worrisome development. Western Equatoria is predominantly inhabited by agriculturalist tribes who are traditionally less violent than pastoralist tribes who typically engage in aggressive rites of passage like cattle raiding. The level of aggressive behavior and ownership of automatic weapons in Western Equatoria is therefore generally understood to be lower than in other parts of southern Sudan. Such a trend however appears to be changing in Western Equatoria due the levels of insecurity; the interest on the part of the communities to arm themselves and take aggressive action to defend themselves was notably high during the research period.

It was found that in past LRA attacks within the research zone, civilians who confronted or chased the LRA did so using locally-made weapons such as bows, arrows and spears. However, some of the communities attacked have members who own automatic rifles, and some of them used these weapons against the LRA in the attacks. Research results concluded that many residents of Western Equatoria believe that arming themselves with modern weaponry is really the only way of protecting themselves and their families against armed forces, such as the LRA. One remote community interviewed said that because of

115 It was explained that community members in Western Equatoria find a lot of similarity between tactics used by the SPLA during the civil war period in which they would seek out homesteads in order to forcibly take (or tax) possessions and those used by the LRA in recent years in the area. The only noted difference between the techniques of the two in terms of extracting possessions from the local population was that SPLA soldiers would usually arrive, talk with the owners of the home, and then demand to be provided with food and provisions, whereas the LRA has been simply taking without discussing it beforehand, World Vision interview, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

116 World Vision interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.



their vulnerability and their efforts to take up arms, they felt like a shield between the LRA and the larger urban areas further inland.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, it is out of perceived necessity that Western Equatorians are arming themselves for their own protection, but they also believe their mobilization is supported and encouraged by Sudanese politicians. For instance, local inhabitants interviewed who closely follow current affairs felt a recent speech by the Vice President of Sudan, Hon. Salva Kiir, in early 2007 was a clear call for Western Equatorian communities to help defend southern Sudan against the LRA. He stated that the “Equatorial Defense Forces, other armed forces and everybody with a gun and the civilian population should join hands with the SPLA and hunt them [the LRA] down”.<sup>118</sup> Many people on the ground have clearly interpreted these words as a call to arms for southern Sudanese to fight non-aligned armed groups, alongside the JIU and SPLA. Some of those who have understood the President’s message in this way even expressed their eager anticipation for the distribution of arms from the GoSS in order to fulfill the Vice President’s message.



Man with local weapons

Research findings indicate that the lack of fully-functioning security forces in Western Equatoria combined with the growing insecurity is creating a void in civilian protection that civilians themselves appear to be trying to fill. This increase in civilian armament and unregulated attempts to provide security and justice are a great concern, as they could actually contribute to the growing security problem instead of solving it – especially if these developments are drawn into the inter-tribal tensions in Western Equatoria.

### 4.3 Other Security Issues in Western Equatoria

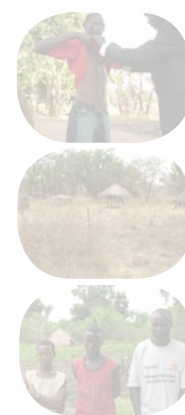
Although the main point of the study was to assess the impact of the LRA in Western Equatoria, other insecurities and conflicts were pronounced in the area and deserve mentioning in this report. All of these factors contributing to the overall sense of insecurity are inter-related and do compound the overall impact of the LRA in Western Equatoria.

November 2005 saw the beginning of violent tribal clashes in Yambio County between the Dinka and Azande tribes. Although the situation had calmed by March 2007 when this report was written, the fear of inter-ethnic violence was still prevalent in the minds of community members and was often mentioned during interviews as another element of insecurity in their communities. This tribal tension is currently not fading in the minds of many inhabitants of Western Equatoria due to the proximity of the newly bolstered

117 World Vision workshop, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

118 Paterno, S., “Salva Kiir is gaining leadership qualities”, Sudan Tribune, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007.





contingents of SPLA soldiers in barracks close to the towns, as the ranks of the SPLA are heavily dominated by Dinka tribe members.<sup>119</sup> It was related to the research team that the SPLA in Western Equatoria is largely made up of Dinka soldiers (an unconfirmed 70% majority). The closeness of barracks to towns is worrying many townspeople of different tribes given the history of SPLA actions in Western Equatoria.

The presence of armed Ambororo pastoralists in parts of Western Equatoria is also a looming threat in the minds of some participants.<sup>120</sup> It was said that, in just the same way that the Dinka cattle had used much of the water in the area that was meant for farming, the Ambororo herds drank from fishing waters and therefore fish numbers had depleted.<sup>121</sup> As mentioned above, certain members of the communities interviewed are afraid of a possible coalition of LRA and Ambororo, as rumors suggest that their paths may cross and merge in CAR.

In some communities, the research team itself became the target of frustration. While only one person refused to be interviewed, quite a few people were reluctant to talk to the team due to the number of people and agencies<sup>122</sup> that had already conducted research in the areas – research which, informants said, was a waste of their time as they had seen no improvement in humanitarian response in the area as a result of the assessments. In one boma, humanitarian food aid had been distributed, but for some reason the food had been wrongly allocated and had been distributed in a non-LRA-affected village of the payam; this mis-management of aid has led to friction in this community between LRA and non-LRA affected homes.

## 4.4 Need for Reconciliation

This section aims to outline, and elaborate on, the need and opportunities to build sustainable peace in Western Equatoria given the high levels of insecurity and grievances prevalent there. The focus was in large part on the needs and opportunities for reconciliation between the targeted communities and the LRA perpetrators and/or northern Ugandan communities. The resounding answers were that reconciliation was indeed possible. This section aims to highlight where more attention needs to be focused in order to foster reconciliation and forgiveness in LRA-affected areas of Western Equatoria.

In a country with a history as complex and violent as Sudan's, it is imperative to increase inter-cultural understanding and to promote reconciliation. For this to happen, the various reconciliation needs and practices need to be understood within the context in which they happen. Using traditional tribal forgiveness mechanisms for the LRA was, in the

119 World Vision interview, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007. The day before this interview was conducted a Zande youth had been shot (hospitalised) by a Dinka SPLA soldier in Yambio town as the boy entered the SPLA barracks just inside Yambio town.

120 In addition to the fear of the Ambororo, it is worth noting that there is some confusion as to the identity of the OAGs in the area. Some people referred to the Ambororo as the Janjaweed or as the 'Jallaba' (a term used in the South of Sudan to refer to their Northern counterparts) due to some of the Ambororo allegedly patrolling on horseback like the Janjaweed.

121 World Vision interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

122 For instance, the inter-agency report, a World Food Programme report and SRRC reports were all conducted in the area where one person refused to be interviewed. He said that what aid had arrived as a result of the assessments had gone to the households that had not been affected by the LRA, whereas his house and others nearby, had not received any assistance at all.



main, something that people interviewed thought possible, and indeed desirable. The only reasons given by participants for not using this form of justice and reconciliation approach were that the LRA were not of their tribe<sup>123</sup> or that they could never be forgiven for what they had done to their people.

Reconciliation and reintegration have been pivotal to peace efforts in LRA-affected parts of northern Uganda, where the civil war had displaced over 1.7 million people and killed tens of thousands. Much attention has been focused on the reconciliation practices of the Acholi; practices such as *mato oput*<sup>124</sup> have found their way to the peace talks agenda. However, no attention has been paid to the reconciliation and reintegration practices of the southern Sudanese who have been affected by the LRA. This assessment in Western Equatoria set out, partly, to see if there was a need for reconciliation between the southern Sudanese and the northern Ugandans, who are largely blamed for these atrocities by the southern Sudanese communities interviewed.

Although it was recognized during interviews that finding common ground between the tribal practices in southern Sudan and those of the Acholi might be hard, members of the communities interviewed suggested that a compromise could be met between the two cultures. Despite the gradual introduction of retributive justice in southern Sudan, cultural beliefs and practices still shape arguably the vast majority of the population's understanding



Baka reconciliation practice

123 Even within one tribe there are differences in practice. This statement should not therefore be indicative of any one tribe's view, but instead of personal rather than collective opinion. What is interesting to note however, is that all traditional authorities interviewed believed that the LRA could and should be forgiven in their traditional tribal way, or in a way that is a compromise between the Sudanese tribal method and the Acholi method.

124 *Mato oput* is a bitter drink that is drunk by both parties in a mediation, designed to resolve conflict between warring families or clans. *Mato oput* is drunk from the same gourd by both sides and marks the burial of bitter feelings between them, Afako, B., "Traditional Drink Unites Ugandans", *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*.



and practice of justice and forgiveness.<sup>125</sup> These traditions, although varying between tribes, could be argued to unite divergent cultures. While ritual practices between tribes can differ enormously, the foundational principals are actually relatively similar.<sup>126</sup> Interviews in southern Sudan with people of different tribes pointed towards mediation, slaughtering an animal and feasting, leading to forgiveness, as the most common forms of reconciliation.

According to people interviewed in LRA-affected areas, the LRA are perceived of as killers; the research team witnessed outspoken sadness coupled with hatred prevailing in discussions centered on the activities of this rebel group. While Uganda has an Amnesty Act that embraces traditional reconciliation practices to deal with disbanded LRA rebels, traditional practices in southern Sudan are still very much contained within the realm of each tribe, rather than being formally recognized by the government authorities at various levels.<sup>127</sup>

With the potential for peace between the LRA and the Government of Uganda and the consequent release and return of the fighters and abductees, it is imperative to understand the rituals that former captives (even those who have not necessarily become LRA fighters) will have to undergo before being accepted back into their southern Sudanese communities. Each tribe has different cleansing practices, ranging from the simple slaughter of a goat or chicken through the elaborate Zande ritual involving blowing water on the offender to cleanse him. The Baka tribal practice is also quite involved, as it includes the practice of stepping over twigs, crushing eggs and smearing egg white and blood onto the body of the returned and, believed, 'soiled' person. The meaning of "community" in southern Sudan – in the sense that a person 'belongs' to such a body – means that such community rituals will need to be understood and supported by authorities in order to foster reintegration back into the whole for those who were abducted. These cleansing practices will no doubt be pivotal to the reintegration of girls held captive all this time, should they be released from the LRA if peace is agreed upon. Reconciliation traditions to alleviate any grievances against the Acholi should also be fostered.<sup>128</sup>

In addition to the cleansing and reintegration of former captives, there is a need to build metaphorical bridges between the LRA and the southern Sudanese once peace is restored or else there could be long-standing hatred for years to come. Efforts to promote forgiveness and understanding between and among Ugandans are already underway. For instance, the Juba peace talks are broaching the topic of Ugandan reconciliation practices and several bodies are conducting research in Uganda based on traditional reconciliation

125 This is echoed in Liu Institute for Global Issues' *Roco Wat I Acholi; Restoring Relations in Acholi-land: Traditional Approaches to Reintegration and Justice* 2005.

126 World Vision interview, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

127 It should be noted that customary law has been recognized as a source of formal legislation within the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan. The GoSS is making efforts to ascertain existing customary law regimes so that their norms can be taken into account during the legislative process. With regard to reconciliation, however, GoSS representatives seem to be less aware of the importance and relevance of customary law.

128 This becomes all the more important if we consider the likely possibility of there being Sudanese Acholi soldiers among the LRA.



and reintegration.<sup>129</sup> However, support from the international community is needed, for assistance in this reconciliation. In addition, as mentioned before, such approaches and efforts should be expanded to include Sudanese practices and participation.

Sudanese reconciliation practices discussed during interviews can only take place when the wrongdoer asks for forgiveness. Mediation then follows between the elders of both parties, clans or communities. At the community level, people returning from LRA captivity will no doubt know the way the community expects them to behave and ask for forgiveness<sup>130</sup> and cleansing. The LRA, on the other hand, is not necessarily aware of the need to ask for forgiveness from the Sudanese people; indeed, it was raised during interviews that the LRA allegedly refused this during the November 2006 'bush talks' in Nabanga.<sup>131</sup> The general feeling among most people interviewed was that, as long as the wrongdoer recognized his/her wrong and apologized, they could be forgiven.<sup>132</sup>

The Juba peace talks are the best chance of achieving peace that the region has seen in two decades. While traditional reconciliation can no longer be used as the only medium through which to achieve justice with respect to the LRA, this form of restorative justice allows for the integration rather than stigmatization of offenders, unlike the formal justice system under which the ICC indictments function for instance. There was a belief among the southern Sudanese interviewed that there may be a stronger chance of lasting peace if some element of customary law is applied because the reconciliation it would foster would provide LRA soldiers with more attractive reasons to disband from LRA control. Reintegration and forgiveness in their communities would likely be a lot more desirable than imprisonment. However, currently, the opinions and the reality lived by the people of southern Sudan is completely dislocated from the peace talks. Clearly, great effort must be made to bring in southern Sudanese perspectives and participation to cultivate regional forgiveness and settle grievances. Such efforts need to be supported by the international community. In a recent publication it was mentioned that 'the Acholi community has forgiven both the LRA and UPDF so the focus should be on peace itself';<sup>133</sup> This study suggests that for peace to become a reality across the region, the same needs to be said of the southern Sudanese who have also been brutally affected by the LRA. Cultivating the forgiveness by southern Sudanese of the LRA should also become a priority on the agenda of the peace talks in order to foster long-term peace and reconciliation in the region.

129 For instance, the Liu Institute for Global Issues has published a highly detailed account of Acholi approaches to justice and reintegration.

130 Although extended periods away from the original community may lead to a stronger adoption of the host-community's practices. Should this be the case, it will be important for the original community to be supported in reintegration ventures for released captives and their children (many of which will have been born into captivity and will have known no other way of life than that of the LRA).

131 World Vision interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007. This statement can *only* be understood as the opinion of one person as the research team has been unable to qualify the statement.

132 The religious undertones of this statement should not go unnoticed. People in southern Sudan are very religious as forgiving someone because the person was Christian and had to forgive also came up quite often in conversation.

133 Words of an Acholi elder, in Ashworth, J., "The Heart of the Matter: Retributive Justice of Restorative Justice?", *Insight Sudan*, November 2006 Issue, p.9.

## 5

# General Recommendations



The purpose of the research project was to provide an in-depth analysis into how communities have been affected by the attacks that have been attributed to the LRA in Western Equatoria State. The underlying idea was that, through sustained community-based analysis, we would be able to come up with findings and recommendations that would complement and go beyond those of rapid inter-agency assessments conducted in the region in the recent past.

This analysis was done from a peacebuilding perspective. As efforts continue to revive the peace talks in Juba, this report aims to shift some of the policy focus back to the grassroots – to expand the international community’s perspective to include the feelings and grievances of the affected communities. Consequently, the recommendations emanating from the research are concentrated on the political and social situation. In order to inform a holistic understanding of what needs to be done to assist communities in Western Equatoria, our recommendations have to be read and understood in conjunction with recommendations made in the past, for instance:

- Inter-State Peace and Reconciliation Conference Resolutions, 18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006
- Inter-Agency Assessment Report of the LRA Affected Population in Maridi, Ibba & Yambio Counties, 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006
- Acholi Traditional Leaders and Civil Society Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007

A complete list of recommendations can be found at the beginning of this report (see Summary of Recommendations). Below are general recommendations to national and international decision-makers, which were not included in the body of the report:

## General Recommendations

- The residents of Western Equatoria are entitled to a life in peace. A multi-dimensional and concerted approach to achieve this, from the local to the international level, urged.
- Protection of civilians, especially of vulnerable groups such as women and children, should be made a priority for national and international action.
- Western Equatorians’ concerns need to be heard and this report gives them a voice. Further community-based reporting should be encouraged to provide a holistic base in the shaping of programming and policy.



## To the international donor community

- **Direct support to operational agencies**

Since October 2006, OCHA and its partners have been trying to mobilize funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to provide assistance to LRA-affected communities in Eastern and Western Equatoria, without success. Given the urgency of the matter, we recommend that individual donor institutions take greater interest in the situation in Western Equatoria State and support operational agencies in identifying funds for humanitarian assistance.

Support multi-year recovery programming in Western Equatoria that integrates emergency relief activities with longer-term support to service delivery, livelihood support, and protection initiatives; sustained, multi-year, dependable funding is required to support the transition to peace and provide citizens in Western Equatoria with a tangible peace dividend.

- **Support to security sector reform**

Increase financial and capacity support for security sector reform in southern Sudan, especially focused on training for police and military on issues related to the physical protection of civilians, e.g. human rights, civil-military relations, etc.

## 6 Conclusion



For more than a year, the LRA has been wreaking havoc among communities in Western Equatoria. Up until now, very little has been known about the nature and impact of the LRA in this state as the attention of politicians, aid workers and the media has been focused on peace negotiations in Juba between the rebel group and the Government of Uganda. While these negotiations are the best chance at peace that the region has seen in more than two decades, this report outlines the need to listen to, and incorporate, the voices and grievances of the communities in Western Equatoria into the peace talks agenda in order to promote *regional* peace and stability. The messages coming out of this report are contemporary and timely, because the LRA still continues to plague the communities of Western Equatoria, and because – at the time of writing – it appears that peace talks will once again resume in Juba.

Western Equatoria State has just come out of more than two decades of civil war. Over the last two years, it has been receiving tens of thousands of returnees from neighboring counties as well as from within Sudan. Recovery and reintegration of returnees require great efforts. The fragile nature of the socio-economic environment has been amplified by the LRA attacks. People interviewed imparted accounts of lootings, abductions, vandalism, torture, rape and killing; as the report shown, these crimes and their humanitarian, social and economic impacts are further straining the coping mechanisms of local communities. This report serves to affirm, and go beyond, the various LRA-related impact analyses already conducted in the area; it captures some of the grievances and losses of the people affected by LRA insecurities – most notably, the fact that these people appear to have been forgotten by their political leaders and the international community.

The little that has been done to alleviate LRA-induced insecurities in Western Equatoria has been, at best, insufficient and late. More than one year after the first LRA attacks, affected communities are still struggling to recover, lacking food, household utensils and other resources to survive and live in dignity. As the research findings illustrate, where there have been attempts at distribution of relief supplies, targeting appeared to be inadequate, thereby creating yet another cause for conflict in the area. In addition, little has been done to improve and support protection mechanisms in the area.

This participatory research project has highlighted the insufficient capacity of the armed forces to protect its citizens from further attempts by the LRA to attack and loot. In many cases cited in this report, grievances were expressed against the security forces (police, SPLA, JIU, UNMIS) due to the length of time it took the forces to respond to dangers and also due to the little power the armed forces actually have to provide physical protection. In some communities visited, residents were forced to arm themselves with local weapons (and in some cases automatic rifles), form self-defense forces and join the armed forces to rid their area of the LRA. This report urges the Government of Western Equatoria, with the support of UNMIS, to deploy law enforcement and security forces throughout the



state, especially taking into account those remote communities that appear to have been the hardest hit by LRA insecurities. If this deployment, coupled with capacity-building of all law enforcement and security forces, is conducted effectively, it will not only increase security in Western Equatoria but will also greatly aid local government efforts to disarm the heavily-armed local community.

Most people interviewed cited poor access to information on current affairs as one of their greatest impediments to ensuring better security for themselves and their community, in the absence of strong armed forces in their area. It transpired during the research that some remote communities had no way of being aware of the presence of LRA fighters in the vicinity of their settlements, let alone knowing of the Juba peace negotiations. Due to poor information flows in Western Equatoria, it can be discerned that many people in the communities feel intimidated and insecure; they are not cultivating their land due to fears of the LRA being in the area. Widespread panic in communities is largely based on rumor. The need for greater information channels, such as FM radio, to remote communities in Western Equatoria has never been so great.

The report highlights a clear need for reconciliation among all those affected by the insecurity, e.g. between LRA captives and their communities of origin, between the LRA and its victims (individual and collective) in southern Sudan and northern Uganda, and between the Acholi (in southern Sudan and northern Uganda) and other tribes in their neighborhood. Efforts also need to be made to strengthen reconciliation among the various other tribes embroiled in this war. The report has highlighted the uncertainty of the composition of the LRA as a possible hindrance to inter-tribal reconciliation and reintegration. Failing to acknowledge the composition of the LRA could potentially lead to an uprising on a communal/regional level of the negative tribal sentiments noted by the research team.

Psychological support is required for victims of the LRA. On an individual level, the recovery and reintegration of victims needs to be supported and facilitated, and on the communal level a more stable and secure society needs to be promoted, with growing capabilities to support not only itself, but also the increasing number of returnees coming back from neighboring countries. Not being able to provide assistance for returnees, as is culturally obliging in southern Sudan, is a great source of sadness and regret among the communities interviewed. Social cohesion in southern Sudan is critical for the survival of all community members. One of the most detrimental impacts of the LRA has been the observed disintegration of social activities and supports. In order to maintain and strengthen these communal support-mechanisms, the GoSS and the international community need to increase humanitarian assistance through basic services, in order to allow communities to increase their long-term household and community assets. However, as clarified in this report, assistance must be well-targeted and coordinated, with the help of the SSRRC and other local government institutions.

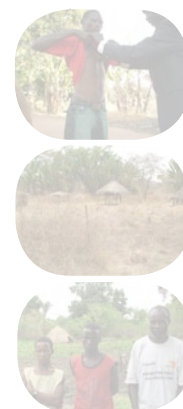


Peace has at last arrived for much of southern Sudan; however, communities in Western Equatoria State have not yet been privileged enough to experience it. With coping mechanisms already weakened by over two decades of war, community livelihoods have been further destabilized – economically, materially, emotionally, physically – due to the LRA presence in the area. This report has emphasized the need for the GoSS and its partners in the international community to re-focus their attention on the plight of LRA-affected people in the region, to advocate on these people’s behalf, and to push for stronger and more targeted political and humanitarian responses so that these communities may, at last, live in the peaceful environment that they are entitled to.





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